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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Joseph A. Helman

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical	1
Scope and Contents	1
Names and Subjects	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Joseph A. Helman
Date:	2010 January 4
Identifier:	AAA.helman10
Creator:	Helman, Joseph A. (1937) (Interviewee) McElhinney, James Lancel, 1952- (Interviewer)
Extent:	4 Items (Sound recording: 4 wav files (2 hr., 19 min.); digital) 53 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Joseph A. Helman, 2010 January 4, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Joseph A. Helman, 2010 January 4, 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.

Available Formats

Transcript is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

Biographical / Historical

Joseph A. Helman (1937-) is an art dealer and collector in New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Joseph A. Helman conducted 2010 January 4, by James McElhinney, for the Archives of American Art, at Helman's home in New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

Helman recalls three major events from his early life--the exhibition "Masterpieces from the Berlin Museums: 1948-1949," the film "Lust for Life," and collecting--that led to his career as an art dealer; buying his first painting, which was a Jasper Johns work; meeting the art dealer Leo Castelli; opening his first gallery in St. Louis in 1969; selling his gallery to Ronald Greenberg and moving to Italy with his family; attending the Sotheby's auction of the Robert C. Scull Collection in 1973; teaming up with Irving Blum to open the Blum Helman Gallery in New York City; organizing exhibitions of established and emerging artists. Helman speaks about his relationship with Emily Rauh Pulitzer and the St. Louis Art Museum; his Happening with Allan Kaprow; the story behind Claes Oldenburg's drawing Tongue Cloud, over St. Louis, 1975; discovering the work of Ralston Crawford; introducing American art to Spain. In addition, Helman discusses the contemporary art market; collectors and the process of collecting; and the redefinition of Pop art to include British and American artists of the 1980s. Throughout the interview Helman mentions the various artists he has represented, exhibited or collected such as Richard Serra, Robert Rauschenberg, Josef Albers, Roy Lichtenstein, Ellsworth Kelly, Andy Warhol, Frank Stella, Ronald Davis, and Bryan Hunt.

General

Originally recorded on 1 sound disc. Reformatted in 2010 as 4 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hr., 19 min.

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 -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews
- Art -- Economic aspects
- Art dealers -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews
- Art, American -- Spain
- Happenings (Art)
- Pop art

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Albers, Josef
- Blum Helman Gallery
- Blum, Irving, 1930-
- Castelli, Leo
- Crawford, Ralston, 1906-1978
- Davis, Ronald, 1937-
- Greenberg, Ronald K.
- Johns, Jasper, 1930-
- Kaprow, Allan
- Kelly, Ellsworth, 1923-
- Lichtenstein, Roy, 1923-1997

Oldenburg, Claes, 1929-
Pulitzer, Emily Rauh
Rauschenberg, Robert, 1925-2008
Saarinen, Eero, 1910-1961
Scull, Robert C.
Serra, Richard, 1938-
Sotheby's (Firm)
St. Louis Art Museum
Stella, Frank
Warhol, Andy, 1928-1987

Places:

Italy -- description and travel