



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with John Mason

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with John Mason
Date:	2006 August 28
Identifier:	AAA.mason06
Creator:	Mason, John, 1927-2019 (Interviewee) Smith, Paul J. (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	47 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with John Mason, 2006 August 28, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with John Mason, 2006 August 28, 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 is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

Restrictions

This transcript is open for research. Access to the entire audio recording is restricted. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Biographical / Historical

John Mason (1927-2019) was a ceramicist of Los Angeles, California. Paul Smith (1931-) is Director Emeritus, American Craft Museum of New York City, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

An interview of John Mason conducted 2006 August 28, by Paul Smith, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in Smith's office, in New York, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

Mason speaks of his childhood in rural Nevada; early interests in photography and jazz; moving to Los Angeles to attend the Los Angeles County Art Institute, now Otis College of Art and Design; attending Chouinard Art Institute; experiences working at Vernon Kilns and with the head designer Elliot House; opening Glendale Boulevard Studio with Peter Voukos; his association with Ferus Gallery; and teaching experiences at Pomona College, University of California at Berkeley, University of California at Irvine, and Hunter College. He also discusses the development of the Hudson River series exhibition; solo exhibitions at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LA Louver Gallery, Pasadena Art Museum, now Norton Simon Museum of Art, and others; participation in group exhibitions such as, "Sculpture Off the Pedestal" at Grand Rapids Museum of Art; imagery found in his work including the orbit, the figure, the torque, the spear form, the vertical form, the cross or X form, symmetry and the monolith; an interest in Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan; the architectural qualities in his work; the foresight of Buckminster Fuller; and the accelerating change in technology that has taken place over the course of his career. Mason recalls Susan Peterson, Kenneth Price, Paul Soldner, Mac McClain, Fred Marer, Millard Sheets, Edward Kienholz, Walter Hopps, James Melchert, John Coplans, Richard Ballard, Richard Koshalek, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 5 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 5 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hrs., 26 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Ceramicists -- California -- Los Angeles -- Interviews
- Decorative arts
- Sculptors -- California -- Los Angeles -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Ballard, Richard
- Chouinard Art Institute (Los Angeles, Calif.) -- Students
- Coplans, John
- Ferus Gallery (Los Angeles, Calif.)
- Fuller, R. Buckminster (Richard Buckminster), 1895-1983
- Hopps, Walter
- Kienholz, Edward, 1927-
- Koshalek, Richard
- Marer, Fred
- McClain, Mac
- Melchert, Jim, 1930-
- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
- Otis Art Institute -- Students
- Peterson, Susan, 1925-2009

Price, Kenneth, 1935-2012
Sheets, Millard, 1907-1989
Soldner, Paul
Sullivan, Louis H., 1856-1924
Voukos, Peter, 1924-2002
Wright, Frank Lloyd, 1867-1959