



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Dennis Oppenheim

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
General.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	1
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Dennis Oppenheim
Identifier:	AAA.oppenh09
Date:	2009 June 23-24
Creator:	Oppenheim, Dennis, 1938-2011 (Interviewee) Richards, Judith Olch (Interviewer)
Extent:	49 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Dennis Oppenheim, 2009 June 23-24, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Dennis Oppenheim, 2009 June 23-24, 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

Dennis Oppenheim (1938-) is a conceptual artist and sculptor in New York, N.Y. Judith Olch Richards (1947-) is former executive director of iCI in New York, N.Y. Oppenheim was educated at California College of Arts and Crafts and Stanford University.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Dennis Oppenheim conducted 2009 June 23-24, by Judith Olch Richards, for the Archives of American Art, at Oppenheim's studio, in New York, N.Y. Oppenheim speaks of his work in the past 15 years; the evolution of his work and its lack of continuity; his use of writing as a catalyst for constructing works and the importance of language in conceptual art; the role of the audience and the effects of positive reaction to one's work; the risks involved in moving away from successful work to find another avenue; experimentation and the ability to exhibit failures; the emotionality and detached qualities of Abstract Expressionism during the 1950s; the experimental side of studio art in comparison to public art; the seniority felt by fine artists over the applied arts, such as architecture, during the 1950s and 1960s; listening to the public opinion,

including those that do not come from the art world; the theoretical progression of works such as, "Jump and Twist," [1999], and "Device to Root Out Evil," [1997]; how to react to controversial work; his lack of representation by galleries and dealers; his staff of assistants and his more theoretical role in the operation; his lack of fellowship with other artists and his dislike of collaboration; the Venice Biennale in 1997; the Olympics in Beijing in 2008; his current work and on-going commissions. Oppenheim also recalls Andy Warhol, Pierre Levai, Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, Robert Irwin, Richard Serra, Alice Aycock, Keith Sonnier, and Donald Lipski.

General

Originally recorded on 4 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 5 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hrs., 31 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Abstract expressionism
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Acconci, Vito, 1940-
Aycock, Alice
Biennale di Venezia
Irwin, Robert, 1928-
Levai, Pierre
Lipski, Donald, 1947-
Nauman, Bruce, 1941-
Olympic Games (29th : 2008 : Beijing, China)
Serra, Richard, 1938-
Sonnier, Keith, 1941-2020
Warhol, Andy, 1928-1987

Occupations:

Conceptual artists -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews