



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Gerhardt Knodel

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Gerhardt Knodel
Identifier:	AAA.knodel04
Date:	2004 August 3
Creator:	Knodel, Gerhardt (Interviewee) Adamson, Glenn (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	7 Items (Sound recording: 7 sound files (5 hr., 23 min.); digital, wav) 77 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Gerhardt Knodel, 2004 August 3, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Gerhardt Knodel, 2004 August 3, 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.

Biographical / Historical

Gerhardt Knodel (1940-) is a fiber artist from Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Glenn Adamson is a curator and, art historian from Wisconsin.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Gerhardt Knodel conducted 2004 August 3, 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

Knodel speaks of his German heritage; his parents each immigrating to Los Angeles; growing up in Los Angeles and being part of the German community; his father building houses; the influence of his childhood

environment on his artwork; taking art classes in school; participating in theater and set design; studying art at Los Angeles City College; collecting textiles; transferring to UCLA; teaching high school art; the influence of Abstract Expressionism on his early work; quitting teaching and studying fiber arts at University of California, Long Beach; traveling to numerous countries, and their influence on his artwork; researching and lecturing on fabric as environment; how the fiber art movement has evolved and changed; early exhibitions and the need for more venues; the fiber art community in the 1960s and 70s; the importance of University art programs; moving to Michigan and teaching at Cranbrook; the importance of scale and context in his work; making large scale pieces to fit within an architectural space; working on commission for public projects; working with the community in Pontiac, Michigan on a commissioned piece; the influence of the history of textiles; being director of the Cranbrook Academy of Art; putting figures on to textiles; the decline of the fiber art movement; and the benefits of schools such as Cranbrook. Knodel also recalls Bernard Kester, Mary Jane Leland, Laura Andreson, Anni Albers, Sheila Hicks, Neda Al-Hilali, Lenore Tawney, Claire Zeisler, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Jack Lenor Larsen, Christo, Kiki Smith, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 4 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 7 digital wav files. Duration is 5 hr., 23 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Abstract expressionism
- Decorative arts
- Textile crafts -- Study and teaching

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Abakanowicz, Magdalena
- Al-Hilali, Neda, 1938-
- Albers, Anni
- Andreson, Laura
- Christo, 1935-
- Cranbrook Academy of Art -- Faculty
- Hicks, Sheila, 1934-
- Kester, Bernard
- Larsen, Jack Lenor, 1927-2020
- Leland, Mary Jane
- Los Angeles City College -- Students
- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
- Smith, Kiki, 1954-
- Tawney, Lenore
- University of California, Los Angeles -- Students
- Zeisler, Claire, 1903-1991

Occupations:

Fiber artists -- California

Places:

California -- Los Angeles -- Description and Travel
Michigan -- Description and Travel