



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Frank E. Cummings, III

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.

Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
General.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Frank E. Cummings, III
Date:	2006 December 28-2007 January 5
Identifier:	AAA.cummin06
Creator:	Cummings, Frank E. (Interviewee) Lauria, Jo (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	74 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Frank E. Cummings, III, 2006 December 28-2007 January 5, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Frank E. Cummings, III, 2006 December 28-2007 January 5, 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 on line.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Frank E. Cummings III (1938-) is a furniture maker and woodworker of Long Beach, California. Jo Lauria (1954-) is a curator and art writer of Los Angeles, California.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Frank E. Cummings, III conducted 2006 December 28 and 2007 January 5, by Jo Lauria, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in the artist's home, in Long Beach, California.

Scope and Contents

Cummings speaks of his childhood in Los Angeles and the challenges he faced in school; receiving a B.A. from California State University, Long Beach; working with troubled youth as a social worker with Neighborhood Youth Association; teaching at California State University, Long Beach while earning his M.F.A. at California State University, Fullerton through the Black Faculty Teaching Program; the invitation by Eudora Moore to show in "California Design XI"; the importance of having his and his students' work published in Dona Meilach's book, "Creating Modern Furniture: Trends, Techniques, Appreciation"; the role of reflective surfaces in his work to capture the viewer's attention; using a diamond stylus to draw on glass; serving as the first M.F.A. graduate program coordinator at California State University, Long Beach; the development and creation of his famed clock, *It's About Time*, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; working as a gofer for Sam Maloof during a three day seminar at Yosemite National Park; receiving an invitation from Maloof to teach at Penland School of Crafts in Penland, North Carolina; his experiences at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine.; the consistent drive throughout his career to continue working, exhibiting, and publishing; his love of teaching; the honor of receiving the Outstanding Professor Award at California State University, Fullerton, in 1997; receiving a National Endowment of Arts grant in 1973 to spend two months in Ghana, Africa examining connections between the African American struggle for identity in the ghettos of the United States and struggles faced in Africa; returning to various regions in Africa in 1981 at the request of the State Department to evaluate and help increase object making productivity in villages while exhibiting his art in museums throughout the continent; his deliberate selection of materials; the role race has played in his career; his reverence of nature; designing furniture for the set of the movie, "How Stella Got Her Groove Back;" the development and creative process of the Carousel series; finding inspiration in his wife, C.C.; and plans for the future. Cummings also recalls Raymond Hein, Thomas Ferreira, James Prestini, Wendell Castle, William Hunter, Edward Cooke, Gerald W.R. Ward, Kelly H. L'Ecuyer, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 4 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 4 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hr., 28 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- African American art -- African influences
- African American artists
- Decorative arts

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Castle, Wendell, 1932-2018
- Cooke, Edward S., 1954-
- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
- Prestini, James, 1908-

Occupations:

Woodworkers -- California