



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Karen Karnes

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

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Karen Karnes
<b>Date:</b>	2005 August 9-10
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.karnes05
<b>Creator:</b>	Karnes, Karen, 1925-2016 (Interviewee) Shapiro, Mark, 1955- (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
<b>Extent:</b>	65 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Karen Karnes, 2005 August 9-10, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Karen Karnes, 2005 August 9-10, 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.

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## Biographical / Historical

Karen Karnes (1925- ) is a potter from Morgan, Vermont. Mark Shapiro is a potter from Worthington, Massachusetts.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Karen Karnes conducted 2005 August 9-10, by Mark Shapiro, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at the artist's home and studio, in Morgan, Vermont.

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## Scope and Contents

Karnes discusses her childhood in Brooklyn and the Bronx as the daughter of Russian and Polish immigrants working in the garment industry; living in a cooperative housing project built especially for garment workers and their families;

attending the High School of Music and Art, New York City; going on to Brooklyn College, and fortuitously landing in the class of Serge Chermayoff, who taught primarily in the Bauhaus style; meeting her first husband, David Weinrib, with whom she eventually moved to Pennsylvania; David bringing home a slab of clay for her to work with, her first experience with the material; traveling to Italy and working in a ceramics factory there; attending a summer session at Black Mountain College in North Carolina and taking a class with Josef Albers; moving to Stony Point, in Rockland County, New York, to start Gatehill Community; her first gallery relationship, with Bonniers, New York City; the birth of her son Abel in 1956; the first time she used a salt kiln, while at the Penland School of Arts and Crafts, Penland, North Carolina, in 1967, and its effect on the character of her work; her relationship with the Hadler-Rodriguez Galleries, New York City; the pottery show in Demarest, New Jersey; her teaching philosophy and methods, including the "Continuum"; meeting her life partner, Ann Stannard, in 1970; Ann's home in Wales, and living there before settling in Vermont; the fire that destroyed their home and studio in 1998; the issues of privacy and isolation in an artist's life; her expectations about her career, especially as a Jewish woman; and her feelings on the work of contemporary potters.

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## Scope and Contents

Karnes also recalls John Cage, Soetsu Yanagi, Bernard Leach, Shoji Hamada, Charles Olsen, Marguerite Wildenhain, Paul and Vera B. Williams, Mary Caroline Richards, Goren Holmquist, Paul J. Smith, Mikhail Zakin, Jack Lenor Larsen, Isamu Noguchi, D. Hayne Bayless, Zeb Schactel, Warren Mackenzie, Garth Clark, Joy Brown, Robbie Lobell, Paulus Berensohn, and others.

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## General

Originally recorded on 3 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 6 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hr., 35 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:

- Ceramics
- Decorative arts
- Jewish artists
- Women artists

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America

### Occupations:

Ceramicists -- Vermont