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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Harold O'Connor

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Harold O'Connor
Identifier:	AAA.oconno07
Date:	2007 October 11-31
Creator:	O'Connor, Harold, 1941- (Interviewee) Zeiger, Dinah (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	63 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Harold O'Connor, 2007 October 11-31, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Harold O'Connor, 2007 October 11-31, 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

Harold O'Connor (1941-) is a goldsmith in Salida, Colorado. Dinah Zeiger (1947-) is an art historian from Denver, Colorado.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Harold O'Connor conducted 2007 October 11 and 31, by Dinah Zeiger, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at O'Conner's studio, Dunconor Workshops, in Salida, Colorado.

Scope and Contents

O'Connor speaks of his childhood in New York; his father, who was a doctor, and his mother, who was a craft artist; an early exposure to the craft field; attending Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado and studying psychology for one year before returning to Rochester, N.Y.; working in occupational therapy and making commercial apple-peeling machines; returning to WSU, becoming interested in anthropology and transferring to the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque; taking classes in metalwork during his senior year; being inspired by Georg Jensen; attending international schools to learn metalsmithing and goldsmithing, including the National Arts and Crafts School in Copenhagen, Denmark, the National Arts School in Helsinki, Finland, and Kunst und Werkschule in Pforzheim, Germany; the differences between apprenticeship programs and technical schools; working as the first resident metal craftsman at Penland School of Crafts in Penland, N.C.; moving with his wife to Crested Butte, Colorado and setting up a small studio in an alley; returning to UNM to complete his undergraduate degree before attending Instituto Allende in San Miguel Allende, Mexico and receiving his M.F.A.; teaching jewelry for four years at Alberta College of Art and Design at Calgary, Canada and designing workshops; returning to Crested Butte and running his own private school and two-week workshops; identifying as an international artist; his exhibition and show history; his relationship with galleries; self-publishing jewelry and metalsmithing technique books; working in series; finding inspiration through various means and the great diversity in his work over the past 30 years; the materials he has worked in over the years, including labradorite, silver, copper, titanium, and gold; his use of traditional hand tools; his studio space; working intuitively without drawings; the creative stimulation found in Taos, N.M.; his admiration of the work of Eduardo Chillida, Aldo Calò, Constantin Brancusi and Isamu Noguchi; traveling and teaching experiences in the Czech Republic, Austria, the Arctic, South Korea, and other locations; and plans for future travel. O'Connor recalls Klaus Ulrich, Reinhold Reiling, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 4 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 4 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hrs., 5 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Decorative arts
- Goldsmiths -- Colorado -- Interviews
- Metal-work -- Study and teaching
- Metal-workers -- Colorado -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Alberta College of Art + Design -- Faculty
- Brancusi, Constantin, 1876-1957
- Calò, Aldo, 1910-1983
- Chillida, Eduardo, 1924-2002
- Instituto Allende -- Student
- Jensen, Georg Arthur, 1866-1935

Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Noguchi, Isamu, 1904-1988
Penland School of Handicrafts -- Faculty
Reiling, Reinhold, 1922-
Ulrich, Klaus
University of New Mexico -- Student
Western State College of Colorado -- Student