



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Ron Kent

Funding for this interview was provided by the Nanette L. Laitman
Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
Business Number: Phone: 202-633-7950
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical	1
Scope and Contents	1
Names and Subjects	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Ron Kent
Date:	2010 April 20-22
Identifier:	AAA.kent10
Creator:	Kent, Ron, 1931- (Interviewee) Riedel, Mija, 1958- (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	99 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Ron Kent, 2010 April 20-22, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Ron Kent, 2010 April 20-22, 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 online.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Ron Kent (1931-) is a wood artist in Kailua, Hawaii.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Ron Kent conducted 2010 April 20 and 22, by Mija Riedel, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at Kent's home and studio in Kailua, Hawaii.

Scope and Contents

Kent discusses his first entry into Easter show (at Honolulu Academy of Arts) in late 1960s/early 1970s; the challenge of figuring of making objects; the notion of limitations as an important factor in his work; growing up in Los Angeles of the 1930s; an ethic of frugality and a father who could make and repair things around the house; his first career as an engineer; influential books, including works by Ayn Rand and Franz Kafka; a new career as a stockbroker in San Diego in the early 1960s; making a small kayak; his willingness to push boundaries and the need for a certain amount of anxiety in his creative process; discovery of Norfolk/Cook pine as main medium; his wife Myra's gift of his first lathe in the early 1970s; influential shapes and vessels, including the ovoid shape and long-necked bottles; the need for "heft" in his pieces; the advantages and disadvantages of being a self-taught artist; early exhibitions of bottles, and first purchase by del Mano Gallery, Los Angeles; the notion of "dialog" with wood; the creative perils of too much technical and technological facility; his first trip to New York City; the emergence of translucence in his work, and oil-sandpaper techniques; the evolution of the pedestal foot; the series Guardian, from the mid-2000s; marketing efforts and gallery recognition, including one-man show at Barry Friedman, Ltd., New York, NY; the imposter syndrome; acquisition of a piece by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York in the 1980s; acquisition of work by Jonathan Fairbanks at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; his dishwashing liquid formula for treating wood; experimentation with wave forms, including a bench for the for 20th anniversary of the Contemporary Museum in Honolulu; early artistic pioneers and influences, including James Prestini, Rude Osolnik, and Palmer Sharpless; the notion of value in art and in life; the importance of breakage, and the series Post-Nuclear of stitched vessels; collaboration with fiber artist Pat Hickman in the 1990s; retirement from stockbroker job in 1997 to become a woodturner full time and negative effect on artistic productivity; initial commissions, and the decision not to accept more of them; brief series Calabash; the happenstance nature of using wood as a medium; the importance of American woodturning for the international recognition of the movement; work he finds interesting, including that of Ron Gerton and Michael Bauermeister; a philosophy of continually trying new approaches or inventing unconventional approaches. He recalls David Ellsworth, Dale Nish, John Perreault, Hap Sakw, Albert LeCoff, Vladimir Ossipoff, Bob Stocksdales, and Jerry Glaser.

General

Originally recorded on 6 memory cards as 9 digital sound files. Duration is 5 hr., 18 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Woodworkers -- Hawaii -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

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