



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Elmer Bischoff

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Elmer Bischoff
<b>Date:</b>	1977 August 10-September 1
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.bischo77
<b>Creator:</b>	Bischoff, Elmer, 1916-1991 (Interviewee) Karlstrom, Paul J. (Interviewer)
<b>Extent:</b>	82 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Elmer Bischoff, 1977 August 10-September 1, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)</a>

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

These interviews are part of the Archives' Oral History Program, started in 1958 to document the history of the visual arts in the United States, primarily through interviews with artists, historians, dealers, critics and others.

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## Biographical / Historical

Elmer Bischoff (1916-1991) was a painter and educator from San Francisco, California.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Elmer Bischoff conducted 1977 August 10-September 1, by Paul J. Karlstrom, for the Archives of American Art.

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## Scope and Contents

Bischoff speaks of his family background; the influence of art teachers and attitudes at the University of California, Berkeley in the 1930s; his years of teaching at the California School of Fine Arts (San Francisco Art Institute), first under the directorship of Douglas MacAgy and then under Ernst Mundt and Gurdon Woods; his fellow faculty members Clyfford Still, David Park, Clay Spohn and Hassel Smith, and their work in abstract expressionism. He recalls some of his most successful students, including Joan Brown, Manuel Neri, and William T. Wiley.

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## Scope and Contents

Bischoff explains his turning away from abstract expressionism toward figurative painting, and cites the influence of David Park. He credits George Staempfli as the first New York art dealer to be interested in Bay Area figurative painting. He discusses the origins of the Bay Area funk movement. He speaks of teaching at the University of California, Berkeley, and reflects on the differences between teaching in a university environment and an art school. He discusses his move away from the figure to large scale abstraction.

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## General

Originally recorded 3 sound tape reels. Reformatted in 2010 as 5 digital wav files. Duration is 5 hr., 24 min.

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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:

- Abstract expressionism
- Art, American
- Figurative art
- Painters -- California -- Interviews

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- Brown, Joan, 1938-1990
- Brown, William Theo, 1919-2012
- Geis, Bill
- Hudson, Robert, 1938-
- MacAgy, Douglas, 1913-
- Neri, Manuel, 1930-
- Park, David, 1911-1960
- San Francisco Art Institute
- Smith, Hassel, 1915-2007
- Spohn, Clay Edgar, 1898-1977
- Still, Clyfford, 1904-1980
- University of California, San Francisco. School of Fine Arts
- Wiley, William T., 1937-2021