



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with J.B. Blunk

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with J.B. Blunk
Date:	2002 May 16
Identifier:	AAA.blunk02
Creator:	Blunk, J. B., 1926-2002 (Interviewee) Adamson, Glenn (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	61 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with J.B. Blunk, 2002 May 16, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with J.B. Blunk, 2002 May 16, 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

J.B. Blunk (1926-2002) was a woodworker from Inverness, California.

Scope and Contents

An interview of J.B. Blunk conducted 2002 May 16, by Glenn Adamson, in Inverness, California, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Scope and Contents

Blunk speaks about his childhood in Kansas; his studies at UCLA; classes with ceramic artist Laura Andreson; Andreson taking her students to see an exhibition of Japanese potters; Japanese influence and his desire to go to Japan; his service in the United States Army during the Korean War and being stationed in Japan at the end of the war; meeting Isamu Noguchi for the first time at a Mingei ceramic shop; meeting potter Kitaoji Rosanjin through Noguchi's wife, Yoshiko; his apprenticeship with Rosanjin; wedging clay for Rosanjin; his living arrangements at Rosanjin's house; his work for potter Toyo Kaneshige and traveling with him to Bizen, Japan; Blunk's return to California; building a kiln; teaching pottery at a small art school near Santa Monica; meeting his wife and working with her at a children's camp; his work on a sheep ranch and making metal jewelry; his move to Inverness and the abundance of wood there; learning how to use a chain saw while constructing a roof for Gordon Onslow-Ford's home (designed by Warren Callister); the wood he sculpted for his own home; his travels in 1969 and 1970 to Mexico and Macchu Picchu; his bench, "Seating Sculpture, 1968-69," in the exhibition *Objects: USA*; his Redwood bench sculpture in the California Design exhibition at the Pasadena Art Museum; his exhibition at the Bolinas Museum; his method of making an arch sculpture out of cypress wood, including chiseling the wood with a gouge; his sculpture, "Six Stones," at Stanford University; his use of shoe dye to blacken his sculptures; the personality and tactile qualities in his work; sculpting wet wood; the difficulties of sculpting with eucalyptus and his fondness for redwood; his piece at the Tassajara Mountain Zen Center in Carmel Valley, California; a commission from the Orientation Center for the Blind, Albany, California; and the 1994 forest fire that threatened his house. Blunk also recalls Bruce Mitchell and Warren Callister.

General

Originally recorded on 2 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 7 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hr., 34 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Ceramics -- Study and teaching
- Decorative arts
- Sculptors -- California -- Interviews
- Woodwork -- Equipment and supplies
- Woodwork -- Technique
- Woodworkers -- California -- Interviews.

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America