



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Harvey K. Littleton

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Harvey K. Littleton
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.little01
<b>Date:</b>	2001 March 15
<b>Creator:</b>	Littleton, Harvey K. (Interviewee) Byrd, Joan Falconer (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
<b>Extent:</b>	36 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Harvey K. Littleton, 2001 March 15, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Harvey K. Littleton, 2001 March 15, 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

Harvey K. Littleton (1922- ) is a glass artist, potter, sculptor, and printmaker from Wisconsin and Spruce Pine, N.C. Joan Falconer Byrd (1939-) is a professor in the art department of Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, N.C.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Harvey K. Littleton conducted 2001 March 15, by Joan Falconer Byrd, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in Littleton's home, Spruce Pine, N.C.

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## Scope and Contents

Littleton speaks of his family background including the work of his father [Jesse Talbot Littleton] at Corning Glassworks, and his early experiences with glass at Corning. He discusses his studies at the University

of Michigan in physics and his switch to sculpture; his studies at Cranbrook Academy, in 1941, and his teachers Marshall Fredericks and Carl Milles; his studies on industrial design; becoming a potter; and working at Corning Glassworks, in the summers, inspecting hand-blown coffee pots and top-of-the-stove ware. He discusses his service in the 849th Signal Intelligence Unit in North Africa and Italy during WWII; studying with Norah Braden, at the Brighton School of Art, in England; the importance of, "A Potter's Book," by Bernard Leach; teaching pottery at night, in Ann Arbor, Michigan; the beginnings of the Ann Arbor Potters Guild; making his own potters' wheels; serving on the board of Penland School of Crafts; the development of "American" art and the impact of the GI Bill on the creation and expansion of art departments; the "master-slave apprentice system"; "the genius of Shoji Hamada"; the properties of porcelain; artist communities at Penland and Cranbrook; the influence of Bill Brown, director of the Penland School of Crafts; art education and the impact of the MFA; Black Mountain College, Pilchuck Glass School, and Haystack Mountain School of Crafts; problems with the European educational system; the importance of Erwin Eisch's work on his development; his relationship with galleries and museums, particularly the Museum of Modern Art, the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and American Craft Museum; and consignment laws. He also comments on the founding of the Midwest Designer Craftsmen; his involvement with the American Crafts Council (ACC) and the distinction between "the indigenous craftsman" and the "artist-craftsman"; American Crafts Council fairs; his printmaking; his techniques of sandblasting; teaching vitreography; and his plans for opening a print gallery. He recalls Charles Eames, Peter Voulkos, Shoji Hamada, Robert Turner, Dante Marioni, Fritz Dreisbach, and others.

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## General

Originally recorded on 3 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 6 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hrs., 10 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:

- Decorative arts
- Glass artists -- North Carolina -- Interviews
- Potters -- Interviews
- Pottery -- Study and teaching -- United States.
- Printmakers -- North Carolina -- Interviews
- Prints -- Technique

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- American Craft Council
- Ann Arbor Potters Guild
- Black Mountain College (Black Mountain, N.C.)
- Braden, Norah, 1901-
- Brown, William J. (William Joseph), 1923-1992
- Corning Glass Works
- Cranbrook Academy of Art -- Students
- Dreisbach, Fritz

Eames, Charles  
Eisch, Erwin, 1927-  
Fredericks, Marshall M., 1908-1998  
Hamada, Shōji, 1894-1978  
Haystack Mountain School of Crafts  
Marioni, Dante, 1964-  
Midwest Designer-Craftsmen  
Milles, Carl, 1875-1955  
Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.)  
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America  
Penland School of Handicrafts  
Pilchuck School  
Renwick Gallery  
Turner, Robert Chapman, 1913-2005  
University of Michigan -- Students  
Voukos, Peter, 1924-2002