



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Robert Noel Blair

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Robert Noel Blair
Identifier:	AAA.blair94
Date:	1994 November 30-1995 August 27
Creator:	Blair, Robert N. (Robert Noel), 1912-2003 (Interviewee) Brown, Robert F. (Interviewer)
Extent:	2 Items (sound cassettes (2 hrs.); analog.) 66 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Robert Noel Blair, 1994 November 30-1995 August 27, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Robert Noel Blair, 1994 November 30-1995 August 27, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This interview is part of the Archives of American Art 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 administrators.

Available Formats

Transcript is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

Restrictions

This transcript is open for research. Access to the entire audio recording is restricted. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Biographical / Historical

Robert Blair (1912-2003) is a painter, printmaker, and instructor of Buffalo, New York.

Scope and Contents

An interview with Robert Blair conducted 1994 November 30-1995 August 27, by Robert Brown, for the Archives of American Art.

Scope and Contents

Blair talks about his father, a Vermonter, who went to Harvard Law School and became a corporation lawyer in Buffalo, and his mother, a Rochester, New York native, who went to Cornell and taught Greek and Latin in New York State schools before marriage; being an indifferent student until he went to the Albright Art School in Buffalo, although instruction there was perfunctory; attending the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1931-1934), recalling especially his two British drawing teachers, Guthrie and Burns, and Frederick Allen who taught sculpture, and fellow student, Carl Johnson, summers with his family in Vermont and the pleasant primitive farm life; his first teaching job -- Saturday children's classes at the Buffalo Museum of Science and his first exhibitions in Buffalo and New York City, including a show at the Morton Gallery, New York (1940) from which the Metropolitan Museum purchased a large watercolor; his love of using unusual implements to paint with; his service in World War II, in which he was assigned to design training aids and to paint war scenes.

Scope and Contents

Blair continues discussion of his service as an airborne soldier and artist in Belgium and Germany during World War II; returning from the War to direct the Arts Institute of Buffalo and his long friendship with Charles Burchfield; Philip Elliott, painter and teacher at the rival Albright Art School in Buffalo; traveling throughout the US and Mexico, painting wherever he camped; his work and proficiency in watercolor; and the value of figure studies, which he does regularly with other artists.

General

Originally recorded 2 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 8 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hr., 30 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art -- Study and teaching -- Massachusetts -- Boston
Art -- Study and teaching -- New York (State) -- Buffalo
Painters -- New York (State) -- Buffalo -- Interviews
Painting, American
Printmakers -- New York (State) -- Buffalo -- Interviews
World War, 1939-1945 -- Art and the war

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Albright Art School (Buffalo, N.Y.)
Arts Institute of Buffalo
Burchfield, Charles Ephraim, 1893-1967
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. School

Occupations:

Art teachers -- New York (State) -- Buffalo -- Interviews