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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Marilyn Levine

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Marilyn Levine
Date:	2002 May 15
Identifier:	AAA.levine02
Creator:	Levine, Marilyn, 1935-2005 (Interviewee) Adamson, Glenn (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	54 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Marilyn Levine, 2002 May 15, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Marilyn Levine, 2002 May 15, 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

Marilyn Levine (1935-2005) was a ceramist from Oakland, California.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Marilyn Levine conducted 2002 May 15, by Glenn Adamson, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in Oakland, California.

Scope and Contents

Levine speaks of growing up in Alberta, Canada; going to the University of Alberta for her undergraduate and graduate degrees in chemistry; being an analytical inorganic chemist; meeting her husband at the university; her husband's work at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan and how rules about nepotism prevented her from teaching; auditing a drawing and painting art class when she could not find a job; taking evening pottery classes taught by Beth Hone; teaching chemistry at Campion College during the school year and pottery during the summers at the University of Regina; meeting Jack Sures at the Western Potters' Association and his influence on her career; helping Sures get a pottery position at the University of Regina; teaching with him from 1966-1969; using a travel grant from the Canada Council to meet American artists such as Peter Voulkos, Ron Nagle, James Melchert, and Robert Arneson; applying to graduate school at the University of California at Berkeley and being rejected; a James Melchert workshop at Beth Hone's studio; getting into Berkeley's graduate program with Melchert's help; receiving an M.F.A.; separating from her husband; experimenting with Funk art; seeing a pair of worn down shoes and becoming inspired to specialize in super-realist ceramic sculptures; her work as "timeless" and not of a particular fashion; showing her art in a New York gallery and being ripped off; having her M.F.A., one person show, at the Hansen Fuller Gallery and at the University Art Museum; letting the galleries price her work; exhibiting at OK Harris in New York; the long, slow process of making pieces; her work being accepted in America, but not in Canada; teaching ceramics to non-art majors at the University of Utah; developing a studio building, The West Coast Macaroni Factory, with Peter Voulkos; her methods, techniques, and materials including her experiments with fiberglass, nylon, and Dacron; avoiding big conferences, such as the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts [NCECA]; her first museum retrospective in 1974 at the Norman McKenzie Art Gallery; her exhibition at the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery in Waterloo, Ontario, in conjunction with the University of Waterloo; her exhibition, "Sharp Focus Realism," at the Sidney Janis Gallery; her involvement in the exhibition, "Clayworks: 20 Americans," at the American Craft Museum; her work in museum collections; having a commission to make ceramic sculptures of sporting gear for Pacific Enterprises; her studio assistants and feeling a lack of privacy; titling her work with human names for identification purposes but not having specific references to anyone. Levine also recalls Robert Bechtle, Ruth Braunstein, Joan Brown, Stephen DeStaebler, Ivan Karp, Bella Feldman, Duane Hanson, Clay Jensen, John Mason, Joan Mondale, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 1 sound disc. Reformatted in 2010 as 2 digital wav files. Duration is 1 hr., 29 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art -- Philosophy
- Ceramics -- Technique
- Decorative arts
- Women artists
- Women ceramicists
- Women sculptors

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

Melchert, Jim, 1930-
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Voukos, Peter, 1924-2002

Occupations:

Ceramicists -- California -- Oakland
Sculptors -- California -- Oakland