



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Wilhelmina Holladay

Funding for this interview provided by ArtTable, Inc.

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/>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Scope and Contents.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Wilhelmina Holladay
Date:	2005 Aug. 17-2005 Sept. 23
Identifier:	AAA.hollad05
Creator:	Holladay, Wilhelmina Cole, 1922- (Interviewee) Wasserman, Krystyna (Interviewer)
Extent:	4 Sound discs (Sound recording, master (3 hr., 51min.); digital; 2 5/8 in.) 57 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Wilhelmina Holladay, 2005 Aug. 17-2005 Sept. 23, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Wilhelmina Holladay, 2005 Aug. 17-2005 Sept. 23, 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

Wilhelmina Holladay (1922-) is the founder of the National Museum of Women in the Arts from Washington, D.C. Krystyna Wasserman (1938-) is the director of the Library and Research Center at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Wilhelmina Holladay conducted 2005 Aug. 17-Sept. 23, by Krystyna Wasserman, for the Archives of American Art, at Holladay's home, in Washington, D.C.

Scope and Contents

Holladay speaks of her childhood in upstate New York, and the influence of her grandparents, especially her grandmother, Gertrude Strong, on her sense of beauty and aesthetics; her first exposure to women artists, through the work of Rosa Bonheur and Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun; going to college at Elmira College,

majoring in business and art history; her mother, who she describes as a "free spirit"; coming to Washington, D.C., almost by accident, after passing a civil service exam during the war; various jobs in Washington, including working for General Hausman at the Air Force adjustment and for the Chinese Embassy; working for Madame Chiang Kai-shek in New York as her social secretary; meeting her husband, Wallace Holladay, at a housewarming party in Washington;

Scope and Contents

Wallace designing and building a home for them in McLean, Va., and raising their children there; working at the gift shop at the National Gallery of Art, and as part of the board of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, her first experiences with a career in the art world; beginning her renowned collection of work by women artists while living in McLean, including the work of Sofonisba Anguissola, Artemisia Gentileschi, and Angelica Kauffman; meeting with Nancy Hanks and having her first discussions about the possibility of a museum devoted to women artists; developing a plan and an advisory committee for the museum, and purchasing a space on New York Avenue, now the headquarters of the National Museum for Women in the Arts; the great success of the museum's opening exhibition in 1987, after years of renovation; the importance of the state committees and international committees as an outreach of the museum; the importance of a sharp focus in developing her collection;

Scope and Contents

her favorite exhibitions at the museum, including exhibitions on Grandma Moses, Berthe Morisot, Georgia O'Keeffe, Frida Kahlo, Emily Carr, and Julie Taymor ("Grandma Moses in the 21st Century," March 15 to June 10, 2001; "Berthe Morisot: An Impressionist and her Circle," January 14, 2005 - May 8, 2005; "Places of Their Own: Emily Carr, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Frida Kahlo," February 8 to May 12, 2002; "Julie Taymor: Playing with Fire," November 16, 2000, to February 4, 2001); educational programs she has developed within the museum; and her hopes for the museum's future. She recalls Howard Ludington, Marion Campbell, Jen Zien Huang, Ian Woodner, Ted Sorenson, Joel Macy, Hester Beall Provensen, Harry Lunn, Louise Nevelson, Cynthia Helms, Mike Ainslie, Roma Crocker, Helga Carter, Claire Getty, Elizabeth Campbell, Eleanor Tuft, Linda Nochlin, Gwen John, 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
Women artists

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

National Museum of Women in the Arts (U.S.)

Occupations:

Art patrons -- Washington (D.C.)
Collectors -- Washington (D.C.)

Interior designers
Museum directors -- Washington (D.C.)