



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Don Freeman

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives of American Art |
| Title: | Oral history interview with Don Freeman |
| Date: | 1965 June 4 |
| Identifier: | AAA.freema65 |
| Creator: | Freeman, Don, 1908-1978 (Interviewee) McGlynn, Betty Hoag (Interviewer) New Deal and the Arts Oral History Project |
| Extent: | 1 Sound tape reel (Sound recording; 5 in.) 19 Pages (Transcript) |
| Language: | English . |
| Digital Content: | Digital Content: Oral history interview with Don Freeman, 1965 June 4, Transcript |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

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

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Don Freeman (1908-1978) was an Illustrator from New York, N.Y. Went to New York City at the age of 21. Studied with John Sloan and Harry Wickey at the Art Students League.

Scope and Contents

Interview of Don Freeman conducted 1965 June 4, by Betty Hoag McGlynn, for the Archives of American Art, in his home, in Santa Barbara, Calif. Freeman speaks of his childhood in San Diego with his guardian; his high school years spent in St. Louis at a public school Prineipia (and his teacher Kathryn Cherry); the knowledge of his artistic destiny as a child; his move to New York City in 1929; his time spent working as an unbooked trumpet player for jazz orchestras on Broadway; his formative years at the Art Students League under the guidance of John Sloan;

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the influence of Robert Henri and "Art Spirit;" his decision to do illustrations for the theater section of the Herald Tribune of ongoing performances; his time spent studying with Harry Wickey (etcher and sculptor); his relationship and marriage to wife Lydia as well as description of life in downtown Manhattan immediately following the stock market crash ; time at Art Students League studying along side with Jackson Pollock, Manuel Tolegian, Whitney Darrel; his decision to work for the WPA in

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the graphics department completing lithographs (1933-1934); "Freedom of the Press," a painting completed around the same time and the possible influence of Reginald Marsh; his interest in a project called "Paint for the People" (a public works project for the New York Subway system); time spent illustrating for the WPA theater magazine "The Living Magazine;" his opinions concerning acetate and stone as well as the use of mezzotint; his personal magazine which he published for four years (name unknown); a general summary of his feelings towards the WPA as an artistic force; his separation from the Union Uprisings due to his success within the program;

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his work on "Our Flying Navy" a series of illustrations (now compiled as a book) used for advertisement for the Navy; his participation in the Association of American Artists before his term spent in the Army during WWII; his budding career as a children's books writer and illustrator (Barton Press); his illustrations for William Soroyan's The Human Comedy; his move back west and his son Roy; and his current occupation of giving "Chalk Talks" around the country, speaking with students about art, music, theater.

General

An unrelated interview of Ben Messick conducted by B. Hoag McGlynn is also on this tape.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Artists' materials
- Federal aid to the arts
- Illustration of books
- Illustrators -- California -- Interviews
- Prints -- Technique

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

Art Students League (New York, N.Y.) -- Students
Henri, Robert, 1865-1929
Marsh, Reginald, 1898-1954
New Deal and the Arts Oral History Project
Pollock, Jackson, 1912-1956
Sloan, John, 1871-1951
Tollegian, Manuel J. (Manuel Jerair), 1911-1983
United States. Works Progress Administration
Wickey, Harry