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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Emerson Woelffer

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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/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Emerson Woelffer
Date:	1999 March 26
Identifier:	AAA.woelff99
Creator:	Woelffer, Emerson, 1914-2003 (Interviewee) Karlstrom, Paul J. (Interviewer)
Extent:	55 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Emerson Woelffer, 1999 March 26, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Emerson Woelffer, 1999 March 26, 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 available on-line.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Emerson Woelffer (1914-2003) was a painter and educator from Los Angeles, California. One of the leading senior modernists working in Los Angeles, Woelffer was invited in 1960, by Mitch Wilder, to head the fine arts department at Chouinard Art Institute where he taught until it was moved to Valencia and transformed into California Institute of the Arts (CalArts).

Scope and Contents

An interview of Emerson Woelffer conducted 1999 March 26, by Paul Karlstrom, for the Archives of American Art's Art Schools in California Project, in Woelffer's studio/home, Los Angeles, California.

Scope and Contents

Woelffer briefly discusses his own student experience at the Art Institute of Chicago (1933-1937), and focuses more on his teaching at Moholy Nagy's Institute of Design in Chicago, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center (1954-1960) where he was head of the fine arts department, and the many years in Los Angeles as an educator at Chouinard Art School (now California Art Institute) and Otis Art Institute (now Otis College of Art and Design). Woelffer recalls Chouinard students who were the most "far out," among them Larry Bell, Joe Goode, and Ed Ruscha. He credited the free-wheeling stimulation of Los Angeles itself as the source for these experimental artists who were different from those in Chicago. In his final remarks, Woelffer emphasized the importance of drawing to the training of an artist.

General

Originally recorded on 2 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 4 digital wav files. Duration is 1 hr., 50 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art -- Study and teaching -- California

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Art Schools in California Oral History Project
Chouinard Art Institute (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center
Institute of Design (Chicago, Ill.)
Otis Art Institute

Occupations:

Art teachers -- California -- Los Angeles -- Interviews

Functions:

Art Schools -- California -- Los Angeles