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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Ron Nagle

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.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Ron Nagle
Identifier:	AAA.nagle03
Date:	2003 July 8-9
Creator:	Nagle, Ron Berkson, Bill (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	84 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Ron Nagle, 2003 July 8-9, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Ron Nagle, 2003 July 8-9, 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 available on line.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Ron Nagle (1939-) is a ceramacist of San Francisco, California. Bill Berkson (1939-) is a poet.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Ron Nagle conducted 2003 July 8-9, by Bill Berkson, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in San Francisco, California.

Scope and Contents

Nagle speaks of his childhood in San Francisco and growing up in the "Outer Mission"; his early creative influences, including his father who "could build anything," his mother, who ran a ceramics club in their basement, and his high school friend Steve Archer, who customized cars; making and selling jewelry while in high school; the Beat scene in San Francisco; teaching his high school friend Rick Gomez about jewelry in exchange for lessons in throwing clay on the wheel; attending San Francisco State University, initially as an English major then switching to art; learning about Peter Voulkos from Gomez; taking a summer course with Henry Takemoto at the Art Institute [now the California School of Fine Arts]; his "manic" interest in art magazines; studying with Charles McKee at San Francisco State; working as a studio assistant for Peter Voulkos at the University of California at Berkeley, after his graduate school application was rejected; making connections in the Los Angeles art scene through friend and sculptor Ed Bereal; the influence of Kenneth Price, James Melchert, Peter Voulkos, 16th and 17th century Japanese ceramics, popular culture, and painters such as Giorgio Morandi, Albert Pinkham Ryder, Josef Albers, Philip Guston, Billy Al Bengston, and others; his first show at the Dilexi Gallery, "Works in Clay by Six Artists," 1968; teaching for 42 years; the relation between music and "studio art"; playing the piano and his broad interest in music; his band Mystery Trend; creating sound effects for the film, "The Exorcist;" his use of color; exhibitions at Garth Clark Gallery and showing internationally; his use of porcelain in the early 1990s; the idea of craft vs. art; the meditative and playful qualities of working with clay; his references to male and female physiology in his work; and his process.

General

Originally recorded on 3 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 11 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hrs., 27 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Beat generation
- Ceramicists -- California -- San Francisco -- Interviews
- Ceramics -- Study and teaching
- Ceramics -- Technique
- Decorative arts
- Jewelry making

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
- San Francisco State University -- Students
- Voulkos, Peter, 1924-2002

Occupations:

- Musicians -- California -- San Francisco