Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Rosalyn Drexler

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Rosalyn Drexler
Date:	2017 May 17-June 2
Identifier:	AAA.drexle17
Creator:	Drexler, Rosalyn (Interviewee) Lyon, Christopher (Interviewer)
Extent:	82 Pages (Transcript) 5 Items (Sound recording: 5 sound files (3 hr., 26 min.); digital, wav)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Rosalyn Drexler, 2017 May 17-June 2, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Rosalyn Drexler, 2017 May 17-June 2, 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

Rosalyn Drexler (1926-) is a sculptor, playwright, and novelist in New York, New York. Christopher Lyon (1949-) is a writer in Brooklyn, New York.

Scope and Contents

An interview with Rosalyn Drexler conducted 2017 May 17 and June 2 by Christopher Lyon, for the Archives of American Art, at Garth Greenan Gallery in New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

Drexler discusses her childhood in the Bronx; her experiences studying dance and music; her higher education at Hunter College; attending films and the Yiddish Theater; meeting her husband Sherman Drexler;

her time as a professional wrestler; her memories of traveling to the South and encountering Jim Crow segregation; she describes learning about art from Sherman Drexler and her joint exhibition with Sherman; her early work in sculpture; participating in Happenings with Jim Dine; joining Anita Reuben's gallery; her debut as a playwright; her experience writing "I am the Beautiful Stranger;" the changing public perception of her and being classified as an artist; her decision to become a painter and appropriating images for her work; the influence of S. J. Perelman on her plays; her play about Joseph Cornell and ballerina Allegra Kent, and interviewing Allegra Kent; her recent artwork and preparing for her 2017 show at Garth Greenan Gallery; her artwork from the 1980s and 1990s; her comedy writing and sense of humor. Drexler also recalls Chico Marx, Jack Newfield, Igor Youskevitch, Ivan Karp, Anita Reuben, Lucas Samaras, Richard Gilman, Al Carmines, Amiri Baraka, Barbara Ann Teer, Franz Kline, Elaine De Kooning, Bill de Kooning, Andy Warhol, Jack Kroll, Lawrence Alloway, Tom Hess, Barney Newman, Harold Rosenberg, Susan Sontag, Joe Hirshhorn, Henry Geldzahler, Donald Barthelme, Kornblee Gallery, Eva Hesse, Tom Doyle, William Klein, Marilyn Monroe, Alex Katz, Alice Neel, Basquiat, Saturday Night Live, and Lenny Bruce, among others.

System Details

Recorded on tascam 100MKII 022546.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Happenings (Art)
Segregation -- United States
Women artists
Women painters
Women sculptors
Women wrestlers

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Alloway, Lawrence, 1926-1990
Baraka, Amiri, 1934-2014
Barthelme, Donald
Basquiat, Jean-Michel, 1960-1988
Bruce, Lenny
Carmines, Al
Cornell, Joseph
De Kooning, Elaine
De Kooning, Willem, 1904-1997
Dine, Jim, 1935-
Doyle, Tom
Drexler, Sherman
Garth Greenan Gallery
Geldzahler, Henry
Gilman, Richard, 1923-2006

Hess, Thomas B.
Hesse, Eva, 1936-1970
Hirshhorn, Joseph H.
Hunter College -- Students
Karp, Ivan C., 1926-2012
Katz, Alex, 1927-
Kent, Allegra
Klein, William
Kline, Franz, 1910-1962
Kornblee Gallery
Kroll, Jack
Marx, Chico, 1887-1961
Monroe, Marilyn, 1926-1962
Neel, Alice, 1900-1984
Newman, Barry
Perelman, S. J. (Sidney Joseph), 1904-1979
Reuben Gallery
Rosenberg, Harold, 1906-1978
Samaras, Lucas, 1936-
Sontag, Susan, 1933-2004
Teer, Barbara Ann, 1937-2008
Warhol, Andy, 1928-1987
Youskevitch, Igor, 1912-1994

Occupations:

Authors -- New York (State) -- New York
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
Playwrights -- New York (State) -- New York
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York