



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Lee Bontecou

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Lee Bontecou
Identifier:	AAA.bontec09
Date:	2009 January 10
Extent:	118 Pages (Transcript)
Creator:	Bontecou, Lee, 1931- Ashton, Dore
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.

Biographical / Historical

Lee Bontecou (1931-) is a sculptor and printmaker from New York, New York. Bontecou studied at the Art Students League of New York and taught at Brooklyn College.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Lee Bontecou conducted 2009 January 10, by Dore Ashton, for the Archives of American Art, at Knoedler and Company, in New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

Bontecou speaks of her interest in art as a young child and her parents' encouragement and influences; her two years at community college before studying painting then sculpture under William Zorach at the Arts Students League in New York City; her time working, living and studying in Rome though the Fulbright Scholarship; her abstracted figural works in Rome influenced by ancient Greek and Roman sculpture; her exploration in Europe of non-American influences and her admiration of the strong design sense in Italy; returning to the United States and working in the New York City art scene and exhibiting her works at Leo Castelli's Gallery; different techniques including welding and vacuum forming; meeting her husband, Bill Giles, and raising her daughter, Vallie, in New York City; leaving New York City and the Castelli Gallery for

Pennsylvania and the ability to experiment in her artwork; teaching at Brooklyn College where she worked with Morris Dorsky and enjoyed a wide range of students; her lack of affiliation with art movements, including Pop Art; her illness and her current work; and her strong belief that an M.F.A. is useless and that young artists have to make themselves. Bontecou also recalls Robert Brackman, Julio Gonzales, Alexander Calder, Richard Bellamy, Gabriel Kahn, Richard Stankewicz, Tom Doyle, Eve Hesse, Sandra and Jack Beale, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 3 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 10 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hr., 42 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Pop art
Sculpture -- Technique

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Art Students League (New York, N.Y.) -- Students
Bellamy, Richard
Brackman, Robert, 1898-
Brooklyn College -- Faculty
Calder, Alexander, 1898-1976
Doyle, Tom
González, Julio, 1876-1942
Hesse, Eva, 1936-1970
Leo Castelli Gallery
Stankiewicz, Richard, 1922-1983
Zorach, William, 1887-1966

Occupations:

Printmakers -- New York (State) -- New York
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York