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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Edgar Anderson

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
General.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Edgar Anderson
Date:	2002 September 17-19
Identifier:	AAA.anders02
Creator:	Anderson, Edgar, approximately 1922- (Interviewee) Gold, Donna, 1953- (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	78 Pages (Transcript) 24 Items (Sound recording: 24 sound files (5 hr., 52 min.); digital wav)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Edgar Anderson, 2002 September 17-19, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Edgar Anderson, 2002 September 17-19, 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 online.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Edgar Anderson (1922-) is a woodworker from Morristown, New Jersey. Donna Gold (1953-) is an art writer from Stockton Springs, Maine.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Edgar Anderson conducted 2002 September 17-19, by Donna Gold, in Morristown, New Jersey, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Scope and Contents

Anderson describes his philosophy of nature, and the genetic affinities between trees and humans. He discusses childhood in Jersey City, New Jersey; his parents; his grandfather, who was a bookbinder and leather craftsman; and other influences from his childhood, including his uncles and the Stickley family's Craftsman Farms. He recalls that his mother was an accomplished painter and amateur architect; his father was responsible for constructing the foundations for the Chrysler Building. He describes his early admiration for Frank Lloyd Wright, and a meeting with Wright to inquire about the Taliesin Fellowship. Anderson did not join the Fellowship. He briefly discusses Ayn Rand and *The Fountainhead*. He recalls his architectural studies at Pratt Institute, including a structural investigation of Wright's Fallingwater house, and studying architectural rendering with Caleb Hornbostel. He describes his service during World War II, serving in Italy as a platoon commander for the Army Engineers. He talks about meeting his wife, Joyce, and the genesis of their working partnership. After the war, he and Joyce studied at Pratt under Philip Johnson; he recalls his student projects and the continuing influence of Frank Lloyd Wright. He also studied at Chicago Technical College. He recalls his apprenticeship building boats with his uncle. He describes, in technical detail, the early years of the practice, including a discussion of his wood supplier, the Monteath Company. He comments at length on his personal creative process, which includes elliptical references to a wide variety of sources, including Umberto Eco and the film *2001*. He describes several projects for Lou and Sandy Grotta, including an anthropomorphic grandfather clock in the shape of a hand and wristwatch, an illusionary headboard, and the Knight table. He also comments on the Grotta house, designed by Richard Meier. He briefly mentions the editorial strategy of *American Craft*, and later *Craft Horizon*, and his relationships with editors such as John Kelsey, Paul Roman, and Rose Slivka. He mentions having taught at Philadelphia College of Art. He recalls racing in a demolition derby. He discusses his attitude towards criticism, mentioning Paul Smith, the director of the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, at length. He briefly describes his design for a 9/11 memorial at Liberty State Park and the political character of his work. He also reflects on his work relative to the culture at large. He talks about new technologies and new tools, and the evolution of the partnership. He describes his involvement in the craft community at Peters Valley, New Jersey. He comments at length on his apprentice Rob Sperber, and their development of the chainsaw mill.

General

Originally recorded 5 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 24 digital wav files. Duration is 5 hr., 52 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art -- Political aspects
- Decorative arts
- September 11 Terrorist Attacks, 2001
- Woodwork -- Equipment and supplies
- Woodwork -- Technique
- Woodworkers -- New Jersey -- Interviews.
- World War, 1939-1945

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

American Crafts Council. Museum of Contemporary Crafts
Anderson, Joyce, 1925-
Eco, Umberto
Fallingwater (Pa.)
Grotta, Lou
Grotta, Sandra
Hornbostel, Caleb
Johnson, Philip, 1906-2005
Kelsey, John, 1946-
Meier, Richard, 1934-
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Philadelphia College of Art -- Faculty
Pratt Institute -- Students
Rand, Ayn
Roman, Paul
Slivka, Rose
Smith, Paul J., 1931-
Sperber, Robert
Taliesin Fellowship
Woodstock School of Painting
Wright, Frank Lloyd, 1867-1959

Functions:

Memorials

Places:

Liberty State Park (Jersey City, N.J.)

Preferred Titles:

2001, a space odyssey (Motion picture)
Craft Horizons