



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Mischa Richter

Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

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/>

Table of Contents

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

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Mischa Richter
Identifier:	AAA.richte94
Date:	1994 September 27-28
Extent:	3 Items (sound cassettes 2 hr., 43 min.); analog.) 54 Pages (Transcript)
Creator:	Richter, Mischa, 1910-2001 Brown, Robert F.
Language:	English .

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.

Available Formats

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

Biographical / Historical

Mischa Richter (1910-2001) was a painter and cartoonist from New York, N.Y. and Provincetown, Mass. Richter was born in the Ukraine. He came to the United States in 1922, attending special art classes for gifted students at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and subsequently graduating from the Yale School of Fine Arts in 1934. After working on the WPA art project as a mural painter in New York, he turned to cartooning, doing editorial and humorous cartoons for the daily newspaper, PM, and then becoming art editor for the New Masses. In 1941 he began his longtime affiliation with the New Yorker, as well as producing daily panels, "Strictly Richter" and "Bugs Baer" for King Features. In the 1970s and 1980s, Richter did numerous drawings for the OpEd page of the New York Times. Died March 23, 2001, at age 90.

Scope and Contents

An interview with Mischa Richter conducted 1994 September 27-28, by Robert F. Brown, for the Archives of American Art.

Scope and Contents

Richter tells of his life as the only child of a prosperous Jewish family in Kharkov, Ukraine, where he showed early precocity in drawing. He remembers the Russian Revolution, being taken to Poland in 1921, and then in 1922 to New York and Boston. He discusses his education in Boston, including drawing lessons with Harold Zimmerman at which he got to know Hyman Bloom and Jack Levine; and classes at the Museum School in Boston from 1929 to 1930.

Scope and Contents

He speaks of his long-time friendship with Will Barnet, attending Yale School of Fine Arts, 1930-1934, and painting a WPA mural for the Boston Boys Club in 1935. He remembers meeting Will Steig, deciding to become a cartoonist, and selling enough drawings to leave the WPA to work as art editor for "The New Masses," where he became close friends with Ad Reinhardt. He discusses becoming a contract cartoonist in 1940 for "The New Yorker;" his avoidance of art dealers, because they demand steady production yet have no known goals, unlike a magazine; his abhorrence of taking himself, or others, too seriously; the perils of early success and the pettiness of many matters in the art community of Provincetown, Mass.; and the nature of his paintings.

General

Sound quality is poor.

General

Originally recorded on 3 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 4 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hr., 43 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Cartooning
- Jewish artists
- Magazine illustration -- 20th century
- Painters -- Massachusetts -- Provincetown -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

Barnet, Will, 1911-2012
Bloom, Hyman, 1913-
Levine, Jack, 1915-2010
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. School
Reinhardt, Ad, 1913-1967
Steig, William, 1907-
Yale University. School of Fine Arts
Zimmerman, Harold K., 1905-1941

Occupations:

Cartoonists -- Massachusetts -- Provincetown -- Interviews

Preferred Titles:

New Yorker (New York, N.Y. : 1925)
New masses