



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Adolph Gottlieb

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives of American Art |
| Title: | Oral history interview with Adolph Gottlieb |
| Identifier: | AAA.gottli67 |
| Date: | 1967 Oct. 25 |
| Extent: | 2 Sound cassettes (Sound recordings (90 min.)) 27 Pages (Transcript) |
| Creator: | Gottlieb, Adolph, 1903-1974 Seckler, Dorothy Gees, 1910-1994 |
| Language: | English . |

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.

Biographical / Historical

Adolph Gottlieb (1903-1974) was a painter from New York, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Adolph Gottlieb conducted 1967 Oct. 25, in New York, by Dorothy Seckler, for the Archives of American Art.

Scope and Contents

Gottlieb speaks of his childhood in New York; his decision to pursue art and its connection to a generational rebellion against traditional middle class values; his interest in art by the age of fifteen; the cultural influence of pop culture and comic strips (Mutt and Jeff); his interrupted high school career at Stuyvesant; his eighteen month stay in Europe (1921) studying in museums and various art schools; his subsequent exposure to Matisse, Picasso, and Leger; his experiences with German Expressionism in Vienna, Munich, Dresden, and Berlin; his return to the states; his attraction to Italian and French Renaissance painting as well as Ingres Courbet, and Delacroix; his time spent attending Saturday classes at the Arts Student League under John Sloan; the influence of John Sloan's cubist side; his foresight of the

transient nature of the Ashcan school; his belief in painting from the imagination and memory; Cezanne's influence insofar as the notion of how to approach the forms of nature in terms of their volume; his instinct to maintain the surface and to keep it flat; his use of muddy, gray, brown, subdued colors, applied in a rich juicy impasto style; his first exhibition with the Art Alliance; his relationship with Rothko and Avery and specifically the heavy influence of Avery on his subject matter after his marriage; his short time working for the WPA in 1936; his self-discovery in Arizona; his literary influences, Pound, Joyce, Proust, 19th century writers, and Russian writers; his return to New York City and his further abstraction and reduction of means; his use of a horizon as the result of a shift in forms; his budding interest in primitive art (particularly African Art); the formation of his pictographs and the influence of the Surrealists and the philosophy of Jung and the collective unconscious; his belief in surface techniques to achieve freshness, much like the automatism; the elimination of compartmentalization in his work in the 50's; his interest in certain opposing images; art as a matter of subjective rather than objective; his more refined work, more colorful, and more subtle work of the mid 50's; his distaste for academic devices; his recent Burst paintings; and his impulse to work on a larger scale.

General

Transferred from original acetate tape reels.

General

Sound quality is poor.

General

The recording ends before the conclusion of the interview.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Abstract expressionism
- Art, Abstract -- New York (State) -- New York
- Art, American
- Ashcan school of art
- Expressionism (Art)
- Painters -- New York (State) -- Interviews
- Surrealism

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

Art Students League (New York, N.Y.) -- Students
Cézanne, Paul, 1839-1906
Rothko, Mark, 1903-1970
Sloan, John, 1871-1951
United States. Works Progress Administration