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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Al Hansen

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Al Hansen
Date:	1973 November 6-13
Identifier:	AAA.hansen73
Creator:	Hansen, Al, 1927-1995 (Interviewee) Cummings, Paul (Interviewer)
Extent:	2 Sound tape reels (Sound recording; 5 in.) 112 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Al Hansen, 1973 November 6-13, Transcript

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.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Al Hansen (1927-1995) was an artist from New York, New York. Founder of Fluxus art movement and one of the first Happenings artists.

Scope and Contents

Interview of Al Hansen conducted 1973 November 6-13, by Paul Cummings, for the Archives of American Art.

Scope and Contents

Hansen traces his personal history, recalling his childhood and early education in Queens; his service in the armed forces; and jobs he held in social work, advertising, off-Broadway theater, and art galleries. He describes taking classes with John Groth at the Art Students League in the 1940s; with Reuben Nakian at Pratt in the 1950s; and with John Cage at the New School in 1958. He also discusses the rise of New York as an art center; his interest in film; his involvement in experimental sound and music; his approach to creating

Happenings and that of other artists; organizing poetry readings at the Epitome Coffee Shop; his Hershey bar wrapper collages; the writing of his book, "A Primer of Happenings and Space Time Art," (New York: Something Else Press 1965); his interactions with Fluxus and George Maciunas; participating in the "Below Zero" show at the Reuben Gallery in 1959; attending the Destruction In Art symposium in London in 1966; and his recent exhibitions in Germany. People he recalls include Tony Smith; Pauline Goldfine [ph]; Dick Higgins; Wolf Vostell; Larry Poons; Allan Kaprow; Claes Oldenburg; Don McCarey [ph]; Jim Dine; George Brecht; Jackson Mac Low; James Waring; Marisol Escobar; Ivan Karp; Bob Watts; George Segal; Judith Dunn; Bob Dunn; Jan Müller; Nam June Paik; Raphael Ortiz; Charlotte Moorman; and Lettie Lou Eisenhauer.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art -- New York (State) -- New York
- Art -- Study and teaching
- Art, American
- Artists -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews
- Fluxus (Group of artists)
- Happenings (Art)

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Art Students League (New York, N.Y.) -- Students
- Brecht, George
- Callahan, Harry M.
- Dine, Jim, 1935-
- Dunn, Bob
- Dunn, Judith
- Eisenhauer, Lette
- Goldfine, Pauline
- Groth, John, 1908-1988
- Higgins, Dick, 1938-1998
- Kaprow, Allan
- Karp, Ivan C., 1926-2012
- Mac Low, Jackson
- Maciunas, George, 1931-1978
- Marisol, 1930-2016
- McCarey, Don
- Moorman, Charlotte
- Muller, Jan, 1922-1958
- Nakian, Reuben, 1897-1986
- New School for Social Research (New York, N.Y.) -- Students
- Oldenburg, Claes, 1929-
- Ortiz, Rafael Montanez
- Paik, Nam June, 1932-
- Poons, Larry
- Pratt Institute -- Students
- Reuben Gallery

Segal, George
Smith, Tony, 1912-1980
Vostell, Wolf, 1932-1998
Waring, James, 1922-1975
Watts, Robert, 1923-1988