



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Esther McCoy

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Esther McCoy
Identifier:	AAA.mccoy87
Date:	1987 June 7-Nov. 14
Creator:	McCoy, Esther (Interviewee) Giovannini, Joseph (Interviewer)
Extent:	97 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Esther McCoy, 1987 June 7-Nov. 14, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Esther McCoy, 1987 June 7-Nov. 14, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

These interviews are part of the Archives' 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 others.

Biographical / Historical

Esther McCoy (1904-1989) was an architectural historian from Santa Monica, California. McCoy was interested in both Italian and Mexican architecture as well as the folk art and crafts of Mexico and South America. Although her professional interests ranged from writing fiction to studying the folk architecture and crafts of Mexico, McCoy achieved her most notable success for her numerous articles, books, and exhibitions about Southern California architecture and the architects associated with the modernist movement.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Esther McCoy conducted 1987 June 7-Nov. 14, by Joseph Giovannini, for the Archives of American Art.

Scope and Contents

McCoy speaks of her childhood and early education; moving to New York in the 1920s; meeting and getting to know various writers including Theodore Dreiser; beginning her own writing career; her involvement in radical politics; the beginning of her interest in architecture; working as a free-lance writer; working with

the builder, Tim Robert, as a draftsman; writing a novel about architecture; southern California's role in the development of modernism; writing for magazines in the 1940s; writing several books on architecture, including one on Richard Neutra; current trends in architecture.

General

Originally recorded on 8 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 15 digital wav files. Duration is 7 hrs., 22 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Architectural writing -- California
- Architecture -- California
- Latino and Latin American artists

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Dreiser, Theodore, 1871-1945
- Neutra, Richard Joseph, 1892-1970
- Robert, Tim

Occupations:

- Architectural historians -- California -- Interviews