



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Robert Motherwell

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Robert Motherwell
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.mother71
<b>Date:</b>	1971 Nov. 24-1974 May 1
<b>Extent:</b>	110 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Creator:</b>	Motherwell, Robert Cummings, Paul
<b>Language:</b>	English

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

These interviews are 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 others.

### Available Formats

Transcript is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

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## Biographical / Historical

Robert Motherwell (1915-1991) was a painter and printmaker from New York, N.Y.

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## Scope and Contents

Interview of Robert Motherwell, conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, at the artist's home in Greenwich, Connecticut November 24, 1971 - May 1, 1974.

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## Scope and Contents

Motherwell speaks of his relationship with his parents; attending prep school; studying philosophy at Stanford University and Harvard University; his theory of automatism; European and American painters in post-war New York; teaching at Black Mountain College; teaching at Hunter College; his retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art and other exhibitions; his collages with Gauloise cigarette packages; the photograph *The Irascibles*; his membership in American Abstract Artists; his marriage to Helen

Frankenthaler; his use of color and light in his paintings; spending summers in Provincetown, MA; beginning printmaking; playing poker; working with the art dealers Kootz, Janis, and Frank Lloyd of Marlborough; his series Elegy for the Spanish Civil War, Je t'aime, Beside the Sea, Open, and Lyric Suite. Motherwell also recalls Peggy Guggenheim, Marcel Duchamp, Meyer Shapiro, Betty Parsons, Sam Kootz, Frank O'Hara, Clement Greenberg, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, Richard Lippold, Tanya Grosman, and others.

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## General

Originally recorded on 4 sound tape reels. Reformatted in 2010 as 8 digital wav files. Duration is 8 hrs., 9 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:

Art, American  
Painters -- New York (State) -- Interviews  
Printmakers -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Sound recordings