



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Avis Berman research material on art and artists

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Avis Berman research material on art and artists
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.bermavis
<b>Date:</b>	1976-1988
<b>Extent:</b>	0.6 Linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Berman, Avis
<b>Language:</b>	English .

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The collection was donated incrementally by Avis Berman 1981-1993.

### Related Materials

Also in the Archives are the Avis Berman research material on Katharine Kuh, 1939-2006 and an interview of Reuben Nakian conducted by Berman for the Archives Oral History Program, June 1981.

### Available Formats

35mm microfilm reels 2786 and 4909 are available at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

### Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C., Research Center.

### Conditions Governing Use

Interviews with Gross, Lawrence, and Nakian: Authorization to quote or reproduce for purposes of publication requires written permission from Avis Berman. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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## Biographical / Historical

Avis Berman (1949- ) is an art historian, writer, and curator from New York, N.Y.

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## Scope and Contents

Avis Berman research material on art and artists consists of interviews conducted by Berman and scattered correspondence in preparation for various books, articles and exhibitions. Subjects include Romare Bearden, Adelyn Breeskin, Chaim Gross, Jacob Lawrence, Reuben Nakian, and Helen Farr Sloan regarding John Sloan.

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## Scope and Contents

Material on art historian and museum director Adelyn Breeskin (microfilm reel 2786) includes an interview conducted by Berman September 8 and November 2, 1976. Breeskin speaks of her educational background; working at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Metropolitan Museum; her early interest in reading and illustrated books; her role as Curator of Prints and Director of the Baltimore Museum of Art; the Sadie May, Claghorn, Garrett, and Cone Collections; the financial management of the Baltimore Museum of Art; the Venice Biennale, 1960; and her research concerning Mary Cassatt and Romaine Brooks. She recalls Katherine B. Child, Claribel and Etta Cone, William Ivins, Jr., Gertrude Stein, Alicie B. Toklas and others. Also included are transcripts of interviews with Gertrude Rosenthal, January 14, 1977, and James Foster, December 10, 1976, in which they discuss working with Breeskin, and a copy of Berman's article "Adelyn Breeskin: 50 Years of Excellence, Part I," which appeared in the Feminist Art Journal, Summer 1977; and a manuscript draft and photocopied pages of "Profile of Adelyn Breeskin, Part 2" by Berman. (An abbreviated version of this article appeared in The Baltimore Sun, Oct. 30, 1977).

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## Scope and Contents

Berman's interview of painter Romare Bearden (2 cassettes, 45 page transcript) was conducted 1980 July 31 in Bearden's studio, Long Island City, New York. Bearden discusses his mural commissions; his youth; his time in Paris; working out of the blues tradition; the influence of the South; and changes in his work. He recalls Constantin Brancusi, Jacob Lawrence, Henri Matisse, Duke Ellington, Stuart Davis, and others.

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## Scope and Contents

The interview with painter Jacob Lawrence was conducted 1982 July 20-August 4th (3 sound cassettes, 81 page transcript). Also present is Gwendolyn Knight.

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## Scope and Contents

The interview with Helen Farr Sloan, widow of painter John Sloan, was conducted by Berman on 1988 July 17 for an audience at the Delaware Art Museum. The interview primarily concerns her husband, painter John Sloan including their marriage and life together as well as his life and work before they married, Farr Sloan's education including being a student of John Sloan's, as well as her own experience as a teacher. She briefly discusses art collecting.

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## Scope and Contents

The interview of sculptor Reuben Nakian was conducted 1981 April 1 (1 sound cassette, untranscribed).

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## Scope and Contents

The interview of sculptor Chaim Gross and Renee Gross was conducted 1981 March 7 (2 sound cassettes, untranscribed).

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## Scope and Contents

The collection also includes 13 letters to Berman from art historians and critics, and copies of 2 letters sent, in response to her query about what books they find indispensable to their work. Berman used the information in an article in ARTnews (Nov. 1983). Correspondents include John Szarkowski, Milton Brown, John Canaday, Robert Rosenblum, Julius Held, Theodore Reff, Linda Nochlin, Albert Elsen, James R. Mellow, Lewis Mumford, Dore Ashton, John Walker, and Robert Rosenblum. This material is on microfilm reel 4909.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Museum directors -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews

Names:

Bearden, Romare, 1911-1988  
Breeskin, Adelyn Dohme, 1896-1986  
Brooks, Romaine  
Cassatt, Mary, 1844-1926  
Child, Katherine B.  
Cone, Claribel

Cone, Etta  
Foster, James W., 1920-  
Gross, Chaim, 1904-1991  
Ivins, William Mills, 1881-1961  
Knight, Gwendolyn  
Lawrence, Jacob, 1917-2000  
Nakian, Reuben, 1897-1986  
Rosenthal, Gertrude, 1903-  
Sloan, Helen Farr, 1911-2005  
Sloan, John, 1871-1951  
Stein, Gertrude, 1874-1946  
Toklas, Alice B.

Occupations:

Art historians -- Interviews  
Art historians -- United States -- Interviews