



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Richard Gray

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Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Richard Gray
Identifier:	AAA.gray07
Date:	2007 Dec. 9
Creator:	Gray, Richard, 1928-2018 (Interviewee) McElhinney, James Lancel, 1952- (Interviewer)
Extent:	1 Item (Sound recording, master: 1 sound disc (1 hr., 45 min.); digital; 2 5/8 in.) 41 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Richard Gray, 2007 Dec. 9, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Richard Gray, 2007 Dec. 9, 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.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Richard Gray (1928-2018) was an art dealer from Chicago, Ill. Interviewer James McElhinney is a painter and educator from New York, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Richard Gray conducted 2007 Dec. 9, by James McElhinney, for the Archives of American Art, at Carlyle Hotel, in New York, N.Y .

Scope and Contents

Gray speaks of being born in Chicago, Ill. and attending high school in Hyde Park; required coursework in art and music; his father's childhood in Poland; attending the University of Illinois in Chicago before transferring to the main campus in Champaign-Urbana; studying architecture but then becoming more interested in art; the influence of an early mentor; joining the air force and being stationed in France in the early 1950s; traveling throughout France, Spain, and Germany; visiting Barcelona to see Antoni Gaudí's architecture; returning to the United States, meeting his wife on a blind date, and marrying her within a year; being moved by the musical and artistic environment of his in-laws' home; owning a manufacturing business for 10 years; restructuring his father's summer resort in Michigan following his death; hosting music festivals and Harry Boris as artist-in-residence at the resort; following Boris's suggestion to open an art gallery in Chicago; his first art purchases from Allan Stone and André Emmerich in New York; his first gallery space off of Michigan Avenue on East Ontario Street in the same building as B.C. Holland and Noah Goldowsky; his second gallery space on Michigan Avenue; showing Color Field artists including Kenneth Noland, Morris Louis, and Jules Olitski; dealers as collectors; seeing himself more as a collector than a dealer at this time in his life; his diverse collection of drawings spanning many time periods; his past practice of buying works of art in shares with other dealers; the competition between art dealers and auction houses; his belief in free-market opportunities; handling the sale of Willem de Kooning's *Woman V*; the gallery's representation of Jaume Plensa and David Klamen; the future direction of the gallery at both the Chicago and New York City locations; the changing market in international art; recently being designated a Living Landmark by the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois; and his strong presence and activity in Chicago's cultural community. Gray also recalls André Emmerich, Andrew Fabricant, Paul Gray, and others.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art -- Collectors and collecting -- Illinois -- Chicago -- Interviews
- Art -- Economic aspects
- Color-field painting

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Boris, Harry
- De Kooning, Willem, 1904-1997
- Emmerich, André
- Fabricant, Andrew
- Gaudí, Antoni, 1852-1926
- Gray, Paul
- Klamen, David, 1961-
- Louis, Morris, 1912-1962
- Noland, Kenneth, 1924-2010
- Olitski, Jules, 1922-2007
- Plensa, Jaume, 1955-
- Stone, Allan
- University of Illinois. -- Student

Occupations:

Art dealers -- Illinois -- Chicago