



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Norma Minkowitz

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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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Norma Minkowitz
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.minkow01
<b>Date:</b>	2001 September 17 and 2001 November 16
<b>Creator:</b>	Minkowitz, Norma M., 1937- (Interviewee) Malarcher, Patricia (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
<b>Extent:</b>	40 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Norma Minkowitz, 2001 September 17 and 2001 November 16, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Norma Minkowitz, 2001 September 17 and 2001 November 16, 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

Norma Minkowitz (1937-) is a fiber artist from Westport, Connecticut. Patricia Malarcher is also a fiber artist from Englewood, N.J.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Norma Minkowitz conducted 2001 September 17 and 2001 November 16, by Patricia Malarcher, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in Minkowitz's home in Westport, Connecticut.

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## Scope and Contents

Minkowitz speaks of her early childhood and what it was like growing up in a musical household in which her father was a concert pianist, her grandfather a composer, and her uncle a violinist; her relative's escape from Russia before the Russian revolution, how her parents met and what life in the Bronx was like; her

relationships with different family members, specifically how close she was to her mother throughout her life; her first crocheting experience, making doilies with her mother; how she was drawn to drawing; her education in art, attendance at the Music and Art High School and then Cooper Union; her most rewarding experience at Cooper Union with her two-dimensional teacher Stefano Cusamano; her first paid job as a book illustrator for a children's dictionary; making designs to send to Woman's Day and Family Circle after the birth of her second child in 1963; the difference between a fiber artist and a craftsperson, trying to distinguish herself as an artist and how she would like to be recognized on a fine arts level; how time consuming making "wearables" or clothing was; the galleries she exhibited at including Elements in New York; her shows at the American Craft Museum, curator Paul Smith; the different museums where her work has been displayed including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, the De Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco and the Kwang Ju Museum in Korea; her teaching experiences at the various craft schools; her different experiments within her work and how her work has changed since she began in the 1960s; her different studio spaces and how most times she can work right on her lap; how her children became artists; the meaning of several works to her and how viewers could interpret them differently, specifically, "Get Thee Up" and "Goodbye Mother;" how much home means to her; the many different pieces she has collected by other artists, including John McQueen, Richard Devore, and Ruth Duckworth; her other activities including running in three New York Marathons; how she has bronzed two pieces and what that was like; her four grandchildren, and making art and being a successful grandmother at the same time. Minkowitz also recalls Andrea Miller-Keller, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Lenore Tawney, Sheila Hicks, Alex Katz, Kathleen Whitney, Pat Hickman and others.

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## General

Originally recorded on 4 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 6 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hrs., 27 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:

- Crocheting
- Decorative arts
- Fiber artists -- Connecticut -- Interviews
- Handicraft -- Study and teaching
- Sculpture
- Women artists

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

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