



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Salvatore Scarpitta

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Salvatore Scarpitta
Date:	1975 January 31.-February 3
Identifier:	AAA.scarpi75
Creator:	Scarpitta, Salvatore, 1919-2007 (Interviewee) Cummings, Paul (Interviewer)
Extent:	67 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Salvatore Scarpitta, 1975 January 31.-February 3, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Salvatore Scarpitta, 1975 January 31.-February 3, 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.

Restrictions

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

Biographical / Historical

Salvatore Scarpitta (1919-2007) was a sculptor.

Scope and Contents

Interview of Salvatore Scarpitta conducted 1975 January 31.-February 3, by Paul Cummings, for the Archives of American Art. Scarpitta speaks of his family's background; growing up and going to school in California; moving to Italy and going to art school at 17; attending the American Academy; his experiences in Europe after the war broke out in 1940; being arrested and interned for 18 months in Italy and escaping; joining the United States Navy; getting thrown out of the American Academy after being accused of being a Communist; his abstract paintings; moving back to America after Leo Castelli saw his work; his painting techniques; his thoughts on futurism and cubism; why he shifted from working on a canvas to tearing it apart and using it as materials; his use of color; how his interest in race cars influenced his art work; building race cars; living in New York and the art scene there; his successful

art show on the Piazza San Marco in Venice; the reason for using belts in his paintings; how certain paintings led him to building sleds; his feelings about Leo Castelli; and teaching art. He recalls Phil Guston, Jack Levine, Franz Kline, Bill de Kooning, Jackson Pollack, Mark Rothko, and many others.

General

Originally recorded on 2 sound tape reels. Reformatted in 2010 as 4 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hr., 11 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art, Abstract
- Art, American
- Automobile racing
- Cubism
- Futurism (Art)
- Painters -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews
- Painting -- Technique
- Sculptors -- Interviews
- World War, 1939-1945

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- American Academy in Rome
- Castelli, Leo
- De Kooning, Willem, 1904-1997
- Guston, Philip, 1913-1980
- Kline, Franz, 1910-1962
- Levine, Jack, 1915-2010
- Pollock, Jackson, 1912-1956
- Rothko, Mark, 1903-1970