



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Helen Williams Drutt (English)

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# Table of Contents

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

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Helen Williams Drutt (English)
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.drutt91
<b>Date:</b>	1991 July 5-October 20
<b>Creator:</b>	Drutt, Helen Williams (Interviewee) Pacini, Marina (Interviewer) Sewell, Darrel, 1939- (Interviewer)
<b>Extent:</b>	264 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Helen Williams Drutt (English), 1991 July 5-October 20, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)</a>

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## 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: 35mm microfilm reel 4777 available at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

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## Biographical / Historical

Helen Williams Drutt (1930- ) is an art dealer and gallery director of the Helen Drutt gallery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Known as Helen Drutt or Helen Williams Drutt and later Helen Williams Drutt English.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Helen Williams Drutt English conducted 1991 July 5-1991 October 20, by Darrel Sewell and Marina Pacini, for the Archives of American Art Philadelphia Project.

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## Scope and Contents

Drutt English speaks of early childhood in Winthrop, Massachusetts and growing up in Philadelphia; memories of her parents and grandparents and connection to the decorative arts and style; attending Birney Elementary School and returning to Winthrop in the summers; art lessons as a child; attending

Tyler School of Art; early training as an artist and interest in art history; first jobs and working at the Smith Memorial Recreation Center and the Psychological Research Institute and teaching; travel in Europe after college; marriage to Lawry Weiss and divorce; attending classes at the Barnes Foundation; teaching school children; second marriage to William Drutt; starting an interior design firm; moving to her current home; attempting to build a craft center in Philadelphia; joining the Arts Council of the YM/YWHA and significant exhibitions; marriage to Maurice English; serving as Founding Director of Philadelphia Council of Professional Craftsmen and organizing exhibitions; advising Calvin Hathaway on collecting for the Philadelphia Museum of Art; starting the Inter-Society on Twentieth Century Decorative Arts and Design; attending the World Crafts Council in Dublin; teaching at the Philadelphia College of Art, and creating an original course on contemporary craft; opening Helen Drutt Gallery; relationships to artists and to collectors; collecting philosophy concentrating on ceramics and jewelry; developing her archive; developing relationships with European goldsmiths; changing locations of gallery (Old Town, Walnut Street); teaching at Moore College of Art and becoming Director of the Moore College of Art Gallery; relationship of the gallery to the Philadelphia Craft Show and the Fabric Workshop; developing relationships with collectors beyond Philadelphia; working with the National Endowment for the Arts; various European scholars; travel to Hawaii and relationships there; interest in poetry; Relationship and marriage to Maurice English; Opening a branch of her gallery in New York; discussion of the changing perception of craft as art. Close friendship with Stella Kramrisch; relationship to George Nakashima; development of the gallery system for crafts; detailed discussion of her relationship to Calvin Hathaway; the development of COLLAB; Difference between work with non-profits and the commercial sector; developing the Robert Arneson exhibition at the Gallery of the Moore College of Art; the financials of running a gallery; work in Australia; ongoing network of international contacts. Also reminiscences of Rudolf Staffel, Dr. Hermann Gundesheimer, O. Spurgeon English, Gladys Myers and Gallery 1015, Ms. De Mazia, William Daley, T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings, Ted Hallman, Dick Jones, Daniel Jackson, Stanley Lechtzin, Olaf Skoogfors, Bill Daley, Dick Reinhardt, Dick Koga, Calvin Hathaway, Paula Winokur, Richard Kagan, Albert Paley, Ronald Pearson, Claus Bury, Robert Pfannebecker, Howard Kottler, Patti Warashina, Karen Karnes, Peter Voukos, Society of North American Goldsmiths, Tom Rippon, Emmy Van Leersum, Gijs Bakker, Breon O'Casey, Mark Burns, Emily Reinsel, Evan Turner, Edna Beron, Lois Boardman, Peter Dormer, Evert Von Straatten, Lila and Twigg Smith, Jim Jenson, Stephen Berg, Robert Arneson, Stella Kramrisch, Claire Zeisler, Ruth Duckworth, Joke van Ommen, Dale Chihuly, James Surls, Peter Chang.

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## General

Originally recorded on 7 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 13 digital wav files. Duration is 8 hr., 28 min.

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Decorative arts  
Handicraft -- Collectors and collecting -- Pennsylvania -- Pennsylvania  
Handicraft -- Exhibitions

Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Sound recordings

Names:

Helen Drutt Gallery  
Moore College of Art  
Philadelphia Council of Professional Craftsmen  
Philadelphia Museum of Art

Occupations:

Art dealers -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia  
Gallery directors -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia