



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Ed Moulthrop

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 Ed Moulthrop
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.moulth01
<b>Date:</b>	2001 April 2-3
<b>Creator:</b>	Moulthrop, Ed, 1916-2003 (Interviewee) Douglas, Mary F., 1956- (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
<b>Extent:</b>	39 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Ed Moulthrop, 2001 April 2-3, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Ed Moulthrop, 2001 April 2-3, 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

Ed Moulthrop (1916-2003) is a wood turner from Atlanta, Georgia. Mary Douglas (1956- ) is the curator at the Mint Museum of Craft and Design in Charlotte, N.C.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Ed Moulthrop conducted 2001 April 2-3, by Mary Douglas, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in Moulthrop's home and studio, Atlanta, Georgia.

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## Scope and Contents

Moulthrop speaks of his childhood in Cleveland; his introduction to woodcarving at age 8; buying his first wood lathe in 1932 at age 16; studying architecture at Western Reserve University and sculpture with Victor Schreckengost; his architecture studies in graduate school at Princeton University; the rejection of crafts

or "handmade things" in the 1930s; the use of craft in architecture; the beginning of the craft movement in 1965; the government invention of polyethylene glycol which allowed wood to dry without cracking; his process of soaking wood in polyethylene glycol; teaching architecture at Georgia Tech for ten years; his work with architectural firms in Atlanta and designing an addition to the Library of Congress; selling his first pieces at The Signature Shop & Gallery, in Atlanta, in 1970; the progression of the craft movement from clay, to glass, metal, then wood; the importance of the Albert LeCoff woodturning shop in Philadelphia and conferences sponsored by Coff in the mid-1970s; his full-time pursuit of woodturning in 1975; craft exhibitions at the Mint Museum, High Museum, and American Craft Museum; his exhibitions at Arrowmont; teaching woodturning to his son Philip; his scholarship to make watercolors at Fontainebleu; and his interest in design over technique. He also talks about the work of Bob Stocksdale; the qualities of different woods; major woodturning exhibitions at DIA, the Connell Gallery in Atlanta, and of the Mason collection; the necessity of dealers; galleries including The Hand and The Spirit, Heller Gallery, Gumps, and The Signature Shop & Gallery in Atlanta; woodturning as an American craft movement; the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Aalto, Frank Gehry; and the Greene Brothers; the strengths and limitations of wood; commissions for museums and corporations; his preference for ellipsoids (squashed spheres) and other shapes; his search for unusual woods, such as American Chestnut, Yellowwood, American Mahogany, and Box Elder; making his own tools and lathe; developing his own polish; his involvement with the Georgia Designer-Craftsmen with Jerry Chappell, Gary Noffke, and Ginny Ruffner; and his invention of the "Saturn Bowl" (a bowl with rings).

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## General

Originally recorded on 3 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 5 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hrs., 39 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:

- Architecture -- Study and teaching
- Decorative arts
- Sculpture -- Study and teaching
- Turning
- Turning -- Equipment and supplies
- Turning -- Technique
- Woodworkers -- Georgia -- Interviews.

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- Chappell, Jerry
- Georgia Designer-Craftsmen
- Georgia Institute of Technology -- Faculty
- Library of Congress -- Buildings.
- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
- Noffke, Gary
- Princeton University -- Students

Ruffner, Ginny  
Schreckengost, Viktor, 1906-2008  
Stocksdale, Bob, 1913-2003  
Western Reserve University -- Students