



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with James Lechay

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with James Lechay
Identifier:	AAA.lechay98
Date:	1998 July 9-Aug. 26
Creator:	Lechay, James (Interviewee) Brown, Robert F. (Interviewer)
Extent:	70 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with James Lechay, 1998 July 9-Aug. 26, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with James Lechay, 1998 July 9-Aug. 26, 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.

Restrictions

This transcript is open for research. Access to the entire audio recording is restricted. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Biographical / Historical

James Lechay (1907-2001) was a painter from Wellfleet, Mass.

Scope and Contents

Interview of James Lechay, conducted by Robert F. Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution at Lechay's home in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, on July 9-Aug. 26, 1998.

Scope and Contents

Lechay speaks of his early childhood in the Bronx, N.Y.; copying paintings at the Metropolitan Museum under the tutelage of his elder brother Myron; discontinuing his study of psychology at the University of Illinois in 1929 to return to NYC to paint; taking odd jobs to counter his extreme poverty in the early 1930s; his first exhibition at Another Place (1936), a gallery run by De Hirsh Margules; praise from David Siqueiros, the Mexican muralist; his first trip to Provincetown (1930); exhibiting several times at the Whitney Museum (and others) but not at MoMA; touring NYC galleries on Fridays; meeting Marsden Hartley and Alfred Stieglitz; his friendship with Arshile Gorky; serving as a juror for the 1940s Momentum exhibition with Jackson Pollock and Max Weber; teaching at the University of Iowa in 1945, succeeding Philip Guston; his luck in having, since 1935, a New York dealer; his work as self-referential; being repelled by art fashions and not compromising his work in order to sell; the appearance of simplicity in his work. Lechay also recalls Raphael and Moses Soyer, Abraham Walkowitz, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 2 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 4 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hrs., 17 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Painters -- Massachusetts -- Wellfleet -- Interviews
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Gorky, Arshile, 1904-1948
Hartley, Marsden, 1877-1943
Lechay, Myron, 1898-1972
Margules, De Hirsh, 1899-1965
Pollock, Jackson, 1912-1956
Siqueiros, David Alfaro
Stieglitz, Alfred, 1864-1946
Weber, Max, 1881-1961