



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Franco Mondini-Ruiz

This interview is part of the series "Recuerdos Orales: Interviews of the Latino Art Community in Texas," supported by Federal funds for Latino programming, administered by the Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives.

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical	1
Scope and Contents	1
Names and Subjects	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Franco Mondini-Ruiz
Date:	2004 July 7-8
Identifier:	AAA.mondin04
Creator:	Mondini-Ruiz, Franco, 1961- (Interviewee) Cordova, Cary (Interviewer) Recuerdos Orales: Interviews of the Latino Art Community in Texas
Extent:	93 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Franco Mondini-Ruiz, 2004 July 7-8, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Franco Mondini-Ruiz, 2004 July 7-8, 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.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Franco Mondini-Ruiz (1961-) is an artist in New York. Legal name is Gino Francisco Mondini. Interviewer Cary Cordova (1970-) is an art historian from Austin, Tex.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Franco Mondini-Ruiz conducted 2004 July 7-8, by Cary Cordova, for the Archives of American Art, in Alameda and San Antonio, Tex.

Scope and Contents

Mondini speaks of his parents' disparate backgrounds; his repressed childhood in Boerne, Tex.; his family's electronics store; discovering that his brother was actually his half-brother; attending undergrad and law school at St. Mary's in San Antonio, Tex.; his Catholic rearing; raising his Latino consciousness during and after law school; his life as a successful lawyer; his ingratiation into both rich white and Latino cultures; his partying and coming-out as a gay man; his making of art as a counterpoint to his office work; advice for young Latino artists; the importance of cheap art; exoticizing of Mexican culture by Anglos; quitting law and his experience living in Mexico City; and being diagnosed with HIV. Mondini-Ruiz also speaks of opening his Infinito Botanica and how he operated it; American drug culture; San Antonio's cityscape and his "utopic" hope for it; his "Blue Star on Houston" exhibition; drug use; his show at Bard College as his big break; living with Alejandro Diaz; homosexual and Mexican rococo aesthetics; his exhibit at the 2000 Whitney Biennial and moving to New York City; the importance of found art; the universality of class and race struggles; the problems with over-materialization of artwork; his "Ballroom" show in Marfa, Tex. and the issues confronting that city's arts patronage; his making of the "Spurs Installation"; his new anti-materialistic mindset; and the patterns within his career. Mondini-Ruiz also recalls Michael Tracy, Ito Romo, Rolando Briseno, Sandra Cisneros, Jesse Amado, Donald Judd, Frederieke Taylor, Julia Herzberg, Danny Lozano, Maaretta Jaukkuri, Tracey Moffat, Mike Casey, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 5 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 9 digital wav files. Duration is 5 hrs., 12 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art -- Technique
- Artists (LGBTQ)
- Gay artists
- Hispanic American artists

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Amado, Jesse, 1951-
- Briseño, Rolando, 1952-
- Casey, Mike
- Cisneros, Sandra
- Diaz, Alejandro
- Herzberg, Julia P.
- Jaukkuri, Maaretta
- Judd, Donald, 1928-1994
- Lozano, Danny
- Moffatt, Tracey

Recuerdos Orales: Interviews of the Latino Art Community in Texas
Romo, Ito, 1961-
Taylor, Frederieke
Tracy, Michael, 1943-

Occupations:

Lawyers -- Texas -- Interviews