



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Alanna Heiss

This interview is part of the Elizabeth Murray Oral History of Women in the Visual Arts Project, funded by the A G Foundation.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Alanna Heiss
Identifier:	AAA.heiss10
Date:	2010 June 15-October 28
Creator:	Heiss, Alanna (Interviewee) McElhinney, James Lancel, 1952- (Interviewer) Elizabeth Murray Oral History of Women in the Visual Arts Project
Extent:	80 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Alanna Heiss, 2010 June 15-October 28, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Alanna Heiss, 2010 June 15-October 28, 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.

Biographical / Historical

Alanna Heiss (1943-) is director of Art International Radio in New York, New York. James McElhinney (1952-) is an artist and educator in New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Alanna Heiss conducted 2010 June 15 and October 28, by James McElhinney, for the Archives of American Art's Elizabeth Murray Oral History of Women in the Visual Arts project, at Art International Radio, on Leonard Street, in New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

Heiss speaks of the Clocktower Gallery and the AIR offices; New York galleries and museums and the economic depression of the 1970s; art shows in Germany, France, Switzerland, and England and the role of foreign and West Coast curators in New York shows during the 1960s; founding the Institute for Art and Urban Resources with Brendan Gill; her lack of interest in collecting and the problems she feels it poses

for organizations showing art; her attitudes about displaying art in the 1970s; growing up in a small town in Southern Illinois; spending summers as a child in South Dakota; her musical training; art in relation to Midwestern cultural values; her work on the exhibition "Stalin's Choice: Soviet Socialist Realism, 1932-1956" in 1993; her degree in music and the philosophy of aesthetics from Lawrence University; taking classes at the University of Chicago; moving to New York and deciding to focus on visual arts; her time in Europe and the various jobs she took while abroad including teaching, inspecting monuments for the Society for Ancient Buildings and Monuments, writing about animals, selling and transporting used cars, and serving as an artist liaison; and the exhibitions she saw during her travels.

Scope and Contents

Heiss also discusses trips she made across the United States after returning from Europe; working as a band road crew manger; her work in 1993 on the John Cage tribute show for the Venice Biennale called "Il Suono Rapido delle Cose" and the album produced in conjunction with the show called Caged/Uncaged - A Rock/Experimental Homage To John Cage; her marriage to the artist Jene Highstein and their friendships with the artists Richard Nonas and Gordon Matta-Clark; her return to New York from Europe around 1970 and her use of old or abandoned real estate as locations for contemporary art exhibitions; her first show, "Under the Brooklyn Bridge" in 1971; founding PS1; her work as a parole officer and her exposure to the culture of Harlem; the various shows held at PS1; urban art spaces in New York including the New Museum and the Coney Island Sculpture Museum; her exhibition space on Bleecker Street in New York; her disenchantment with the idea of community art; her work with Tom Finkelpearl; the way she publicized exhibitions; the underground culture of the 1970s; and the relationship between the Museum of Modern Art and PS1 and their eventual merger.

General

Originally recorded on 1 sound disc. Reformatted in 2010 as 4 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hr., 39 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Women arts administrators

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Biennale di Venezia
Callahan, Harry M.
Clocktower Gallery
Elizabeth Murray Oral History of Women in the Visual Arts Project
Finkelpearl, Tom
Gill, Brendan, 1914-1997
Highstein, Jene, 1942-2013
Institute for Art and Urban Resources
Lawrence University

Matta-Clark, Gordon, 1943-1978
Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.)
New Museum (New York, N.Y.)
Nonas, Richard, 1936-
P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center
University of Chicago -- Students

Occupations:

Arts administrators -- New York (State) -- New York
Curators -- New York (State) -- New York
Gallery directors -- New York (State) -- New York