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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with James Melchert

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with James Melchert
Date:	2002 September 18-October 19
Identifier:	AAA.melche02
Creator:	Melchert, Jim, 1930- (Interviewee) Pritikin, Renny (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	46 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with James Melchert, 2002 September 18-October 19, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with James Melchert, 2002 September 18-October 19, 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.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

James Melchert (1930-) is a ceramist from Oakland, California.

Scope and Contents

An interview of James Melchert conducted 2002 September 18-2002 October 19, by Renny Pritikin, 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

Melchert speaks of his decision to pursue painting instead of educational psychology; his introduction to ceramics while learning to teach it at a small college in Illinois; taking a summer course with Pete Voulkos; moving to California and working as Voulkos' studio assistant at the University of California, Berkeley; his friendship with John Mason, another potter; the difference between the philosophies of Mason and Voulkos; teaching at the Art Institute in San Francisco; and the book Exercises in Style [Raymond Queneau], upon which he based his series of "a"s.

Scope and Contents

Melchert also discusses several of the group exhibitions he has been involved with; John Cage and the influence of Silence; his interest in photography; the similarities and differences between his early work and more recent work; working with tiles; his teaching techniques and how he engaged his students; the craft art question; the Milwaukee Art Museum; and the function of pottery. Blunk also recalls Steve DeStaebler, Manuel Neri, Nate Olivera, Joan Brown, Henry Takemoto, Michael Frimkiss, Richard Koshalek, Bob Irwin, Bob Arneson, Bruce Nauman, Russell Lynes, Garth Clark, Suzanne Foley, Richard Shaw, Marilyn Levine, Theresa Cha, Jim Pomeroy, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 3 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 3 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hrs., 47 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Ceramicists -- California -- Oakland -- Interviews
Decorative arts

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

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