



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Robert O. Preusser

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Robert O. Preusser
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.preuss91
<b>Date:</b>	1991 January-October
<b>Extent:</b>	106 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Creator:</b>	Preusser, Robert O. (Robert Ormerod), 1919-1992 Brown, Robert F.
<b>Language:</b>	English .

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## 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.

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## Biographical / Historical

Robert Preusser (1919-1992) was a painter and art instructor from Houston, Texas and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Robert O. Preusser conducted 1991 January-October, by Robert F. Brown, for the Archives of American Art.

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## Scope and Contents

Preusser discusses the establishment of an art department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his involvement with it first as a visiting lecturer and then as a professor of visual design. He speaks often of Gyorgy Kepes, whom he had known at the Institute of Design, Chicago, in the early 1940s, and who recruited him to M.I.T; he also discusses other faculty members, like Minor White, professor of photography. He gives attention to his courses at M.I.T., 1954-1985; early computer design projects by students; his writings on the importance of visual arts to technology; and his supervision of educational programs at M.I.T.'s Center for Advanced Visual Studies, 1974-85. An extensive part of the interview is held in an exhibition of Preusser's work at the M.I.T. Museum (April 4, 1991), discussing in particular

his incorporation of various plastic and metallic materials in his works from the 1960s and 1970s. He speaks as well of the importance of his inclusion in group exhibitions at the Downtown Gallery, New York, ("Newcomers," 1951, and "Recent Arrivals, 1952) and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston ("Collectors Exhibition," 1954), and of his exhibitions at the Boris Mirski Gallery and the Joan Peterson Gallery, Boston, during the 1950s and 1960s, and at various galleries in Houston during the 1980s. Other topics of discussion are his early art instruction in his native Houston, Texas, by the painter Ola McNeill Davidson, 1930-39; further training in painting and design at the Institute of Design, Chicago, 1930-39, 1941-42; Newcomb School of Art at Tulane University, 1940-41; service with a camouflage unit in the U.S. Army, 1942-45; classes at the Art Center School, Los Angeles, 1946-47; his teaching at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1947-54, and at the University of Houston, 1951-54, and his role as co-director of the Houston Contemporary Arts Association, 1948-50.

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## General

Poor sound quality. The first 35 minutes of the interview have been lost.

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## General

Originally recorded on 1 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 7 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hr., 18 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 -- Study and teaching -- Massachusetts
- Art -- Study and teaching -- Texas -- Houston
- Camouflage (Military science)
- Painters -- Massachusetts -- Interviews
- Painters -- Texas -- Houston -- Interviews
- Painting -- Study and teaching

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Art Center School (Los Angeles, Calif.)
- Boris Mirski Gallery (Boston, Mass.)
- Center for Advanced Visual Studies
- Davidson, Ola McNeill
- Downtown Gallery (New York, N.Y.)
- Institute of Contemporary Art (Boston, Mass.)
- Institute of Design (Chicago, Ill.)
- Joan Peterson Gallery

Kepes, Gyorgy, 1906-2001  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. School  
Newcomb College. School of Art  
University of Houston  
White, Minor