



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with David Ellsworth

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.....	1
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects	2

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with David Ellsworth
Identifier:	AAA.ellswo07
Date:	2007 July 16
Extent:	5 Items (Sound recording: 5 sound files (2 hr., 41 min.); digital, wav)
Creator:	Ellsworth, David, 1944- Shea, Josephine, 1958- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
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

David Ellsworth (1944-) is a studio woodworker from Quakertown, Pennsylvania. Josephine Shea (1958-) is a curator from Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan.

Scope and Contents

An interview of David Ellsworth conducted 2007 July 16, by Josephine Shea, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at Ellsworth's home, in Quakertown, Pennsylvania.

Scope and Contents

Ellsworth speaks of living and growing up in Iowa for the first fourteen years of his life; moving to Boulder, Colorado when his father became the director of libraries; being the youngest of two boys; his parents meeting at Oberlin College; his early interest and skill in leatherwork and woodwork as a child; spending time with the family at their cabin up in the mountains in Colorado; his experiences with music, vocals, and woodshop in junior high; attending a preparatory high school that had a very strong art program;

singing in the Army for the Army Air Defense Command; traveling around with the band; being sent to the headquarters of United States Army of Europe in Heidelberg as a speed typist; studying and learning German while abroad; getting admitted into the architecture department at Washington University in St. Louis; flunking out after three semesters; going to New York City to follow a love interest as well as to study art; attending The New School for Social Research; moving back to the Midwest due of the heavy toll of city life; enrolling in the sculpture department at the University of Colorado and receiving both a bachelor of fine arts and a master of fine arts; his first independent show at Metropolitan State College in Denver, Colorado; working as a designer for a stainless steel food services equipment company called Green Brothers; working at the Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass, Colorado; opening up a private studio in Boulder; partaking in various craft shows; working with the Belles Artes Gallery in New York City and Santa Fe, the Del Mano Gallery in Los Angeles, The Hand and the Spirit Gallery in Scottsdale which became Materia Gallery, the Gargoyle Gallery in Aspen; and the Cooper-Lynn Gallery in New York City; working as a teacher at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Gatlinburg; his experiences working with resin; his past experiences working with various kinds of wood; his past divorce; the influence of Native American and Southwest architecture and landscape on his work; the lack of reviews on woodturners and woodturning exhibitions; the difficulty of writing about craft art because of the lack of language; turning down commission work because of the limitations it imposes on the artist or creator; the direction in which he believes the craft of woodturning is going; woodturning as predominantly a hobby for retirees seeking to satisfy a need for creative energy; woodturning as a male-dominated craft; the surprisingly large number of well-known men in the fiber field today; designing and making his own line of tools; creating tutorial videos; holding woodturning classes at his home studio; his working process and how it has changed over time; how he and his wife Wendy ended up in Quakertown, Pennsylvania; and how he came up with his various series and how each developed. Ellsworth also recalls Ed Moulthrop, Melvin and Mark Lindquist, JoAnn Rapp; Steven Hogbin, Lois Moran, James Prestini, Irving Lipton, Albert LeCoff, Rick Mastelli, Clay Foster, Michelle Holzapfel, Mark Sfirri, Virginia Dodson, Betty Scarpino, Bonnie Klein, Arthur and Jane Mason, Fleur and Charlie Bressler, Giles Gibson, and others.

General

Originally recorded 3 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 5 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hr., 41 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Decorative arts
Woodwork -- Equipment and supplies
Woodworkers -- Pennsylvania -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Anderson Ranch Arts Center
Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts -- Faculty
Belles Artes Gallery
Bressler, Charlie

Bressler, Fleur
Cooper-Lynn Gallery
Del Mano Gallery
Dodson, Virginia
Foster, Clay
Gargoyle Gallery
Gibson, Giles
Hogbin, Stephen
Holzapfel, Michelle, 1951-
Klein, Bonnie
LeCoff, Albert B., 1950-
Lindquist, Mark, 1949-
Lindquist, Melvin
Lipton, Irving
Mason, Arthur K.
Mason, Jane S.
Mastelli, Rick, 1949-
Moran, Lois
Moulthrop, Ed, 1916-2003
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
New School for Social Research (New York, N.Y.) -- Students
Oberlin College
Prestini, James, 1908-
Rapp, Joanne
Scarpino, Betty
Sfirri, Mark
United States. Army
University of Colorado -- Students
Washington University (Saint Louis, Mo.) -- Students
Woodstock School of Painting

Geographic Names:

Colorado -- description and travel
Iowa -- Description and Travel