



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Rudolph de Harak

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives of American Art |
| Title: | Oral history interview with Rudolph de Harak |
| Date: | 2000 April 27 |
| Identifier: | AAA.harak00 |
| Creator: | Harak, Rudolph de (Interviewee) Larsen, Susan C. (Interviewer) |
| Extent: | Sound recording: 3 sound cassettes (270 min.) : analog + printed material and drawings 34 Pages (Transcript) |
| Language: | English . |
| Digital Content: | Digital Content: Oral history interview with Rudolph de Harak, 2000 April 27, Transcript |

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

Rudolph de Harak (1924-2002) was a graphic designer and painter from Trenton, Maine.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Rudolph de Harak conducted 2000 April 27, by Susan Larsen, for Archives of American Art, in Trenton, Maine. Also received from De Harak at the time of the interview are a photocopy of an article reprinted in Design Culture that de Harak wrote for the American Institute of Graphic Arts; photocopy of an interview transcript with Gyorgy Kepes conducted by de Harak, de Harak's vitae, 2 exhibition catalogs, an article in recognition of de Harak by Daniel Forte, and a pencil drawing and a design with color chart.

Scope and Contents

De Harak discusses his childhood in California and moving to both Chicago and New York in support of his sisters' dancing careers, as well as his education and career. He attended the New York School of Industrial Arts, graduating in 1940, at the age of sixteen. After graduation he worked in an upholstery factory etching zinc plates for printed and painted silk fabric for use in draperies. At age eighteen he was drafted into the Army and served throughout WWII. After the war he returned to California, to be with his sisters and mother. Eventually he found work in a Los Angeles design studio, where he became reacquainted with Hal Tritel, whom he had known in New York. Together, they attended an inspirational lecture by Will Burtin, the art director of Fortune magazine.

Scope and Contents

In 1947, De Harak and Tritel opened their own design firm. In 1950, De Harak moved back the New York in search of more opportunities as a designer. He worked at a variety of tasks including a stint at Seventeen magazine, starting his own design firm, and teaching at Cooper Union School of Visual Arts. His clients included McGraw Hill Publishers, the Atomic Energy Commission, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He also worked on the World Trade Center. Through his work with the Atomic Energy Commission, De Harak became friends with Gyorgy Kepes. He also became friends with Will Burtin and Bill Golden, the designer of the "CBS eye" logo. De Harak also discusses the effect computers have had on design, the influence of Wolfgang Weingart, and his decision to focus on painting.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Designers -- Interviews
- Exhibitions -- Design
- Graphic artists -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

- Drawings
- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Burtin, Will, 1908-
- Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art -- Faculty
- Golden, William, 1911-1959
- Kepes, Gyorgy, 1906-2001
- McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. -- Employees
- Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.)
- Tritel, Hal
- U.S. Atomic Energy Commission
- Weingart, Wolfgang, 1941-
- World Trade Center (New York, N.Y.) -- Design

Occupations:

Painters -- Interviews