



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Harry Gamboa, Jr

The digital preservation of this interview received Federal support from the Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Harry Gamboa, Jr. and Gronk
Date:	1999 Apr. 1-16
Identifier:	AAA.gamboa99
Creator:	Gamboa, Harry (Interviewee) Rangel, Jeffrey J. (Interviewer) Gronk, 1954- (Interviewee)
Extent:	5 Sound cassettes (Sound recording (270 min.); analog) 90 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Harry Gamboa, Jr, 1999 Apr. 1-16, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Harry Gamboa, Jr, 1999 Apr. 1-16, 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. Funding for the interview and transcription provided by the Smithsonian Institution Latino Initiatives Fund.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Harry Gamboa, Jr. (1951-) is a painter, writer, photographer, and video artist from Los Angeles, Calif.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Harry Gamboa, Jr. conducted 1999 Apr. 1-16, at various cafes in Los Angeles, Calif., by Jeffrey Rangel, for the Archives of American Art. The artist, Gronk, joined the interview for the second session.

Scope and Contents

Photographer, painter, video artist, and writer, Harry Gamboa, Jr. (b. 1951), has been involved in creating visual and performance works that interpret the contemporary urban Chicano culture. A native of Los Angeles, Gamboa began the interview by reflecting on his book *Urban Exile* (University of Minnesota Press, 1998), which he considers only a fragment of his creative work, feeling photography his primary medium. He expressed a need to maintain his identity as a Chicano artist while at the same time trying to balance financial survival, family maintenance, and creative spontaneity. He described growing up in East Los Angeles, a period that tested his personality and developed his quick wit and humor as a means of survival and his sense of being the "participant viewer." He remembers his educational experiences as "highly damaging," due to the physical violence from a few teachers and the stereotyping of Chicanos. His views about the Vietnam War and his disillusionment of the political process which led to a discussion about the Civil Rights Movement and the African-American culture's influence on his work. He emphasized the lack of an awareness by the art community of black and Chicano artists that was underscored in the Armand Hammer Museum's *LA and Noir* [Sunshine and Noir: Los Angeles Art, 1960-1990, at the UCLA/Armand Hammer Art Center] exhibition, 1998.

Scope and Contents

The second session began and ended with Gamboa reflecting on his relationship with his wife and fellow artist, Barbara Carrasco. In the interim, he and Gronk, who joined the interview, discussed the dynamics that brought the artists together in Asco; the differences and competitiveness within the Chicano Arts Movement; and the vulnerabilities of an artist's surviving while trying to maintain an artistic vision. Despite these challenges and an oppressive dominant culture that has not embraced Chicano art, Carrasco have continued as artists because they feel a need to create and to present their work as a means of expanding a perception of reality.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Chicano artists
- Chicano movement
- Latino and Latin American artists
- Photography

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Asco (Group of artists)