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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Alison Knowles

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 Alison Knowles
Date:	2010 June 1-2
Identifier:	AAA.knowle10
Creator:	Knowles, Alison, 1933- (Interviewee) Richards, Judith Olch (Interviewer) Elizabeth Murray Oral History of Women in the Visual Arts Project
Extent:	86 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Alison Knowles, 2010 June 1-2, 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.

Biographical / Historical

Alison Knowles (1933-) is an artist and a founding member of Fluxus in New York, N.Y. Judith Olch Richards (1947-) is a former director of iCI in New York, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Alison Knowles conducted 2010 June 1-2, by Judith Olch Richards, for the Archives of American Art's Elizabeth Murray Oral History of Women in the Visual Arts Project, at Knowles' home and studio, in New York, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

Knowles speaks of her family background; her father's (an English professor) influence on her education; her love of nature and isolation as a young girl; her French studies at Middlebury College; her transfer to Pratt Institute to study art; the social and academic environment at Pratt; her inclinations towards abstraction; her first marriage to Jim Ericson; her first studio at 423 Broadway; her early jobs as a commercial artist; her first gallery show at Nonagon, in 1958, and how she subsequently burned the paintings in that show; her second marriage to Dick Higgins in 1960; her Judson Gallery Show in 1962 and how she subsequently

discarded those works; her involvement in the Fluxus group; her involvement with the "Cage class," and its early performances; her collaboration with John Cage on the book, "Notations" (1968); her collaboration with Marcel Duchamp on a print (1967); the circumstances surrounding her performance piece, "Make a Salad" (1962), her travels through Europe with Higgins; the birth of her twins; her computerized poetic piece and installation, "House of Dust" (1967) and how it was later vandalized; her move to Los Angeles to teach at CalArts; the rebuilding of "House of Dust" at CalArts; her move back to New York; the processes leading up to several projects and collaborations including "Loose Pages," "Big Book," "Bread and Water," and more; where she finds her inspiration; her thoughts on performance art; her studio environment in Barrytown, N.Y.; the influence and support of Germany on her work and Fluxus in general; her recent work, including "Identical Lunch"; and current challenges she faces as an artist.

Scope and Contents

She recalls Richard Lindner, Adolph Gottlieb, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Judy Chicago, Josef Albers, Dorothy Podber, Ray Johnson, Dick Higgins, Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, Klaus Schönig, Jon Hendricks, Gilbert Silverman, George Maciunas, George Brecht, Jack Mac Low, Yoko Ono, Mieko Shiomi, Takako Saito, Joe Jones, Marcel Duchamp, Daniel Spoerri, Richard Hamilton, Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Helmut Becker, Coco Gordon, Jim Tenney, Cornelia Lauf, Rirkrit Tirvanija, Allan Kaprow, Simone Forte, Carolee Schneemann, Richard Teitelbaum, Miriam Schapiro, Miguel Abrau, James Fuentes, Cyrilla Wozenter, Kathy Kuehn, Ryszard Wasko.

General

Originally recorded on 5 mini discs. Duration is 5 hr., 45 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Fluxus (Group of artists)
- Performance art
- Women artists
- Women performance artists

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Albers, Josef
- Brecht, George
- California Institute of the Arts -- Faculty
- Callahan, Harry M.
- Chicago, Judy, 1939-
- De Kooning, Willem, 1904-1997
- Duchamp, Marcel, 1887-1968
- Elizabeth Murray Oral History of Women in the Visual Arts Project
- Gordon, Coco, 1938-

Gottlieb, Adolph, 1903-1974
Hamilton, Richard, 1922-
Hendricks, Jon
Higgins, Dick, 1938-1998
Johnson, Ray, 1927-1995
Jones, Joe, 1909-1963
Kaprow, Allan
Kuehn, Kathy
Lauf, Cornelia
Lindner, Richard, 1901-1978
Mac Low, Jackson
Maciunas, George, 1931-1978
Middlebury College -- Students
Moorman, Charlotte
Ono, Yōko
Paik, Nam June, 1932-
Pollock, Jackson, 1912-1956
Pratt Institute. Art School -- Students
Rauschenberg, Robert, 1925-2008
Saito, Takako, 1929-
Schapiro, Miriam, 1923-2015
Schneemann, Carolee, 1939-
Schöning, Klaus
Shiomi, Mieko, 1909-1948
Silverman, Gilbert
Spoerri, Daniel, 1930-
Teitelbaum, Richard
Tenney, James
Waśko, Ryszard

Occupations:

Conceptual artists -- New York (State) -- New York

Functions:

Artists' studios