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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Chunghi Choo

Funding for this interview was provided by the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America. Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Chunghi Choo
Date:	2007 July 30-2008 July 26
Identifier:	AAA.choo07
Creator:	Choo, Chunghi (Interviewee) Milosch, Jane (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	75 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Chunghi Choo, 2007 July 30-2008 July 26, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Chunghi Choo, 2007 July 30-2008 July 26, 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 is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

Restrictions

This transcript is open for research. Access to the entire recording is restricted. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Biographical / Historical

Chunghi Choo (1938-) is a Korean American educator, metalsmith, jeweler, and textile and mixed media artist based in Iowa City, Iowa. Interviewer Jane Milosch is a curator from Silver Spring, Maryland.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Chunghi Choo conducted 2007 July 30-2008 July 26, by Jane Milosch, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at the artist's home, in Iowa City, Iowa.

Scope and Contents

Choo speaks of establishing the Metalsmithing and Jewelry program at the University of Iowa in Iowa City; the elaborate equipment, tools, and safety protection used in the studio; her experience teaching silent metalforming at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine; participating in international workshops and seminars in Korea; the extensive world traveling she does with her husband, Dr. Charles Read, including destinations in Scandinavia, Thailand, Austria, Italy, and South Africa, among others; the house she designed in Iowa City; her love of the city and being surrounded by treasured friends, a supportive university, and beautiful environments; an interest in creative cooking and appreciation for diverse dishes from all around the world; her childhood and young adulthood in Inchon, Korea; growing up with an appreciation for beautiful art objects and classical music; an early interest and talent in drawing; attending Ewha Women's University as generations of women in her family had previously; experiences during the Korean War and April 19 Revolution in 1961; coming to the United States in 1961 as a student; studying English, ceramics, enameling, and stone cutting for one semester at Penland School of Crafts in Penland, N.C.; attending Cranbrook Art Academy in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan and studying metalsmithing with Richard Thomas, ceramics with Maija Grotell, and weaving with Glen Kaufman; living with Mrs. Loja Saarinen during her three and a half years at Cranbrook; teaching general craft at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Rapids from 1965-1968; pioneering the mixed-media studies with her students at UNI; accepting the challenge to build a metalsmithing and jewelry program at the University of Iowa in Iowa City in 1968; learning and teaching electroforming; the development of the electro-appliqué technique; extensive donor support and fundraising for the Metalsmithing and Jewelry program and its students; finding inspiration in nature, East Asian calligraphy, classical music, and travel; her long friendship with Jack Lenor Larsen and the great influence he has had on her work; being represented in major art museums and institutions world-wide, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Museum für Kunsthandwerk in Frankfurt, Germany, and many others; the joy she has when her students succeed and surpass her; and plans for future work, writing projects, and travel. Choo also speaks of the 2008 flooding of Iowa City and the state of Iowa during which her studio was severely damaged and many things were lost. Choo also recalls Park, No Soo; Lee, Sang Bong; Ruth Kao; Stanley Lechtzin; Yuho Fujio; David McFadden; Paul J. Smith; Rosanne Raab; Cody Bush; Jocelyn Chateauvert; Mary Merkel Hess; Sandra Mayer-VanderMey; Kee-ho Yeun, and others.

General

Originally recorded 5 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 27 digital wav files. Duration is 5 hr., 22 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Asian American art
Asian American artists

Asian American jewelers
Asian American metal-workers
Decorative arts
Jewelers -- Interviews
Jewelry making
Korean American Artists
Korean American art
Korean War, 1950-1953
Metal-work
Women artists
Women textile artists

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Bush, Cody
Chateauvert, Jocelyn
Cranbrook Academy of Art -- Students
Fujio, Yuho
Grotell, Maija
Haystack Mountain School of Crafts -- Faculty
Ihwa Yöja Taehakkyo
Kao, Ruth
Kaufman, Glen
Larsen, Jack Lenor
Lechtzin, Stanley, 1936-
Lee, Sang-Bong
Mayer-VanderMey, Sandra
McFadden, David Revere
Merkel-Hess, Mary
Museum für Kunsthandwerk Frankfurt am Main
Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.)
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Park, No Soo
Penland School of Handicrafts -- Students
Raab, Rosanne
Saarinen, Loja
Smith, Paul J.
Thomas, Richard C., 1917-1988
University of Iowa -- Faculty
University of Northern Iowa
Victoria and Albert Museum
Yeun, Kee-ho

Occupations:

Jewelers -- Iowa -- Iowa City
Metal-workers -- Iowa -- Iowa City
Mixed-media artists -- Iowa -- Iowa City
Textile designers -- Iowa -- Iowa City

Places:

Korea (South) -- History -- April Revolution, 1960