



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Robert Blackburn

Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Robert Blackburn
Date:	1970 December 4
Identifier:	AAA.blackb70
Creator:	Blackburn, Robert Hamilton, 1920- (Interviewee) Cummings, Paul (Interviewer)
Extent:	52 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Audio: Oral history interview with Robert Blackburn, 1970 December 4, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This interview is 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.

Biographical / Historical

Robert Blackburn (1920-) was a printmaker from New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Robert Blackburn conducted 1970 December 4, by Paul Cummings, for the Archives of American Art. Blackburn speaks of his early life in Jamaica and New York; the influences of his youth including school, gangs, religion, art, music, and culture; the Harlem Community Art Center; studying with Charles Alston; the difficulties suffered by Black artists trying to gain recognition in a white-dominated art world; attending the Art Students League and studying under Vaclav Vytlačil and Will Barnet; his work with children; his film work at the Harmon Foundation; financial problems; the Printmaking Workshop; attending New York University's School of Visual Arts and the Cooper Union School; blacks in the arts; and the influence of music on his paintings. He recalls Jacob Lawrence, Will Barnet, Vaclav Vytlačil, Wallace Harrison, Tatyana Grosman, Grace Hartigan, Sam Francis, and Robert Rauschenberg.

General

Originally recorded 2 sound tape reels. Reformatted in 2010 as 6 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hr., 28 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- African American artists
- Art and race
- Prints -- Technique

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Barnet, Will, 1911-2012
- Francis, Sam, 1923-1994
- Grosman, Tatyana, 1904-1982
- Harrison, Wallace, 1900-
- Hartigan, Grace
- Lawrence, Jacob, 1917-2000
- Rauschenberg, Robert, 1925-2008
- Vytlacil, Vaclav, 1892-1984

Occupations:

- Printmakers -- New York (State) -- New York