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Oral history interview with Nan McKinnell

Funding for this interview was provided by the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America. Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

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# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
General.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	1
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects .....	2

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Nan McKinnell
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.mckinn05
<b>Date:</b>	2005 June 12-13
<b>Extent:</b>	80 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Creator:</b>	McKinnell, Nan Holt, Kathy 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

Nan McKinnell (1913-2012) was a ceramist from Fort Collins, Colorado. Kathy Holt is a ceramist and educator from Littleton, Colorado.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Nan McKinnell conducted 2005 June 12-13, by Kathy Holt, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in Fort Collins, Colorado.

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## Scope and Contents

McKinnell speaks of her childhood in Stanton, Nebraska, and summers spent on her grandfather's farm in Grand Forks, N.D.; her late husband James McKinnell's childhood in Nitro, W.V., and later in Seattle, Washington; her musical education at Wayne State Teacher's College, Nebraska; her first teaching job in Meadow Grove, Nebraska; her husband's tenure in the Navy in the early 1940s, when he was stationed in Hawaii during the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941; her move out West to stay with

relatives in Seattle, Washington, and Hollywood, California; obtaining her Master's degree in art at the University of Washington while teaching music at Bryn Mawr College; her early experiences with ceramics under Paul Bonifas at Bryn Mawr; meeting her husband Jim and marrying him in July 1948; their move to Baltimore where Jim McKinnell was working for Locke Insulators; the couple's trip to Paris, France, on the G.I. bill, where Jim studied at the Ecole Nationale Superieure d'Arts et Metiers; bicycling around the French countryside on a tandem bicycle, visiting potters and pottery studios; their short stay in Vallauris, France, where Pablo Picasso was living at the time; travels to Italy, the Netherlands, and finally ending up at Penzance, in Cornwall, to study pottery with Michael Leach at the Penzance School of Art; returning to the U.S., when Jim worked for the U.S. Geological Survey, and traveling the Midwest in a trailer as part of that job; their education at the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts, Helena, Montana, and Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, Maine; living in Deerfield, Massachusetts, at the historic Bloody Brook Tavern, where they made pottery and gave tours; their first pottery shows, at Deerfield Academy, Deerfield, Massachusetts, and at America House, which became the American Craft Museum, and is now called the Museum of Art & Design, New York, N.Y.; their teaching positions at the University of Iowa, the University of New Hampshire, Colorado University, Loretto Heights College, Denver, Colorado, and the Glasgow School of Art, among others; and their time in Japan on the Hill Family Foundation Grant. McKinnell also recalls Margaret Hancock, Frances Senska, Jack Lenor Larsen, Paul Bonifas, Bernard Leach, Michael Leach, Peter Voulkos, Marguerite Wildenhain, Rudy Autio, Ruth Pennington, Clayton James, Kathleen Horsman, Edward and Mary Scheier, Nils Lou, Edward Osier, Aline Vanderbilt Webb, Ron Brown, Marilyn Scaff Humple, Paul Soldner, Karl Christiansen, Thomas Potter, Kenji Kato, Alec Lecky, Ruth Duckworth, Wayne Higby, Otto and Vivika Heino, Warren MacKenzie, David Shaner, and Gerry Williams, among others.

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## General

Originally recorded on 2 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 10 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hrs., 56 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:

Ceramicists -- Colorado -- Interviews  
Decorative arts  
Pottery -- Study and teaching  
Women artists

Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Sound recordings

Names:

Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America