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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Rude Osolnik

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Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Rude Osolnik
Date:	2001 May 1
Identifier:	AAA.osolni01
Creator:	Osolnik, Rude, 1915-2001 (Interviewee) Douglas, Mary F., 1956- (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	38 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Rude Osolnik, 2001 May 1, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Rude Osolnik, 2001 May 1, 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.

Biographical / Historical

Rude Osolnik (1915-2001) was a woodturner from Berea, Kentucky. Mary Douglas (1956-) a curator at the Mint Museum of Craft and Design in Charlotte, N.C.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Rude Osolnik conducted 2001 May 1, by Mary Douglas, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in Osolnik's home, Berea, Kentucky.

Scope and Contents

Osolnik explains that he was born in New Mexico but moved to Illinois where he grew up. He speaks about his decision to not become a coal miner like his father; learning wood turning from Jack Rohner; engaging in production turning; majoring in industrial arts at Bradley University, in Peoria, Illinois; teaching at Berea

College; working in the Westervelt Shop; using Oliver and Powermatic lathes; making candlesticks, twig pots, and new items for the craft fair market; assembling booths at craft fairs; working with his wife Daphne; their five children; edge bowls; purchasing his property, now a parcel of approximately three hundred acres of land called "Poverty Ridge"; finding and working with wood from their land; appreciating and exploiting spalted pieces; laminating Mahogany; preparing tools and wood for turning; working with Zebrawood, Macasar Ebony, and Pink Ivory; turned pieces proportions; and teaching classes and workshops. Osolnik discusses his caretaker Zenobia Parks; selling his goods at Fireside Industries and America House; founding the American Association of Woodturners; working with the Kentucky Guild; the Southern Highland Craft Guild and developing the Berea Crafts Festival; the failure of the craft fair at Charlotte, N.C.; visiting with the prime minister of Belize, a consultation sponsored by the World Church Service to advise on that country's furniture production and export market; the role of the crafts movement in higher education; the Wallace Nutting collection at Berea; "Osolnik Originals"; a book project (Rude Osolnik: A Life Turning Wood. Louisville, KY: Crescent Hill Books, 1997); and signing his pieces. Osolnik also mentions in passing the DeMano Gallery, California; Great American Gallery, Georgia; Martha Connell; the Mint Museum; "Craft Multiples," an exhibition at the Renwick Gallery; Mark Lindquist; Jack Fifield; American Craft Council; Benchmark Galleries; I Love My Stuff Gallery; Eleanor Roosevelt; Queen Elizabeth; O. J. Mattil; Gary Barker; Walter Hyleck; Bernard Leach; Bob Stockdale; Dale Nish; Ray Key; Berea Craft Enterprises; travel to Scandinavia; and Richard and Lila Bellando.

General

Originally recorded on 3 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 5 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hrs., 29 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Decorative arts
- Turning (Lathe work)
- Woodwork

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- American Association of Woodturners
- Berea College -- Students
- Bradley University -- Students
- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America

Occupations:

- Wood-carvers -- Kentucky -- Interviews