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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Jere Osgood

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Jere Osgood
Date:	2001 September 19-October 8
Identifier:	AAA.osgood01
Creator:	Osgood, Jere, 1936- (Interviewee) Gold, Donna, 1953- (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	64 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Jere Osgood, 2001 September 19-October 8, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Jere Osgood, 2001 September 19-October 8, 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.

Related Materials

Oral history: Reminiscences of Jere Osgood; Columbia University. Oral History Research Office, Box 20, Room 801 Butler Library, New York, NY 10027.

Biographical / Historical

Jere Osgood (1936-) is a woodworker from Wilton, N.H. Donna Gold (1953-) is an art writer from Stockton Springs, Maine.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Jere Osgood conducted 2001 September 19 and Oct. 8, by Donna Gold, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at Osgood's home, in Wilton, N.H.

Scope and Contents

Osgood describes his early childhood years in Staten Island, N.Y.; the influence of his architect grandfather and handyman father; his early interest in architecture; visiting museums with his mother and aunt; Vermont vacations; high school; and reading "Popular Science," "Popular Mechanics," and "Wildlife Magazine." He describes his architecture studies at the University of Illinois and the subsequent use of parabolic and catenary curves when making bowls; attending the School for American Craftsmen in the 1960s when it was "thriving"; selling bookends at America House; exhibiting in "Young Americans" (Museum of Contemporary Crafts, 1962); teaching at Boston University; studying bookbinding and weaving in a folk art school in Denmark in 1960; the distinction between "furniture makers" and "furniture designers" in Denmark; working in his father's basement workshop; setting-up a workshop in Connecticut; the appeal of root forms; developing lamination techniques; making curved forms; and experimenting with various woods. Teaching at the Philadelphia College of Art, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), and Boston University are discussed in detail, as are his typical workday, his design process and means of evaluating form, the growing craft industry, and sculptural furniture. Osgood recalls his teacher Tage Frid.

Scope and Contents

He also discusses his works of art including Elliptical Shell Desks, a walnut Semainaire, Writing Desk (1986), Angels in the Snow (1986), and Cylinder Front Desk (1989). He comments on selling his work at Pritam & Eames (East Hampton, N.Y.); the influence of Wharton Esherick on his career in the late 1950s; commissions; furniture making at RIT and the North Bennett School in Boston; his experiences teaching at Penland, Haystack, Arrowmont, and Peters Valley Craft Center; his involvement with organizations such as the New Hampshire Furniture Masters' Association, American Craft Council, and The Furniture Society; the importance of good photography; the economics of the craft business; and his appreciation of pure form.

General

Originally recorded on 7 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 12 digital wav files. Duration is 5 hrs., 46 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Decorative arts
- Furniture design
- Furniture making
- Woodworkers -- New Hampshire -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

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