



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Howard Ben Tré

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Howard Ben Tré
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.bentre07
<b>Date:</b>	2007 July 7
<b>Extent:</b>	63 Pages (Transcript) 3 Sound discs (Sound recording (4 hr., 3 min.); digital; 2 5/8 in.)
<b>Creator:</b>	Ben Tré, Howard, 1949-2020 Shea, Josephine, 1958- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
<b>Language:</b>	English .

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## 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.

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## Biographical / Historical

Howard Ben Tré (1949- 2020) was a glass artist from Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Josephine Shea is a curator from Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Howard Ben Tré conducted 2007 July 7, by Josephine Shea, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at the artist's studio, in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

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## Scope and Contents

Ben Tré speaks of his childhood in Rockaway Park, New York; his Polish immigrant father who was a woodworker and artist; inheriting a particular aesthetic and sense of hard work from his father; attending Brooklyn Technical High School to play football but not graduating; moving to Marshall, Missouri to attend Missouri Valley College for one year; attending Brooklyn College; becoming involved in Students for a

Democratic Society, the antiwar movement and civil rights movement of the 1960s; traveling to Cuba as part of the first Venceremos Brigade to cut sugarcane in 1969; meeting his first wife, Gay, in Cuba and returning to New York with her; organizing a food co-op and community events in Brooklyn; moving to Portland, Oregon; working in construction for the city before going back to school to study veterinarian medicine at Portland State University; discovering the glass studio in a garage at Portland State; meeting Dale Chihuly and working at Pilchuck Glass School; utilizing the foundry skills learned from Brooklyn Technical High to work with glass in casting and cope and drag methods; his series Burial Boxes and the influence of ancient architecture and ceremonial Chinese bronzes; the rise of the studio glass movement as symptomatic of socio-political-economic times, not just the pioneering efforts of Harvey Littleton and Dominic Labino; traveling throughout Europe with Gay; visiting Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová in Czechoslovakia; visiting Dan Dailey at Cristallerie Daum in France; attending Rhode Island School of Design [RISD]; his first show at Hadler/Rodriguez Gallery in 1980; teaching experiences at Haystack Mountain School of Craft and Appalachian Center for Craft; building and installing an oven at Blenko Glass in Milton, West Virginia and at Super Glass in Brooklyn; working with Mold Melted Glass Studio in Pelechov, Czech Republic; the history of glass and early glass-working techniques; his many commissions, including sited public projects such as Post Office Square in Boston; the adoption of his name, Ben Tré; return visits to Cuba; working with RISD to create a winter study session in Havana; and his view of artists as artists, not defined by medium. Ben Tré also recalls Anthony Parker, Italo Scanga, Ron Onorato, Alice Aycock, Ferdinand Hampson, Steven Polander, Karen LaMonte, among others.

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## General

Originally recorded 3 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 5 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hr., 3 min.

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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:

- Art commissions
- Civil rights -- United States
- Decorative arts
- Glass art -- Technique
- Peace movements

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- Appalachian Center for Craft
- Aycock, Alice
- Brooklyn College -- Students
- Brooklyn Technical High School (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)
- Brychtová, Jaroslava, 1924-
- Chihuly, Dale, 1941-
- Cristallerie Daum
- Dailey, Dan, 1947-
- Hadler/Rodriguez Gallery

Hampson, Ferdinand  
Haystack Mountain School of Crafts -- Faculty  
LaMonte, Karen, 1967-  
Labino, Dominick  
Libenský, Stanislav, 1921-2002  
Littleton, Harvey K.  
Missouri Valley College -- Students  
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America  
Onorato, Ronald J.  
Parker, Anthony  
Pilchuck School  
Polander, Steve  
Portland State University -- Students  
Rhode Island School of Design -- Students  
Scanga, Italo, 1932-2001  
Venceremos Brigade

Occupations:

Glass artists

Geographic Names:

Cuba -- Description and Travel  
Europe -- description and travel