



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Ben Cunningham

Archives of American Art  
750 9th Street, NW  
Victor Building, Suite 2200  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
Business Number: Phone: 202-633-7950  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Ben Cunningham
<b>Date:</b>	1964 October 24
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.cunnin64
<b>Creator:</b>	Cunningham, Ben, 1904-1975 (Interviewee) Phillips, Harlan B. (Harlan Buddington), 1920-1979 (Interviewer) New Deal and the Arts Oral History Project
<b>Extent:</b>	58 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .

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## 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.

### Available Formats

Transcript: 35mm microfilm reel 3418 available at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

### Restrictions

Transcript: Patrons must use microfilm copy.

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## Biographical / Historical

Ben Cunningham (1904-1975) was a painter, educator, and mural painter in New York, New York.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Ben Cunningham conducted 1964 October 24, by Harlan Phillips for the Archives of American Art.

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## Scope and Contents

Cunningham speaks of his early career in San Francisco during the Depression; the art market there; working as a muralist in the Federal Art Project; political and media problems encountered by the project, including strikes by

workers; the work of the Index of American Design in California; working on naval architecture during World War II; and his philosophies about painting. He recalls Joseph Danysh, William Gaskin, and Hilaire Hiler.

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## General

Originally recorded on 1 sound tape reel. Reformatted in 2010 as 2 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hr., 8 min.

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## General

Sound quality is poor.

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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:

- Art and state
- Federal aid to the arts
- Muralists -- California -- San Francisco -- Interviews

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- Danysh, Joseph A., 1906-1982
- Federal Art Project (Calif.)
- Gaskin, William, 1892-1968
- Hiler, Hilaire, 1898-1966
- Index of American Design
- New Deal and the Arts Oral History Project