



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Robert Smithson

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Robert Smithson
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.smiths72
<b>Date:</b>	1972 July 14-19
<b>Creator:</b>	Smithson, Robert (Interviewee) Cummings, Paul (Interviewer)
<b>Extent:</b>	59 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Robert Smithson, 1972 July 14-19, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Robert Smithson, 1972 July 14-19, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)</a>

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

This interview is part of the Archives' 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.

### Available Formats

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

### Restrictions

This interview is open for research. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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## Biographical / Historical

Robert Smithson (1938-1973) was a sculptor well known for his earthworks.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Robert Smithson conducted 1972 July 14-19, by Paul Cummings, for the Archives of American Art at 799 Greenwich Street in New York on July 14 and 19 1972. Smithson speaks of growing up in Passaic, New Jersey; primary and high school; high school art education; going to New York Museums; writing and its impact on art work; the Artists Gallery; the Art Students League; his time in the army; the Cedar Bar; Quicksand; the Museum of Modern Art; art education; Sam Smithson; his father; traveling the U.S.; Brooklyn Museum School; impact of the Museum of Natural History; moving to New York; visiting Europe; psychology; show at the George Lester Gallery; the Broken Circle; Dallas-Fort Worth Airport; crystalline

structures; meeting William Carlos Williams; cosmology; Enantiomorphic Chambers; mapping; painting and drawing; the Dwan Gallery; getting married; Aerial Art; earthworks; sculpture; the Cryosphere; Alogon; Rome; stratas; nonsites; When Attitudes Become Form; Attitudes; mining sites and quarries; light and reflection; the Spiral Jetty; coordination of large works; documentation; selection of sites; Gyrostasis; weather's impact and seasonal change of the Spiral Jetty; confines of the gallery and museum; mirrors; landscapes; artist materials; art education; traveling; art and vacations; documenta; Smithson also recalls Federica Beer-Monti , Hugh Stix , Danny Donohue, Joe Levin, Charlie Hasloff, John Cassavetes , Alan Brilliant, Irving Sandler, Barnett Newman, Richard Bellamy, John Groth, Lawrence Alloway, T. S. Elliot, Donald Judd, William Carlos Williams, Jackson Pollock, William Burroughs, Ad Reinhardt, Dan Flavin, Virginia Dwan, Rosalind Krauss, and others.

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## General

Originally recorded on 2 sound tape reels. Reformatted in 2010 as 3 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hr.

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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 -- Philosophy
- Sculpture, Modern -- 20th century

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- Dwan, Virginia

### Occupations:

- Environmental artists -- New York (State) -- New York
- Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York