



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with James Magee

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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/>

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with James Magee
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.magee16
<b>Date:</b>	2016 September 29-30
<b>Creator:</b>	Magee, James R. (Interviewee) Stieber, Jason, 1973- (Interviewer)
<b>Extent:</b>	11 Items (sound files (4 hrs., 16 min.); digital, wav) 73 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with James Magee, 2016 September 29-30, Transcript</a>

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## 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.

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## Biographical / Historical

James Magee (1946- ) is a painter, sculptor, and creates architectural works of art in El Paso, Texas. Jason Stieber (1973- ) is the National Collector for the Archives of American Art.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview with James Magee conducted 2016 September 29-30, by Jason Stieber, for the Archives of American Art, at Magee's home in El Paso, Texas.

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## Scope and Contents

Magee speaks of his childhood in Michigan; introduction to art in his grandfather's house; memories of his family of origin, discussing religion and music; learning to read in school; sports, running, football, and friendships; Alma College: studying French, poetry, history; travels in high school and college to North Ireland, West Africa; attending University of Pennsylvania Law School [Penn Law]; his father's illness and his

own misdiagnosis of M.S.; painting while at Penn Law; travel to Corsica and Paris; Working as assistant to artist Caroline Lee; living in a French monastery; learning and thinking about homosexuality; moving to New York in 1972; the gay scene post-Stonewall; cruising; working and living in Staten Island; living in Manhattan in the Flower District; driving a cab; moving upstate to a former summer camp; working with mentally disabled adults; welding; opera design; working for the UN on bills about Conscientious Objection and the Seabed Initiative; choosing his pseudonym J.R. McCoy; moving from Upstate New York to Texas; working on an oil rig; finding land to create his installation complex the Hill, in El Paso, Texas; concurrently returning to New York City to do legal work at the U.N. and to volunteer for the poor; building the Hill; describes the identities and personas of his alter egos, Annabel Livermore and Horace Mayfield; being diagnosed as HIV Positive; surgery and amputation of his legs; public interest in his work; scholarship about his work; shows and collaborations in sound art and poetry; his romantic relationships; his desired legacy of his work; and his poems or "titles." Magee also recalls Darthea Speyer Galerie; James Rechy; Paterson Sims; Rod McCall; Tommy Koh; Rudy Weingartner; Dr. Richard Brettell; Camilla Carr; Bob Ostertag; Doug Cohen.

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## General

Originally recorded as 11 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hr., 16 min.

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

Painters -- Texas -- Interviews  
Sculptors -- Texas -- Interviews

### Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Sound recordings