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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Gary Griffin

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 Gary Griffin
Date:	2004 August 4
Identifier:	AAA.griffi04
Creator:	Griffin, Gary, 1945- (Interviewee) Adamson, Glenn (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	73 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Gary Griffin, 2004 August 4, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Gary Griffin, 2004 August 4, 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

Gary Griffin (1945-) is a metalsmith and educator from Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Glenn Adamson is a curator and art historian from Wisconsin.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Gary Griffin conducted 2004 August 4, by Glenn Adamson, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Scope and Contents

Griffin speaks of the opening of the new studio building at Cranbrook; growing up in Los Angeles, California; spending summers in Taos, N.M. with his grandmother; his mother's antique and decorating business; going to Catholic high school; working in a furniture repair shop as a teenager; taking college courses in welding and art; transferring to California State University, Long Beach, and getting a dual degree in industrial and fine arts; deciding to focus on metalwork; getting his M.F.A. at Tyler School of Art; metalsmiths who influenced his early work; the role of functional and conceptual art; having Stanley Lechtzin as a teacher and mentor; the craft community in Philadelphia, attending metalsmith workshops and conferences; and being influenced by decorative arts. Griffin also speaks of becoming head of the jewelry program at Rochester Institute of Technology; working with Hans Christensen; participating in the Society of North American Goldsmiths; his interest in machine technology; deciding to turn from jewelry to blacksmithing; finding dealers for his work; the art community in Rochester; keeping variety in his work; teaching at Cranbrook and rebuilding the metals program; how material culture influences his teaching and artwork; how economics impacts his work; working on commission; making the entrance gates at Cranbrook; working on some of his other important pieces; his current project; the difference between craft and fine arts; and his plans for the future. Griffin also recalls Al Pine, Jack Prip, John Marshall, Philip Fike, Olaf Skoogfors, Elliot Pujol, Rudolf Staffel, Albert Paley, Mary Jane Leland, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 5 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 6 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hr., 52 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Decorative arts
- Metal-work
- Metal-workers -- Michigan -- Bloomfield Hills -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Cranbrook Academy of Art -- Faculty
- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
- Rochester Institute of Technology -- Faculty