



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with May Stevens

Funding for this interview was provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

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
Scope and Contents.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with May Stevens
Date:	2009 August 10-11
Identifier:	AAA.steven09
Creator:	Stevens, May (Interviewee) Richards, Judith Olch
Extent:	85 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with May Stevens, 2009 August 10-11, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with May Stevens, 2009 August 10-11, 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 administrators.

Available Formats

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

Restrictions

This transcript is open for research. Access to the entire audio recording is restricted. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Biographical / Historical

Interviewee May Stevens (1924-) is a feminist painter in Santa Fe, N.M. Interviewer Judith Olch Richards (1947-) is former Executive director of iCI in New York, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

An interview of May Stevens conducted August 10 and 11, by Judith Olch Richards, for the Archives of American Art, at Stevens's home and studio, in Santa Fe, N.M.

Scope and Contents

Stevens speaks of her childhood in Quincy, Massachusetts and her family; her interest and good marks in school; studying fine at Massachusetts College of Art and Design; her little interest in abstraction until much later in her career; various jobs in Boston before moving to New York City; taking classes at the Art Students League where she met fellow artist and future husband Rudolf Baranik; getting married and moving to Paris where Baranik studied at the studio of Fernand Léger; early figurative paintings; teaching at the School of Visual Arts in New York from 1961 to 1996; her political activity that become integral to her art work in the 1960s and '70s; her predominately colorful works juxtaposed with her occasional use of black and white to depict difficult subjects; her work with Heresies feminist magazine; a lifelong love of drawing and writing; printmaking projects; the benefits of participating in artist in residency programs around the country; several important series of works, including Big Daddy, satirically depicting her father as criticism of the Vietnam War, and Ordinary/Extraordinary, which depicts images of her mother, Alice, and Rosa Luxemburg; her interesting figurative style and rich colors; her lack of interest in critics and reviews of her work; her current projects, including a nude self-portrait. Stevens also recalls Leon Golub, Nancy Spero, Lou Gilbert, Grace Paley, Jack Sonenberg, Pheobe Helman, Lucy Lippard, Harmondy Hammond, and Patricia Hills.

General

Originally recorded on 6 memory cards. Reformatted in 2010 as 6 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hr., 14 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Feminism and art
- Women artists
- Women painters

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Baranik, Rudolf

Occupations:

- Painters -- New Mexico -- Santa Fe