



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Mary Fuller McChesney

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Mary Fuller McChesney
Identifier:	AAA.mcches94
Date:	1994 Sept. 28
Creator:	McChesney, Mary Fuller (Interviewee) Landauer, Susan (Interviewer) Women in the Arts in Southern California Oral History Project
Extent:	145 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Mary Fuller McChesney, 1994 Sept. 28, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Mary Fuller McChesney, 1994 Sept. 28, 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. Funding for this interview was provided by the Margery and Harry Kahn Philanthropic Fund of the Jewish Communal Fund of New York.

Available Formats

Available online.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Mary Fuller McChesney (1922-) is a sculptor and art historian of San Francisco and Petaluma, Calif.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Mary Fuller McChesney conducted 1994 Sept. 28, by Susan Landauer, for the Archives of American Art, Women in the Arts in Southern California Oral History Project, at the artist's home, on Sonoma Mountain, Calif.

Scope and Contents

Fuller McChesney discusses her childhood and growing up during the Depression; her student days at the University of California, Berkeley; the political response on the campus to WWII and the Japanese interment; her experience working as a welder in the shipyards which she considers her introduction to sculpture; her introduction to the art community in San Francisco through the cooperative Artists' Guild Gallery; her association with the Abstract Expressionists at the California School of Fine Arts in the 1940s; her foray into writing fiction and her success as a mystery writer; her work on the Archives of American Art's oral history project documenting the WPA art project in California; her first significant publication on the San Francisco School of Abstract Expressionism, *Period of Exploration*, and the interviews she conducted in the mid-late 1960s for the project.

Scope and Contents

She describes her attitudes and philosophies about art; living at Point Richmond with her husband Robert McChesney, Edward Corbett, Hassel Smith, and poet Weldon Kees during the late 1940s; her impressions of the Cedar Bar and New York artists during the mid-late 1960s; her own artistic evolution and career as a sculptor; the intellectual and artistic sources of her work; her subjects and techniques; her public commissions; her audience and market; and her experiences and perspectives as a woman artist and feminist. She recalls Edward Corbett, Willem De Kooning, Richard Diebenkorn, Weldon Kees, Douglas MacAgy, Bea Mandelman, Conrad Marca-Relli, Agnes Martin, Robert McChesney, David Park, Ad Reinhardt, Louis Ribak, Hassel Smith, Clay Spohn, Clyfford Still, and Esteban Vicente.

General

Originally recorded on 2 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 4 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hrs., 58 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Abstract expressionism
- Art, Modern -- 20th century -- California -- San Francisco
- Women art historians
- Women artists
- Women sculptors

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Corbett, Edward, 1919-
- De Kooning, Willem, 1904-1997
- Diebenkorn, Richard, 1922-1993
- Kees, Weldon, 1914-1955

MacAgy, Douglas, 1913-
Mandelman, Beatrice
Marca-Relli, Conrad, 1913-2000
Martin, Agnes, 1912-2004
McChesney, Robert, 1913-2008
Park, David, 1911-1960
Reinhardt, Ad, 1913-1967
Ribak, Louis, 1902-1979
Smith, Hassel, 1915-2007
Spohn, Clay Edgar, 1898-1977
Still, Clyfford, 1904-1980
Vicente, Esteban, 1903-2001
Women in the Arts in Southern California Oral History Project

Occupations:

Art historians -- California -- San Francisco
Sculptors -- California -- San Francisco