



Smithsonian Institution Archives

## Paul N. Perrot Oral History Interviews, 2004

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Smithsonian Institution Archives  
Washington, D.C.  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., <a href="mailto:osiaref@si.edu">osiaref@si.edu</a>
<b>Title:</b>	Paul N. Perrot Oral History Interviews
<b>Identifier:</b>	Record Unit 9618
<b>Date:</b>	2004
<b>Extent:</b>	3 audiotapes (Reference copies).
<b>Creator::</b>	Perrot, Paul N., interviewee
<b>Language:</b>	English

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9618, Paul N. Perrot Oral History Interviews

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## Historical Note

Paul N. Perrot (1926- ) served as the Assistant Secretary for Museums at the Smithsonian from 1972 to 1983. Perrot was on the staff of the Corning Glass Museum from 1952 to 1972, serving as director from 1960 to 1972. After leaving the Smithsonian, Perrot served as director of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts from 1984 to 1991 and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art from 1991 to 1994. Perrot was very active in the international museum community, especially the International Council of Museums.

These interviews of Paul N. Perrot cover his youth in war-torn France, immigration to the United States, early career at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, years at the Corning Museum of Glass, and his tenure as Assistant Secretary for Museum Programs at the Smithsonian.

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## Introduction

The Oral History Program is part of the Smithsonian Institution Archives. The purpose of the program is to conduct interviews with current and retired members of the Smithsonian staff who have made significant contributions, administrative and scholarly, to the Institution. The project's goal is to supplement the published record and manuscript collections in the Archives, focusing on the history of the Institution and contributions to the increase and diffusion of knowledge made by its scholars.

The Paul N. Perrot interviews were conducted as part of the Smithsonian Institution Archives Oral History Program because of his role as Assistant Secretary for Museum Programs at the Smithsonian Institution from 1972 to 1983.

## Descriptive Entry

The Paul N. Perrot Interviews were conducted during five sessions in 2004 and 2009-2011 by Smithsonian Archives Historian Pamela M. Henson. This collection consists of five interview sessions, totaling approximately 14.5 hours of recordings and 314 pages of transcript.

Additional documentation pertaining to Paul N. Perrot can be found in the Records of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Museums and the Paul N. Perrot Papers in Smithsonian Institution Archives.

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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:

- Interviews
- Museum curators
- Oral history

Types of Materials:

- Audiotapes
- Transcripts

Names:

- Corning Museum of Glass
- Henson, Pamela M., interviewer
- International Council of Museums
- Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.)
- Perrot, Paul N.
- Santa Barbara Museum of Art
- Smithsonian Institution. Assistant Secretary for Museum Programs
- Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Geographic Names:

- France

## Container Listing

### Interviews

Interviews	<b>Interview 1: July 22, 2004</b>
Interviews	The first interview of Perrot discusses his childhood in war-torn France; immigration to New York City after the war; early jobs and education in New York; first museum position at the Cloisters of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; appointment as curator and then assistant director at the Corning Glass Museum; and involvement in museum professional societies, c. 1926-1970.
Interviews	Transcript, pp. 1-44 of audiotape recording, 2.5 hours.
Interviews	Audio Recordings of Interviews: Total Recording Time: 2.5 hours Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Original Masters: 5 7" reel-to-reel analog audiotapes</li><li>• Reference Copies: 3 audiotape cassettes</li></ul>
Interviews	<b>Interview 2: June 15, 2009</b>
Interviews	Perrot traces his arrival at the Smithsonian in 1972, responsibilities to carry out the National Museum Act, planning for the Museum Support Center, and supervision of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, c. 1972-1980s.
Interviews	Transcript 1-99, of audiotape recording, 2.5 hours.
Interviews	Audio Recordings of Interviews: Total Recording Time: 2.5 hours Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Original Masters: 2 digital .wav files</li><li>• Reference Copies: 2 digital .mp3 files</li></ul>
Interviews	<b>Interview 3: September 4, 2009</b>
Interviews	Discusses his work on the Bicentennial of the American Revolution, especially the renovation of the Arts and Industries Building; early planning for the Quadrangle complex; initiation of psychological studies of exhibits and visitors in the Office of Museum Programs based on work of Chandler Screven; critique of exhibits during his tenure and the work of the Office of Exhibits Central; the Festival of American Folklife in 1976; c. 1970s-1980s.
Interviews	Transcript, pp. 1-54, of audiotape recording, 2.5 hours.
Interviews	Audio Recordings of Interviews: Total Recording Time: 2.5 hours Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Original Masters: 2 digital .wav files</li></ul>

- Reference Copies: 2 digital .mp3 files

Interviews

**Interview 4: September 9, 2009**

Interviews

Perrot continues his discussions of planning for and transferring collections to the Museum Support Center; development of the Conservation Analytical Laboratory; planning, design and fundraising for the Quadrangle complex with the Museum of African Art, Sackler Gallery, International Center, and additional office space; c. 1980s.

Interviews

Transcript, pp. 1-78, of audio recording, 4.0 hours.

Interviews

Audio Recordings of Interviews: Total Recording Time: 4.0 hours

- Note:
- Original Masters: 3 digital .wav files
  - Reference Copies: 3 digital .mp3 files

Interviews

**Interview 5: May 5, 2011**

Interviews

Discusses the 1979-1980 Smithsonian delegation to China and other international activities; reminiscences of colleagues including William N. Richards, Jane R. Glaser, Peter G. Powers, and S. Dillon Ripley; Phillip Stern, Marvin Sadik; and concludes with his advice to young museum professionals; c. 1979-1980s.

Interviews

Transcript, pp. 1-66, of audio recording, 3.0 hours.

Interviews

Audio Recordings of Interviews: Total Recording Time: 3.0 hours

- Note:
- Original Masters: 2 digital .wav files
  - Reference Copies: 2 digital .mp3 files