



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Jack Whitten

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Jack Whitten
Identifier:	AAA.whitte09
Date:	2009 December 1-3
Creator:	Whitten, Jack, 1939-2018 (Interviewee) Richards, Judith Olch (Interviewer)
Extent:	130 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Jack Whitten, 2009 December 1-3, Transcript

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.

Biographical / Historical

Interviewee Jack Whitten (1939-2018) was an American abstract painter in Woodside, N.Y. Interviewer Judith Olch Richards (1947-) is former Executive director of iCI in New York, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Jack Whitten conducted 2009 December 1 and 3, by Judith Olch Richards, for the Archives of American Art, at Whitten's studio, in Woodside, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

Whitten speaks of his childhood in Bessemer, Alabama; being an African-American in the segregated South; his time at the Tuskegee Institute and Southern University; his participation in a civil rights march; the influence of jazz; his time at Cooper Union in New York, the abstract expressionists of New York including Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline and Phillip Guston; his teaching at Cooper Union and School of Visual Arts; his 9/11 experience and the memorial that it led him to create; how his work varies between his summers in Greece and his studio time in New York; movement of his work from figurative expressionism to process painting and experimentation and how it fits between form and meaning; the concepts of horizontality, non-relational abstraction, and third-wave modernism; the galleries of the Horodner Romley, Daniel Weinberg,

Alexander Grey, Thomas Flor, and other spaces; Whitten also recalls Leo Amino, Bob Blackburn, Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, Norman Lewis, Wayne Theibaud, Bob Thompson and others.

General

Originally recorded on 7 memory cards. Reformatted in 2010 as 7 digital wav files. Duration is 6 hr., 25 min.

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

Occupations:

Painters -- New York (State)