



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with I.J. (Isaac J.) Sanger

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.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with I.J. (Isaac J.) Sanger
Date:	1981 November 17
Identifier:	AAA.sanger81
Creator:	Sanger, I. J. (Isaac J), 1899-1986 (Interviewee) Pennington, Estill Curtis (Interviewer)
Extent:	16 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with I.J. (Isaac J.) Sanger, 1981 November 17, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with I.J. (Isaac J.) Sanger, 1981 November 17, 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 others.

Biographical / Historical

I. J. Sanger (1899-1986) was a painter and printmaker of Marlow Heights, Md.

Scope and Contents

Interview of I.J. (Isaac) Sanger, conducted 1981 November 17, by Estill Curtis "Buck" Pennington, for the Archives of American Art, in New York, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

Sanger speaks of his first encounters with art as a child growing up in rural Virginia, and of his first industrial art classes, taken at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville while he was still attending high school in Free Union. After graduating, he received what he describes as his first real training in art while working for the carpentry shop at Columbia University in New York in the early 1920s. While attending Columbia, he found work as a furniture designer for the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association]. Sanger also worked for his professor Albert Heckman,

doing linoleum cuts for "Aesop's Fables," which Heckman was illustrating. He explains that it was Heckman who encouraged him to continue practicing print making. Until then, he had been working in oil and water color while studying "Art Structure" with Arthur Dow.

Scope and Contents

When the Depression hit in 1929, Sanger lost his position with the YMCA and worked odd jobs until Albert Heckman introduced him to Gustave von Groschwitz, who brought him on to the WPA. During the 1930s, he received widespread recognition for his work; his prints were selected by the American Institute of Graphic Arts for their "50 Prints of the Year" show in 1928 and 1929. Following his work with the WPA, Sanger served the army in World War II at Camp Kearns in Utah. He explains how he continued expanding his portfolio throughout the War, and once it was over, spent 25 years as a commercial artist. He relocated to Washington, D.C. in 1951 and became a member of the Washington Print Society while Prentiss Taylor was secretary. In D.C., he was a graphic designer for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, but kept up his own private work, which Jacob Pins featured at the Smithsonian Castle. After formally retiring in 1966, Sanger decided to dedicate his time to travel, but adds that he still makes print making, painting, and furniture design a priority.

General

Originally recorded on 1 sound cassette. Reformatted in 2010 as 2 digital wav files. Duration is 1 hr., 6 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Painters -- Maryland -- Interviews
- Painting, Modern
- Printmakers -- Maryland -- Interviews
- Prints

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- American Institute of Graphic Arts
- Columbia University -- Students
- Dow, Arthur W. (Arthur Wesley), 1857-1922
- Heckman, Albert
- Pins, Jacob, 1917-
- University of Virginia -- Students
- Von Groschwitz, Gustave, 1906-1991
- YMCA of the USA

Occupations:

- Furniture designers -- New York (State) -- New York

