



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview of Ralph Chessé

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview of Ralph Chessé
Identifier:	AAA.chess64
Date:	1964 October 22
Extent:	28 Pages (Transcript)
Creator:	Chessé, Ralph McChesney, Mary Fuller New Deal and the Arts Oral History Project
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This interview conducted as part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project, which includes over 400 interviews of artists, administrators, historians, and others involved with the federal government's art programs and the activities of the Farm Security Administration in the 1930s and early 1940s.

Restrictions

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

Biographical / Historical

Ralph Chessé (1900-1991) was a mural painter and puppeteer, in San Francisco, California.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Ralph Chessé conducted 1964 October 22, by Mary McChesney for the Archives of American Art.

Scope and Contents

Chessé speaks of his background and early interest in art; experimenting in puppetry; his first involvement with the WPA mural project; working on frescos for Coit Tower; technical aspects of the work; subject

matter for frescos and how it was chosen; the importance of the Federal Art Project in that period in art history; political problems with the Federal Art Project; switching to the Federal Theater Project; some of the work he did for the Federal Theater Project; building and operating marionettes; his work in silkscreen; the WPA's value and contribution. He recalls Lucien Labaudt.

General

Originally recorded on 1 sound tape reel. Reformatted in 2010 as 2 digital wav files. Duration is 1 hr., 11 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Coit Memorial Tower (San Francisco, Calif.)
- Federal aid to the arts
- Mural painting and decoration -- California -- San Francisco
- Muralists -- California -- San Francisco -- Interviews
- Printmakers -- California -- San Francisco -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Federal Art Project (Calif.)
- Federal Theater Project (Calif.)
- Labaudt, Lucien, 1880-1943
- New Deal and the Arts Oral History Project