



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Videos and Slides on Dilmus Hall, Mary T. Smith, and J.B. Murry, circa 1984-1986, at the Archives of American Art

Rayna Andrews

Funding for the processing of this collection
was provided by the Henry Luce Foundation.

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Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
Business Number: Phone: 202-633-7950
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Videos and slides on Dilmus Hall, Mary T. Smith, and J.B. Murry
Date:	circa 1984-1986
Identifier:	AAA.mcwijudi
Creator:	McWillie, Judith
Extent:	0.4 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The videos and slides on African American folk artists Dilmus Hall, Mary T. Smith, and J.B. Murry measure 0.4 linear feet and date from circa 1984 to 1986. The collection includes recorded interviews conducted by art historian Judith McWillie with the artists about their lives and work, and color slides of Dilmus Hall and Mary T. Smith with their work.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Videos and slides on Dilmus Hall, Mary T. Smith, and J.B. Murry were donated to the Archives of American Art by Judith McWillie in 1986 and 1987.

Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art are J.B. Murray drawings, 1985 on microfilm reel 3667.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Rayna Andrews in 2018 with funding from the Henry Luce Foundation.

Preferred Citation

Videos and slides on Dilmus Hall, Mary T. Smith, and J.B. Murry, circa 1984-1986. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C., Research Center. Use of audiovisual recordings with no duplicate copies requires advance notice.

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Biographical / Historical

Judith McWillie is an artist, art historian, and professor emeritus of drawing and painting at the Lamar Dodd School of Art of the University of Georgia. Much of her work focuses on African American artists.

Dilmus Hall (1900-1987) was a self-taught African American artist. Born in Georgia in 1900, he joined the United States Army Medical Corps in 1917 and served in Europe as a stretcher-bearer during World War I. After he returned to Georgia, he worked as a waiter and a fabricator of concrete blocks, retiring in 1961 to devote himself to art. Hall decorated his house and yard in Athens, Georgia with sculpted animals, devils, and humans, often based on biblical themes. He has also produced hundreds of drawings in a cartoon-like style.

Mary Tillman Smith (1904-1995) was an African American self-taught painter in Mississippi. Her work was often created on readily-available materials such as plywood and corrugated tin. Her work is included in collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

J.B. (John Bunion) Murry (also Murray) (1908-1988) was a self-taught African American artist in Georgia. He worked as a sharecropper for the majority of his life. At the age of 70 he experienced a religious vision and began painting, producing an extensive body of work in ten years. Murry was unable to read or write English, but developed his own script which he incorporated into his paintings. His work is included in collections at the American Folk Art Museum and the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Scope and Contents

The videos and slides on African American folk artists Dilmus Hall, Mary T. Smith, and J.B. Murry measure 0.4 linear feet and date from circa 1984 to 1986. The collection includes recorded interviews conducted by art historian Judith McWillie with the artists about their lives and work, and color slides of Dilmus Hall and Mary T. Smith with their work.

The materials related to Dilmus Hall include a 1984 interview (dubbed in 1986) in which Hall covers many topics ranging from his childhood to religious influences in his work, as well as 41 color slides of Hall, his home, and his work.

Materials related to Mary T. Smith and J.B. Murry include an interview with Mary T. Smith in December 1986 and one with J.B. Murry in May 1986, both dubbed onto the same tape. Also included are 10 color slides of Mary T. Smith and her artwork.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in two series.

- Series 1: Material Related to Dilmus Hall, circa 1984-1986 (Box 1; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 2: Material Related to Mary T. Smith and J.B. Murry, 1986 (Box 1; 0.2 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- African American art -- African influences
- African American artists
- Folk artists
- Sculptors
- Self-taught artists
- Women artists

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Slides (photographs)
- Video recordings

Names:

- Hall, Dilmus, 1900-1987
- Murry, J. B. (John B.), 1908-1988
- Smith, Mary T. (Mary Tillman), 1904-1995

Occupations:

- Art historians -- Georgia

Container Listing

Series 1: Material Related to Dilmus Hall, circa 1984-1986

0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: In a June 1984 interview (in two parts, dubbed 1986), Hall speaks of his childhood; military service in WWI; his travels in Europe; his use of tree bark, cement, wood, tin, and other materials; his friendship with Andy Nasisse; and his impression of an exhibition at Nexus in Atlanta. He also preaches from the Bible and comments on African and Southern Christian influences on his work and on the narrative content of his drawings. Slides show Hall, his home yard, and his artwork.

Box 1, Folder 1 Dilmus Hall, June 1984 Part I and Dilmus Hall, June 1984 Part II Interview, 1986
2 Videocassettes (U-matic)

Box 1, Folder 2 Slides of Dilmus Hall and His Work, undated

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Series 2: Material Related to Mary T. Smith and J.B. Murry, 1986

0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Brief interviews with Mary T. Smith in Hazelhurst, Mississippi (December 1986) and J.B. Murry in Warren County, Georgia (May 1986), on one tape. The collection includes two copies of this recording. Also included are 10 color slides of Mary T. Smith and her artwork.

Box 1, Folder 3	Interviews with Mary T. Smith and J.B. Murry by Judy McWillie, 1986 2 Videocassettes (U-matic) Notes: Two interviews are included on one tape. The December 1986 interview with Mary T. Smith interview is followed by the May 1986 interview with J.B. Murry. The interviews were "sketch" edited together. There are two tapes in this series, one of which is a dub of the first.
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Box 1, Folder 4	Slides of Mary T. Smith and Her Work, undated
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