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Oral history interview with L. Brent Kington

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with L. Brent Kington
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.kingto01
<b>Date:</b>	2001 May 3-4
<b>Extent:</b>	95 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Creator:</b>	Kington, L. Brent (Louis Brent), 1934-2013 Douglas, Mary F., 1956- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
<b>Language:</b>	English .

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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

L. Brent Kington (1934-) is a metalsmith from Makanda, Illinois. Mary Douglas (1956-) is a curator at the Mint Museum of Craft and Design in Charlotte, N.C.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of L. Brent Kington conducted 2001 May 3-4, by Mary Douglas, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in Kington's home and studio, Makando, Illinois.

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## Scope and Contents

Kington describes his childhood and the impact of the Depression; his adopted sister Kay; and his hyperactivity and difficulty accomplishing schoolwork. He comments on his high school teachers; his academic and athletic accomplishments at University of Kansas (UK); his studies at Cranbrook Academy of Art with Richard (Dick) Thomas "the intellectual silversmith" and his "mentor"; Hugh Acton and the GM Tech Center; and fellow metalsmiths Fred Fenster, Mike Jerry, Stanley Lechtzin, and Heikki Seppä.

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## Scope and Contents

He discusses exhibitions including "Kansas Designer Craftsmen," "Michigan Designer Craftsmen," "Fiber, Clay, Metal," "Creative Casting, Young Americans 1962," and "Objects: USA." He talks about Ashanti gold weights; Scandinavian design; teaching at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois (SIU) and Illinois State University (ISU), and taking students to the Saint Louis Art Museum to see granulation in Mycenaean gold. He comments at length on his toys and experimenting with ideas about toys.

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## Scope and Contents

Kington also describes blacksmithing workshops held at SIU and the "renaissance" of blacksmithing in the United States. He recalls his involvement with the Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG), American Craft Council (ACC), World Crafts Council (WCC), Artist Blacksmith's Association of North America (ABANA), the Kentucky School of Craft, the National Ornamental Metal Museum, and other organizations. He discusses his weathervane pieces and other series such as Icarus, Crozier, Europa, and Axis Mundi. He comments on the influence of Mircea Eliade's book "The Forge and the Crucible" (1979), considers the blacksmith's role in various cultural mythologies, and evaluates publications such as "Anvil's Ring" and "American Blacksmith."

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## Scope and Contents

He comments on the current state of affairs in metalsmithing; his retirement from SIU and teaching in the University of Georgia-Cortona program; the impact of Cyril Stanley Smith's insights and the importance of his book "A History of Metallography" (1960); his appreciation of Daryl Meier's work; exploring new techniques such as mokume gane, kuromido, shibuichi, rokusho (patination process); encouraging Mary Lee Hu to pursue wire structuring; and his enthusiasm for sharing information. He recalls John Allgood, Philip Baldwin, Robert Ebendorf, Phil Fike, Maija Grotell, Marvin Jensen, Richard Mawdsley, Lee Nordness, Ron Pearson, Bob Peterson, Gene and Hiroko Pijanowski, Jim Wallace, and others.

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## General

Originally recorded on 7 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 14 digital wav files. Duration is 6 hr., 54 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:

- Blacksmithing
- Blacksmithing -- Technique
- Decorative arts
- Learning disabilities

Metal-workers -- Illinois -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Sound recordings

Names:

Cranbrook Academy of Art -- Students  
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America  
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale -- Faculty  
Thomas, Richard C., 1917-1988  
University of Kansas -- Students