



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Bernarda Bryson Shahn

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Bernarda Bryson Shahn
<b>Date:</b>	1995 July 3
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.bryson95
<b>Creator:</b>	Bryson, Bernarda (Interviewee) Meecham, Pamela J. (Interviewer)
<b>Extent:</b>	39 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Bernarda Bryson Shahn, 1995 July 3, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Bernarda Bryson Shahn, 1995 July 3, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)</a>

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## 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. Funding provided by Midtown-Payson Grant.

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## Biographical / Historical

Bernarda Bryson (1903-2004) was a painter from New Jersey. She was the wife of artist Ben Shahn.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Bernarda Bryson Shahn conducted 1995 July 3, by Pamela J. Meecham, for the Archives of American Art.

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## Scope and Contents

Bryson Shahn talks about Ben Shahn's involvement in the Farm Security Administration's photographic project during the 1930s; her and her husband's involvement with socialism, unions, and the Communist Party during the 1930's; the removal of Diego Rivera's mural from Rockefeller Center; changes in Ben Shahn's critical status as a painter -- particularly during the Red Scare, and relative to the rise of Abstract Expressionism; her own career as

an illustrator; the Jersey Homesteads and Ben Shahn's mural in Roosevelt, New Jersey; as well as her impressions of Italy and Japan.

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## General

Originally recorded on 2 sound cassette tapes. Reformatted in 2010 as 3 digital wav files. Duration is 1 hr., 39 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:

- Women artists
- Women painters
- Women printmakers

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- Rivera, Diego, 1886-1957
- Shahn, Ben, 1898-1969
- United States. Farm Security Administration. Historical Section

### Occupations:

- Illustrators -- New Jersey -- Roosevelt
- Painters -- New Jersey -- Roosevelt
- Printmakers -- New Jersey -- Roosevelt