



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with William Harper

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 William Harper
Identifier:	AAA.harper04
Date:	2004 January 12-13
Creator:	Harper, William, 1944- (Interviewee) Nelson, Harold B. (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	50 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with William Harper, 2004 January 12-13, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with William Harper, 2004 January 12-13, 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

William Claude Harper (1944-) is a jeweler and enamelist from New York, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

An interview of William Harper conducted 2004 January 12-13, by Harold B. Nelson, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in New York City, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

Harper speaks of growing up in the small town of Bucyrus, Ohio; taking art lessons as a child; attending Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Institute of Art and completing an M.S. in Art Education; exhibiting at the May Show at Cleveland Museum of Art; choosing to work in enamels, especially cloisonné, and its relationship to painting; visiting New York for the first time and seeing an exhibit of June Schwarcz's work; participating in both national juried exhibitions and solo exhibitions, including a one-man exhibition at the Renwick Gallery; and receiving the National Endowment for the Arts Craft Research Fellowship. Harper also speaks of teaching experiences at several schools; being hired at Florida State University; teaching workshops at the Penland School of Crafts; publishing his book, "Step by Step Enameling;" his affiliation with various craft and fine art galleries; moving to New York City; using precious and commonplace materials; his technique in creating pieces and the tendency to work in series, such as Pagan Babies and Pentimenti; exploring jewelry forms; and the influence of African sculpture, art history, religion, mythology, and artist Jasper Johns on his artwork. Harper also recalls Kenneth Bates, John Paul Miller, Margaret Craver, Robert Ebendorf, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 4 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 15 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hr., 29 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Cloisonné
- Decorative arts
- Enamel and enameling

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Schwarcz, June, 1918-2015

Occupations:

- Enamel artists -- New York (State) -- New York
- Jewelers -- New York (State) -- New York