



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Alexis Smith

Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
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Table of Contents

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

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Alexis Smith
Identifier:	AAA.smith14
Date:	2014 January 24-April 14
Extent:	5 Items (Sound recording: 5 sound files (3 hr., 11 min.); digital, wav) 84 Pages (Transcript)
Creator:	Smith, Alexis, 1949- Drohojowska-Philp, Hunter
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 available online.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Alexis Smith (1949-) is a collage, multimedia, and installation artist in Los Angeles, California. Hunter Drohojowska-Philp is an art critic and writer from Beverly Hills, California.

Scope and Contents

An interview with Alexis Smith conducted 2014 January 24 and April 14, by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, for the Archives of American Art at Smith's studio, in Venice, California.

Scope and Contents

Ms. Smith discusses growing up in Southern California and her early years living with her parents on the grounds of Metropolitan State Hospital, a mental institution in Norwalk, California; her mother's death when Ms. Smith was 11; the family's time in Whittier and Palm Springs and being raised as an only child by her father; her early interest in French studies and travel to France as a student; her interest in studying art beginning with a John Coplans class at UC Irvine; her time at UC Irvine in the early days of the university and her growing attraction to the life of an artist; the origin of her name Alexis Smith; and the encouragement of her fellow artists to continue pursuing her cut-up collages from literature, photos, magazines, and Hollywood ephemera. Ms. Smith also describes her time with her artist women's group in the 70s; her husband Scott Grieger; working for Frank Gehry; her showing with the Nicholas Wilder Gallery; her relationship with Chris Burden and her time with him during his period of performance pieces in the 70s; the Riko Mizuno Gallery; her work with terrazzo and its use for installations at the LA Convention Center, Ohio State University, and other installations; the appropriation of text and the assistance of Jerry Solomon utilizing custom frames in her artwork; the impact of women from history, media and literature on her art; her relationship with Coy Howard; the Holly Solomon Gallery; her Jane series; her On the Road series; her installation Snake Path at UC San Diego; her piece for SITE Santa Fe Red Carpet; teaching at UCLA; her installation of the piece Scarlet Letter at Las Vegas Central Library and its subsequent removal; her associations with Margo Leavin Gallery and Honor Fraser gallery; and the loss of her long-time studio space and the challenges of storing her artwork. Ms. Smith also recalls Judy Chicago, Robert Irwin, Vija Celmins, Larry Bell, Barbara Burden, Richard Sedivy, Avilda Moses, Craig Krull, and Allen Ruppersberg among others.

General

Originally recorded as 5 sound files. Duration is 3 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 -- Study and teaching
- Collagists -- California -- Interviews
- Installations (Art)
- Multimedia (Art)
- Multimedia installations (Art)
- Women artists -- California -- Los Angeles -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Bell, Larry, 1939-
- Burden, Barbara
- Burden, Chris, 1946-

Celmins, Vija, 1938-
Chicago, Judy, 1939-
Coplans, John
Gehry, Frank O., 1929-
Grieger, Scott
Holly Solomon Gallery
Honor Fraser Gallery
Howard, Coy
Irwin, Robert, 1928-
Krull, Craig
Margo Leavin Gallery
Mizuno Gallery
Moses, Avilda
Nicholas Wilder Gallery
Ruppersberg, Allen, 1944-
Sedivy, Richard
Solomon, Jerry
University of California, Irvine -- Students
University of California, Los Angeles -- Faculty

Geographic Names:

France -- description and travel