



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

Victor and Christine Romero film of Allan Houser

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Victor and Christine Romero film of Allan Houser
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.401
Date:	May 12, 1992
Creator:	Romero, Victor (Film producer) Romero, Christine Solinski (Film director)
Extent:	6 Film reels (16mm) 3 Sound tape reels (1/4 inch) 5 Videocassettes (Betacam) 0.25 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection contains an unpublished documentary film shot on May 12, 1992 that depicts an interview with artist Allan Houser [Warm Springs Chiricahua Apache (New Mexico)] discussing his remembrances of painting murals at the U.S. Department of the Interior headquarters in Washington, DC in 1939-1940. The film was shot by Victor Romero (Isleta Pueblo) and Christine Romero.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Gift of Victor and Christine Romero, 2019.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Emily Moazami, Supervisory Archivist, 2020.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Victor and Christine Romero film of Allan Houser, box # and folder #, NMAI.AC.401; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Access to the media materials in this collection are closed until the materials have been digitized. Textual materials are available to view for reference purposes only. Access to NMAI Archives Center collections is by appointment only, Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please contact the archives to make an appointment (phone: 301-238-1400, email: nmaiarchives@si.edu).

Conditions Governing Use

Permission to publish materials from the collection must be requested from National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center. Please submit a written request to nmaiphotos@si.edu.

Allan Houser and the Department of the Interior Murals

Allan Houser is considered one of the most renowned Native American painters and sculptors of the 20th century. Born Allan Capron Houser (originally Haozous) on June 30, 1914 near Apache, Oklahoma, Houser was a member of the Warm Springs Chiricahua Apache tribe.

He left Oklahoma in 1934 to study painting with Dorothy Dunn at her Santa Fe Indian School and remained a student there until 1938. In addition to painting murals at the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C. in 1939, he also painted murals for the Golden Gate Exposition in San Francisco and the New York World's Fair.

In 1940, Houser studied with Swedish artist Olle Nordmark at the Fort Sill Indian School art program and was encouraged to take up sculpture. Eight years later, the Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas commissioned his first sculpture, *Comrades in the Mourning*. Houser taught art at Intermountain Indian School in Brigham City, Utah beginning in 1952 and left in 1962 to teach sculpture at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He retired from academic life in 1975. Allan Houser died in Santa Fe in 1994.

The murals that are depicted in this documentary were commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture public art program, which was often referred to as the "Section." Created in 1934 during the Great Depression by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration, the program was designed to increase employment for artists. The Section artists were commissioned to create art to decorate public buildings often in the form of murals or reliefs. At the Department of the Interior headquarters in Washington, DC, six artists were commissioned from five tribes including artists Velino Shije Herrera (Ma Pe Wi [Red Bird]), Zia Pueblo, 1902-1973; Gerald Nailor (To Yah), Diné (Navajo), 1917-1952; and Woody Crumbo (Woodrow Wilson Crumbo), Potawatomi [Oklahoma], 1912-1989. The Section program was discontinued in 1943.

Victor and Christine Romero

Victor Eugene Romero (Pueblo of Isleta) is a graduate of New Mexico State University (BA, Journalism and Mass Communications, 1976). Following a stint as an independent video producer, Victor transitioned to a career at the U.S. Census Bureau, including varied service as manager of video/photo/radio production, and team leader for promotions and branding initiatives. His high-level contributions feature extensive work on Census 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020.

Christine Solinski Romero is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin (BS, Radio-TV-Film, 1976). Her extensive documentary production credits as Producer, Director, Editor include programs for PBS, National Geographic Television, Discovery Channel, Smithsonian Channel, and an award-winning independent documentary feature, *Besa: The Promise*, the story of Albanians Muslims who protected refugee Jews during the Holocaust. In 2012, Christine transitioned to a career as a Yoga Instructor and Therapist.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains an unpublished documentary film that was shot by filmmakers Victor Romero (Isleta Pueblo) and Christine Romero, which depicts an interview with artist Allan Houser [Warm Springs Chiricahua Apache (New Mexico)]. The footage was shot on May 12, 1992 in the Department of the Interior penthouse in Washington, DC with Houser providing remembrances of his life and his perspective of painting murals there in 1939-1940 as part of the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture public art program. In the documentary, Houser views the murals for the first time since he painted them 50 years before and recalls his experiences with fellow artists- Velino Shije Herrera (Zia Pueblo), Gerald Nailor [Diné (Navajo)], and Woody Crumbo (Potawatomi)- who were painting their own murals in the penthouse at the same time. At the time of filming, the penthouse was closed and off-limits and the murals were about to undergo restoration.

The materials in this collection include six 16mm processed film reels; three 1/4" sound reels; three BetacamSP transfers of reels 1 through 6; a BetacamSP master of a 2:30 promo edit; a BetacamSP transfer of music by David Spotted Eagle licensed for the promo; an interview transcript; a log of avid bins; a disc of avid bins; and other textual documents.

Victor E. Romero served as the Producer, Christine Solinski Romero as Director, Gary Geboy as Cinematographer, and Haven McKinney as the Audio Recordist. Unfortunately, the Kodak film stock they used was defective and the footage turned out grainy, while the audio of the interview turned out clear. Subsequently, the intended documentary about the restoration of the murals was not completed other than a short demo reel.

Arrangement

Materials are arranged by media.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- American Indian art and culture
- Diné (Navajo)
- Mural painting and decoration
- Potawatomi
- Warm Springs Chiricahua Apache (New Mexico)
- Zia Pueblo

Cultures:

- Diné (Navajo)
- Potawatomi
- Warm Springs Chiricahua Apache (New Mexico)
- Zia Pueblo

Names:

- Houser, Allan, 1914-1994
- United States. Department of the Interior

Container Listing

Reel 1-6	Film Reels of Allan Houser Interview , May 12, 1992 6 Motion picture films (Each film canister contains 2 reels wound on one film core. ; 16mm) Notes: Production note found in canisters transferred to Box 11, Folder 4.
Box 7	Videocassettes of Allan Houser Interview , May 12, 1992 5 Videocassettes (BetacamSP) Notes: These videocassettes include three BetacamSP transfers of film reels 1 through 6; a BetacamSP master of a 2:30 promo edit; and a BetacamSP transfer of music by David Spotted Eagle licensed for the promo. A photocopy of the David Spotted Eagle cassette tape liner notes is located in Box 11, Folder 5.
Box 8-10	Audio of Allan House Interview , May 12, 1992 3 Sound tape reels (includes transcript in Box 11, Folder 1 ; 1/4 inch)
Box 11, Folder 1	Transcript of Interview with Allan Houser, May 12, 1992
Box 11, Folder 2	Avid Bins for Interview with Allan Houser, May 12, 1992
Box 11, Folder 3	Computer Disc with Avid Bins for Interview with Allan Houser, May 12, 1992
Box 11, Folder 4	Production Notes for Allan Houser Interview , 1992
Box 11, Folder 5	Photocopy of Linear Notes from David Spotted Eagle's Cassette Tape, 1989 Notes: Materials in this folder are for reference purposes only.