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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Rena Bransten

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Rena Bransten
Date:	2014 May 29-2015 July 10
Identifier:	AAA.branst14
Creator:	Bransten, Rena, 1933- (Interviewee) Riedel, Mija, 1958- (Interviewer) Viola Frey Oral History Project
Extent:	5 Items (sound files (3 hrs., 57 min.); digital, wav) 99 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Rena Bransten, 2014 May 29-2015 July 10, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Rena Bransten, 2014 May 29-2015 July 10, 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.

Biographical / Historical

Interviewee Rena Bransten (1933-) is an art dealer in San Francisco, California who collected Viola Frey's works of art. Interviewer Mija Riedel (1958-) is an independent scholar in San Francisco, California.

Scope and Contents

An interview with Rena Bransten conducted 2014 May 29- 2015 July 10, by Mija Riedel, for the Archives of American Art's Viola Frey Oral History Project at Bransten's home in San Francisco, California.

Scope and Contents

Bransten speaks of attending the Dalton School; her childhood; her father's interest in illuminated manuscripts; her parents; attending Smith College; attending art museums as a kid; college studies; getting married and moving to California; art history at Berkely; Massimoo Zanetti Beverage; being on various museum boards; differences and similarities in art tastes between her and her husband; going to galleries; Ruth Braunstein Gallery; Quay Ceramics; the Elizabeth Arden Building; gallery locations in San Francisco; ceramics; Ron Nagle; travels and collecting; her daughter Trisha; eclectic collecting; buying with your heart; Vik Muniz; her sons; John Baldessari; the 1970s and 1980s; gallery visitors; video art; Dara Birnbaum; Viola Frey; Hung Liu; touring exhibitions; common threads in shows exhibited; gallery publications; art critics; Viola Frey's life and work; changes in the art world; investment collecting; working with Andy Warhol; art fairs; ARCO; art fair fatigue; online sales; impact of the Internet; Watermark; photography; Dawoud Bey; Birmingham Project; changes in the city; art buying as philanthropy; Creative Growth; Art Dealers Association of America; San Francisco Art Dealers Association; finding artists to exhibit; gallery clientele; gallery assistants; influence of museums; Gustave Courbet; Don Ed Hardy; Ruth Asawa; Black Mountain College; gallery shows that stand out; American art; future of the gallery. In the final session Branston recalls her relationship with Viola Frey; Frey's childhood; Frey's relationship with Betty Woodman; Frey's experimental nature and techniques; and Frey's multiple shows at the Quay Gallery. Bransten also recalls the Smith College Art Museum, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Phyllis Lehmann, Barbara Jakobson, Sarah Charlesworth, Marina Abramovic, Yerba Buena, Betty Asher, Virginia Zabriskie, Ruth Braunstein; Peter Voulkos, Richard Shaw, Dilexi Gallery, Markus Lupertz, Hermann Albert, Peter Chevalier, Thomas Schindler, Tony DeLap, John Caldwell, Stephen Wirtz, John Baldessari, William T. Wiley, Peter Vandenburg, Sandy Shannonhouse, Dara Birnbaum, Jim Campbell, Betty Woodman, Hung Liu, Fred Wilson, Garth Clark, Ann Kohns, Manuel Neri, Rupert Garcia, Judith Golden, Walter Maciel, Vernon Coykendall, John Waters, Doug Hall, Phyllis Kind, Ed Thorpe, Jenny Baie, and Markus Lüpertz.

General

Originally recorded as 6 sound files. Duration is 3 hr., 57 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art dealers -- California -- San Francisco -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Viola Frey Oral History Project