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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Eugene V. Thaw

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Table of Contents

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

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Eugene V. Thaw
Date:	2007 October 1-2
Identifier:	AAA.thaw07
Creator:	Thaw, Eugene Victor (Interviewee) McElhinney, James Lancel, 1952- (Interviewer)
Extent:	33 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Eugene V. Thaw, 2007 October 1-2, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Eugene V. Thaw, 2007 October 1-2, 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.

Restrictions

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

Biographical / Historical

Eugene Thaw (1927-) is an art dealer from New York, N.Y. James McElhinney (1952-) is a painter and educator from New York, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Eugene V. Thaw conducted 2007 October 1-2, by James McElhinney, for the Archives of American Art's Art Dealers Association of America Project, at Thaw's residence, in New York, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

Thaw speaks of his childhood in New York City; Mexican art in his home including watercolors by Diego Rivera; beginning classes at the Art Student's League of New York at age 14; attending St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland; attending Columbia University for graduate courses in art history and studying with

Meyer Shapiro and Millard Meiss; an early interest in Old Master, Renaissance, and German Expressionist art; studying in Florence, Italy for four months after World War II; opening The New Bookstore and Gallery with friend Jack Landau above the Algonquin Hotel upon his return to New York City; giving Joan Mitchell and Conrad Marca-Relli their first shows; ending his partnership with Landau, closing the bookstore, and moving the gallery to Madison Avenue; becoming involved in the international art market; the practice of buying and selling works of art in shares with other dealers; showing American and European artists; renaming the gallery E.V. Thaw & Company; operating essentially as a one-man gallery with very limited staff; his relationship with museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Cleveland Museum of Art; his personal collections, including extensive ancient Eurasian artifacts and American Indian art; establishing the Pollock-Krasner Foundation; the philanthropic vision of his own foundation, the Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw Charitable Trust; his retirement from dealing; the "hand of the artist" in historical context and its lack of significance in contemporary art; and advice for young and emerging art dealers. Thaw also recalls Richard Offner, Evelyn Sandberg-Vavala, Norbert Ketterer, Günther Franka, Pierre Matisse, Leo Castelli, Julius Held, Theodore Rousseau, Lee Krasner, Norton Simon, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 2 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 4 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hr., 26 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Art Students League (New York, N.Y.) -- Students
- Castelli, Leo
- Cleveland Museum of Art
- Columbia University -- Students
- E.V. Thaw & Co.
- Franka, Gunther
- Held, Julius Samuel, 1905-
- Ketterer, Norbert
- Krasner, Lee, 1908-1984
- Landau, Jack, 1925-1967
- Marca-Relli, Conrad, 1913-2000
- Matisse, Pierre, 1900-1989
- Meiss, Millard
- Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.)
- Mitchell, Joan, 1926-1992
- Offner, Richard, 1889-1965
- Pollock-Krasner Foundation
- Rivera, Diego, 1886-1957
- Rousseau, Theodore, 1912-
- Shapiro, Meyer
- Simon, Norton, 1907-1993
- St. John's College (Annapolis, Md.) -- Students

Vavala, Evelyn Sandberg

Occupations:

Art dealers -- New York (State) -- New York