



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

A Finding aid to the Willem Volkersz Interviews,  
1975-1985, in the Archives of American Art

Ricky Gomez

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Willem Volkersz interviews
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.volkwill
<b>Date:</b>	1975-1985
<b>Extent:</b>	2.6 Linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Volkersz, Willem
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The Willem Voklersz interviews measure 2.6 linear feet and date from 1975-1985. The collection consists of twenty-nine sound cassettes containing thirty-one interviews of folk artists conducted by Volkersz for a personal research project, a monologue, and readings by Volkersz of notes on individual artists. Subjects include folk artists such as Howard Finster, Jesse Howard, and St. EOM (Eddie Owens Martin). Also found are thirty-seven transcripts of the recordings.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Sound recordings of the Willem Volkersz interviews were donated to the Archives of American Art in 1986 by Willem Volkersz, who made them primarily for his own use as a researcher, collector and teacher of folk art. They were transcribed in 1989 for the Archives of American Art by Toni Reineke.

### Available Formats

Transcripts of interviews are available on the Archives of American Art's website.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Ricky Gomez in 2020.

### Preferred Citation

Willem Volkersz interviews, 1975-1985. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute.

### Restrictions

This collection is open for research. Access to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Researchers interested in accessing audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact References Services for more information.

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## Biographical / Historical

Willem Volkersz is a teacher, collector, and sculptor of Bozeman, Montana, who was born in Holland and came to the United States following World War II. He completed his education at the University of Washington in 1965, and completed a Masters of Fine Art at Mills College in 1967.

Volkersz began researching and collecting work by visionary and naive artists while a professor at the Kansas City Art Institute. His collection is now at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and the Missoula Art Museum, in Missoula, Montana.

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## Scope and Contents

The Willem Voklersz interviews measure 2.6 linear feet and date from 1975-1985. The collection consists of twenty-nine sound cassettes containing thirty-one interviews of folk artists conducted by Volkersz for a personal research project, a monologue, and readings by Volkersz of notes on individual artists. Subjects include folk artists such as Howard Finster, Jesse Howard, and St. EOM (Eddie Owens Martin). Also found are thirty-seven transcripts of the recordings.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as one series.

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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:

African American artists

Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Sound recordings

Names:

Finster, Howard, 1916-2001

Howard, Jesse, 1885-1983  
St. EOM, 1908-1986

Occupations:

Collectors -- Montana -- Bozeman  
Educators -- Montana -- Bozeman  
Folk artists -- United States  
Sculptors -- Montana -- Bozeman

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Interviews, 1975-1985

#### 2.6 Linear feet

The collection consists of twenty-nine sound cassettes containing thirty-one interviews of folk artists conducted by Volkersz for a personal research project, a monologue, and readings by Volkersz of notes on individual artists. Subjects include folk artists such as Howard Finster, Jesse Howard, and St. EOM (Eddie Owens Martin). Also found are thirty-seven transcripts of the recordings.

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Box 1, Folder 1 | Minnie Black, 1984 May 29<br><i>1 Sound cassette</i><br><a href="#">Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Minnie Black</a><br>Black sings while playing various folk and traditional instruments, some of which she has made, and shows Volkersz numerous objects made from gourds.  |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | Ned Cartledge, 1984 March 12<br><i>1 Sound cassette</i><br><a href="#">Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Ned Cartledge</a><br>Cartledge discusses the meaning and method of execution of his works through a tour of his studio and through photographs.   |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | Chief Rolling Mountain Thunder (Frank Van Zandt), 1981 June<br><i>1 Sound cassette</i><br><a href="#">Digital Content: Tape-Recorded Notes on Chief Rolling Mountain Thunder (Frank Van Zandt)</a><br>Volkersz reads portions of articles posted at the site of the artist's school and sculpture garden in Thunder Mountain, Nevada.  |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | Jim Colclough, 1976 September 13<br><i>1 Sound cassette</i><br><a href="#">Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Jim Colclough</a><br>This is primarily- a photo-taking session at the artist's home in Westport, California and at the Tuoloma Gallery in Fort Bragg. Colclough's technique is discussed in the context of individual pieces, whose subjects are suggested by personal events in the artist's life.               |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Charlie Fields (Cedar Creek Charlie), 1984 March 7<br><i>1 Sound cassette</i><br><a href="#">Digital Content: Tape-Recorded Notes on Charlie Fields (Cedar Creek Charlie)</a><br>Volkersz reads from two or three clippings obtained at the Museum of Appalachia, Norris, Tennessee, and gives bibliographical information on an additional article, exhibition, and catalog.<br><br>Side 1 of the tape is the Robert Gilkerson interview. |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Howard Finster, 1977 March 17  |

*1 Sound cassette*[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Howard Finster](#)

Finster conducts an informal tour of his home/museum, telling stories of the origins of his art works; his philosophy, and his "pastoring." Eddie Owens Martin (St. EOM) is mentioned sporadically as "that Indian".

Box 1, Folder 7-8

Nathan Edward Galloway, 1981 June

*1 Sound cassette*[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Paul Galloway about Ed Galloway](#)

Volkersz interviews Ed Galloway's son, Paul, who discusses his father's career as an artist and as a manual training teacher at a local orphanage, where he made virtually everything necessary for the school's functioning. After his retirement, Ed Galloway began making large concrete totem poles on his property near Foyil, Oklahoma. Paul Galloway also discusses the subsequent theft and physical deterioration of many of the objects.

Box 1, Folder 9

Carlton Elonzo Garrett, 1984 March 9-10

*1 Sound cassette*[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Carlton Elonzo Garrett](#)

Volkersz, accompanied by Allan Winkler, toured the artist's home/studio, examining, discussing, and photographing works. During part of the interview, Garrett works on some figures while Volkersz and Winkler watch and ask questions about his work methods.

Box 1, Folder 10

Emil Gehrke, 1976 August 19

*1 Sound cassette*[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Emil Gehrke](#)

Before the interview, Volkersz reads from articles about Gehrke posted at Gehrke's residence. Gehrke speaks about his windmills and their creation from junkyard objects. He also discusses his recent illness due to rust and paint remover poisoning and about his longtime involvement with ref leXOlogy. He also discusses topics such as training versus education, and the precarious state of the world's economy.

Box 1, Folder 11

Robert Gilkerson, 1985 September 23

*1 Sound cassette*[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Robert Gilkerson](#)

This is a telephone interview conducted by Volkersz in preparation for an exhibition "Word and Image in American Folk Art" featuring artists who incorporate words into their works. They discuss work methods and idea sources.

Box 1, Folder 12

Dilmus Hall, 1984 June 3

*1 Sound cassette*[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Dilmus Hall](#)

This interview was conducted in Hall's studio home in Athens, Georgia, where he and Volkersz discuss his drawings, the death of his wife, his having shot at a burglar, his World War I experiences, and a hospital stay.

- Box 2, Folder 1 Irene Hall, 1981 June 8  
*1 Sound cassette*  
[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Irene Hall](#)  
Content of first interview: Volkersz interviews the Hall during a tour of her garden and home in Eufala, Oklahoma. They discuss vandalism problems, how Hall began her artistic career, her psychic abilities, building houses, and traveling with her baseball player husband, local lore, her art works, a collection of skulls, and her lack of acceptance by her family and community.  
  
Irene Hall interview is on Tape 1, Side 1. Tape 1, Side 2 and Tape 2 is the interview with Irene Hall's family.
- Box 2, Folder 2 Irene Hall's Family, 1981 June 9  
*2 Sound cassettes*  
[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Irene Hall's family](#)  
Content of second interview: Accompanied by Mary Ann Anders, curator of "Folk Art in Oklahoma," Volkersz interviewed Hall's grandson and his wife at their home. They primarily discussed the preservation of Hall's works, as well as Hall's marriage, her husband's baseball career in the early 1900s, her mother's adoption as a member of the Creek Indian tribe, and the artist's psychic abilities.  
  
Interview begins on Side 2 of Irene Hall interview cassette and continues on a second cassette.
- Box 2, Folder 3-4 Jesse Howard, 1975 March 14  
*2 Sound cassettes*  
[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Jesse Howard](#)  
Content of first interview: Howard was interviewed by Volkersz, who was accompanied by a group of students from the Kansas City Art Institute. They held a question and answer session, after which Howard conducted them on an informal tour of the premises.
- Box 2, Folder 5 Jesse Howard, 1977 April 12  
*1 Sound cassette*  
[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Jesse Howard](#)  
Content of second interview: Howard is taped at an opening party for a retrospective of his work. He discusses some of his works, queries and teases the crowd on Biblical knowledge, and talks while he continues working on a wheel project. The conversation continues while Volkersz drives him home afterwards.
- Box 2, Folder 6 Jesse Howard, 1981 November 1  
*1 Sound cassette*  
[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Jesse Howard](#)  
Howard queries his guests on Biblical knowledge and discusses his works while on a tour of his home and farm.
- Box 2, Folder 7 Jesse Howard, 1982 October 30



- 1 Sound cassette*  
[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Jesse Howard](#)  
Howard queries his guests on Biblical knowledge and discusses his works while on a tour of his home and farm.
- Box 2, Folder 8      Hans Jorgensen, 1975 March 7  
*1 Sound cassette*  
[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Hans Jorgensen](#)  
Volkersz and his students informally interview Jorgensen, first in his yard and home and then in a local restaurant.
- Box 2, Folder 9      C.P. Ligon, 1977 March 31  
*1 Sound cassette*  
[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with C. P. Ligon](#)  
Volkersz interviews Ligon while visiting his home in Toccoa, Georgia. There is some discussion of materials, Ligon's history, and genealogies of the Ligon family, but most of the interview consists of casual conversation accompanying examination of Ligon's works, which Volkersz photographs.
- Box 2, Folder 10      Eddie Owens Martin (St. EOM), 1977 March 20  
*1 Sound cassette*  
[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Eddie Owens Martin \(St. E.O.M.\)](#)  
Volkersz and his wife Diane visit Martin's home in Buena Vista, Georgia, where he conducts them on a tour of his art work, discussing his work methods and a bit of his life history.  
  
Side 2 contains the following interviews: Columbus McGriff, Benjamin Oscar War, and Will Watson.
- Box 2, Folder 11      Eddie Owens Martin (St. EOM), 1984 March 6  
*1 Sound cassette*  
[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Eddie Owens Martin \(St. E.O.M.\)](#)  
Volkersz, accompanied by Allan Winkler, visited Martin at his home, where he talked in a stream-of-consciousness manner about his works and current state.
- Box 2, Folder 12      John Martin, 1984  
*1 Sound cassette*  
[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with John Martin](#)  
Volkersz, accompanied by Allan Winkler, visited Martin's home and workshop, where Martin demonstrated his bicycle's unique features and showed a toothpick violin and guitar.
- Box 2, Folder 13      Columbus McGriff, 1977 March 21  
*1 Sound cassette*  
[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Columbus McGriff](#)  
Volkersz visits McGriff at his home and workshop and they converse while examining some of McGriff's works.

Interview on Side 2 of the 1977 Eddie Owens Martin (St. EOM) tape.

Box 2, Folder 14

R. A. Miller, 1984 March 10  
*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with R. A. Miller](#)

Volkersz, accompanied by Allan Winkler, visited Miller's home in Gainesville, Georgia, where he makes windmills. They discuss Miller's materials, sources, methods, and then purchase one of the windmills.

Interview is on Side 2 of the Mose Tolliver tape.

Box 2, Folder 15

Dow Pugh, 1977 April 2  
*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Dow Pugh](#)

Volkersz and his wife Diane visit Pugh at his home in Tennessee where they tour his concrete arid wood sculptures. Pugh discusses his construction technique and the vandalism of his works and materials.

Side 2 contains the 1984 Robert Smith interview.

Box 3, Folder 1

Herman Rusch, 1975 May 17  
*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Herman Rusch](#)

Volkersz visits Rusch at his "museum" in Wisconsin, where they discuss Rusch's creations, and farm economics.

Fred Smith interview is on Side 2.

Box 3, Folder 2

Fred Smith, 1975 May 18  
*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Fred Smith](#)

An interview conducted by Volkersz at the Pleasant View nursing home. Much of the interview is unintelligible due to Smith's 1964 stroke. Conversation deals primarily with Smith's health, but he briefly discusses his inception of the "sculpture garden," his inclusion in a Walker Art Center exhibition, and his fiddling.

The interview is on Side 2 of the Herman Rusch tape.

Box 3, Folder 3

Mary T. Smith, 1984 March 2  
*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Mary T. Smith](#)

Smith conducts Volkersz on an outside tour of her art works (and some found objects) on the property surrounding her home.

Jim Sudduth interview is on Side 2.

Box 3, Folder 4

Robert E. Smith, 1984

*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Transcript of Taped Monologue by Robert E. Smith](#)

This is a recording made by Smith explaining how he became interested in art, briefly describing his life history.

Interview is on Side 2 of the Dow Pugh tape.

Box 3, Folder 5

Robert E. Smith, 1985 September 23

*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Robert E. Smith](#)

This is a telephone conversation conducted shortly after Volkersz received a cartoon book from Smith. They discuss the conception and content of the cartoon books and Smith's attempts to interest a publisher in them.

Box 3, Folder 6

Jim Sudduth, 1984 March 3

*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Jim Sudduth](#)

Sudduth plays the harmonica (mouth harp) and sings, with Allan Winkler providing rhythmic accompaniment. There is very little conversation, mostly relating to the music.

Interview is on Side 2 of the Mary T. Smith tape.

Box 3, Folder 7

Mose Tolliver, 1984 March 5

*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Mose Tolliver](#)

Volkersz and Allan Winkler visit Tolliver's home and discuss his work history and painting methods. Volkersz purchases some paintings, discussing prices with Mrs. Tolliver.

R. A. Miller interview is on Side 2.

Box 4, Folder 1

Oliver Edward Walls (Interview with his Granddaughter, Ruth Ellsworth), 1983

*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Transcript of Interview with Ruth Ellsworth about Oliver E. Walsh](#)

Volkersz interviews Oliver Edward Walls's granddaughter, Ruth Ellsworth, while examining a collection of Walls's carvings.

Box 4, Folder 2

Benjamin Oscar Ward, 1977 March 21-March 22

*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Tape-Recorded Notes on Benjamin Oscar Ward](#)

Volkersz's notes on a conversation he had had with B. O. Ward's son, Ray Ward.

Recording is on Side 2 of the 1977 Eddie Owens Martin (St. EOM) cassette.

Box 4, Folder 3

Willard Watson, 1977 March 21-March 22

*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Tape-Recorded Notes on Willard Watson](#)

Volkersz records notes just after a conversation with Willard and Ollie Watson.

Recording is on Side 2 of the 1977 Eddie Ownes Martin (St. EOM) cassette.

Box 4, Folder 4

Anna Woelfer and Wayne Woelfer, 1975 June 18  
*1 Sound cassette*

[Digital Content: Tape-Recorded Notes on Anna and Wayne Woelfer](#)

Volkersz reads from articles posted at the site of Woelfer's home "Eaglemount Rockeries."

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