



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Frank S. Okada

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

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Frank S. Okada
Identifier:	AAA.okada90
Date:	1990 Aug. 16-17
Creator:	Okada, Frank S. (Frank Sumio), 1931-2000 (Interviewee) Johns, Barbara (Interviewer)
Extent:	87 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Frank S. Okada, 1990 Aug. 16-17, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Frank S. Okada, 1990 Aug. 16-17, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)

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 administrators.

Location of Originals

Transcript also available at the University of Washington, Manuscripts Collection, and at the Oregon Historical Society.

Available Formats

Transcript available on line

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Frank S. Okada (1931-2000) was a Japanese American painter based in Seattle, Washington. He taught at University of Oregon from 1969-1999.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Frank Okada conducted 1990 Aug. 16-17, in Seattle, Wash., by Barbara Johns, for the Archives of American Art Northwest Asian American Project. Okada discusses his parents' background; his

family including his brothers, John, author of "No-No Boy," and Charlie, a graphic designer; traveling to Japan for the Pacific Northwest Artists and Japan exhibition; being in an internment camp; painting in Eugene, Ore. and Seattle, Wash.; his painting techniques; studying under Leon Derbyshire; his connection with the jazz scene in Seattle in the late 1940s and 1950s including musicians Sammy Davis, Ray Charles, and Quincy Jones; attending Cornish School of Art, Seattle; meeting Mark Tobey; comparison of his painting style to Tobey's; his stint in the Army; attending Cranbrook Academy of Art and studying with painter Fred Mitchell; his Whitney fellowship in New York; study of Japanese, Chinese, and Zen paintings; working for Boeings in the early 1960s; traveling to France on a Guggenheim; teaching at University of Oregon in Eugene; his minimalist work; influence of Japanese art in his painting. Okada mentions Lawson Inada (Asian American poet), Frank Chin (Asian American playwright), artists David Stone Martin, James Edward Peck, Yayoi Kusama, George Tsutakawa, Paul Horiuchi, Ben Shahn, Kenjiro Nomura, Louis Bunce, Bill Ivey, and art gallery owner Zoe Dusanne.

General

Originally recorded on 5 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 9 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hrs., 38 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art, Japanese American influences
- Asian American art
- Asian American artists
- Asian American painters
- Asian American sculptors
- Japanese American art
- Japanese American artists
- Japanese Americans -- Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945
- Painting, Chinese
- Painting, Japanese
- Painting, Modern -- 20th century -- Washington (State) -- Seattle
- Painting, Zen

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Bunce, Louis, 1907-1983
- Charles, Ray, 1930-2004
- Chin, Frank, 1940-
- Cornish School of Allied Arts (Seattle, Wash.)
- Cranbrook Academy of Art -- Students
- Davis, Sammy, 1925-
- Derbyshire, Leon
- Dusanne, Zoe, 1884-1977
- Horiuchi, Paul, 1906-

Inada, Lawson Fusao
Ivey, William, 1919-1992
Jones, Quincy, 1933-
Kusama, Yayoi, 1929-
Martin, David Stone
Nomura, Kenjiro, 1896-1956
Northwest Asian American Project
Okada, John
Peck, James Edward, 1907-
Shahn, Ben, 1898-1969
Tobey, Mark
Tsutakawa, George
University of Oregon -- Faculty

Occupations:

Painters -- Washington (State) -- Seattle
Sculptors -- United States