



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Sam Gilliam

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Sam Gilliam
<b>Date:</b>	1989 Nov. 4-11 1989 Nov. 4-11
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.gillia89
<b>Creator:</b>	Gilliam, Sam, Jr. (1933-2022) (Interviewee) Forgey, Benjamin (Interviewer)
<b>Extent:</b>	4 Items (Sound recording; sound cassettes) 54 Pages (Transcript) 4 Items (Sound recording; sound cassettes) 54 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Sam Gilliam, 1989 Nov. 4-11, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Sam Gilliam, 1989 Nov. 4-11, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)</a>

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

These interviews are 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 others.

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## Biographical / Historical

Sam Gilliam (1933-2022) was a painter in Washington, D.C.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Sam Gilliam conducted 1989 Nov. 4-11, by Ben Forgey for the Archives of American Art. Gilliam speaks of his decision to come to Washington, D.C., from Louisville, Ky.; his shift from figurative painting to abstract painting; meeting Washington painters Robert Gates and Tom Downing; the "stature" of Tom Downing in the Washington art scene in the 1960s and Walter Hopps' role; influential exhibitions at the Jefferson Place Gallery and the Washington Gallery of Modern Art; being a Washington artist and a black artist; artist/teachers at American University; the Johnson Avenue Workshop grant; his relationship with Rockne Krebs; the history of the Washington Coalition of Artists; the Corcoran Gallery and the Washington Project for the Arts' relationship to Washington artists;

his involvement with the District of Columbia Art Center; teaching; and his working methods. Gilliam also discusses various paintings, processes, materials, ideas and experiments at length. He recalls Gene Davis, Howard Mehring, Ken Noland, Morris Louis, Nesta Dorrance, Alma Thomas, Lou Stovall, Al Nodal, Jock Reynolds, Michael Botwinick, Willem de Looper, Paul Reed, and others.

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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:

- African American artists
- African American painters
- Art -- Technique
- Art -- Washington (D.C.)
- Painting, Modern -- 20th century -- Washington (D.C.)

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- Coalition of Washington Artists
- Corcoran Gallery of Art
- District of Columbia Arts Center, Inc.
- Downing, Thomas, 1928-1985
- Hopps, Walter
- Jefferson Place Gallery
- Krebs, Rockne, 1938-2011
- Washington Gallery of Modern Art (Washington, D.C.)
- Washington Project for the Arts (D.C.)

### Occupations:

- Painters -- Washington (D.C.)