



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Paulus Berensohn

Funding for this interview was provided by the Nanette L. Laitman
Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Paulus Berensohn
Identifier:	AAA.berens09
Date:	2009 March 20-21
Extent:	60 Pages (Transcript) 7 Items (Sound recording: 7 sound files (4 hr., 13 min.); digital, wav)
Creator:	Berensohn, Paulus Shapiro, Mark, 1955- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Language:	English .

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.

Related Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds the papers of Paulus Berensohn.

Biographical / Historical

Paulus Berensohn (1933-2017) was a poet, ceramic artist, dancer, and educator in Penland, North Carolina. Mark Shapiro (1955-) is executive director of Lumina Art Gallery, in New York.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Paulus Berensohn conducted 2009 March 20-21, by Mark Shapiro, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at Berensohn's home and studio, in Penland, North Carolina.

Scope and Contents

Berensohn speaks of growing up in New York City and his family; his brother Lorin Bernsohn, cellist with the New York Philharmonic; his problems with dyslexia as a child and yet his interest in reading and learning; an early interest in dance and the lack of support he received from his family; his admittance into Yale University, from where he quickly removed himself to attend Goddard College in Vermont; after Goddard attending Columbia University, Juilliard, and Bennington College while studying dance; studying under both Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham; his relationship with M.C. Richards; his first teaching job at Pendle Hill in Pennsylvania that lead to teaching at Swarthmore College for four years; his want to become a production potter while living on a farm in rural Pennsylvania where he created an artist commune; working with pinched pots and moving to Penland, North Carolina to teach workshops at the Penland School of Crafts; his book, "Finding Your Way With Clay," which started as a journaling and teaching project while at Penland; his interest in book art via his interest in journaling; the importance of clay as a healing material that connects humanity and the earth and his role as an advocate for clay; his work in and travels to Australia; recent photography projects and his busy and active schedule. Berensohn also recalls Remy Charlip, June Ekman, Fleur Cowles, John Cage, Robert Dunn, Yvonne Rainer, Carolyn Brown, Mary Oliver, Karen Karnes, Burt Supree, Toshiko Takaezu, Ann Stannard, Gerry Williams, George Kokis, Joe Bennion, Bill Brown, Jane Pieser, Ron Garfinkel, Jenny Mendes, Ian Anderson, Verne Stanford, Meg Peterson, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 4 SD memory cards. Reformatted in 2010 as 7 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hr., 13 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Artists' books
- Ceramicists -- North Carolina -- Interviews
- Clay
- Communal living
- Dance -- Study and teaching
- Diaries -- Authorship
- Dyslexia
- Photography
- Poets -- North Carolina -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Anderson, Ian, 1947-
- Bennington College -- Students

Bennion, Joseph W., 1952-
Brown, Carolyn
Brown, William J. (William Joseph), 1923-1992
Callahan, Harry M.
Charlip, Remy
Columbia University -- Students
Cowles, Fleur
Cunningham, Merce
Dunn, Robert G.
Ekman, June
Garfinkel, Ron
Goddard College -- Students
Graham, Martha
Juilliard School -- Students
Karnes, Karen, 1925-2016
Kokis, George
Mendes, Jerry
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
New York Philharmonic
Oliver, Mary, 1935-
Pendle Hill (School : Wallingford, Pa.) -- Faculty
Penland School of Crafts -- Faculty
Peterson, Mary
Pieser, Jane
Raine, Yvonne
Richards, Mary Caroline
Stanford, Verne
Stannard, Ann
Supree, Burton
Swarthmore College -- Faculty
Takaezu, Toshiko
Williams, Gerald, 1926-2014
Yale University -- Students

Occupations:

Artists

Geographic Names:

Australia -- Description and Travel