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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Jon Eric Riis

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Jon Eric Riis
Date:	2009 June 27 and 28
Identifier:	AAA.riis09
Creator:	Riis, Jon Eric, 1945- (Interviewee) Riedel, Mija, 1958- (Interviewer)
Extent:	99 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Audio: Oral history interview with Jon Eric Riis, 2009 June 27-28, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt) Digital Content: Oral history interview with Jon Eric Riis, 2009 June 27-28, Transcript

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 is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

Restrictions

This interview is open for research. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Biographical / Historical

Jon Eric Riis (1945-) is a fiber artist from Atlanta, Georgia. Riis was educated at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Cranbrook Academy of Art.

Scope and Contents

An interview with Jon Eric Riis conducted 2009 June 27 and 28, by Mija Riedel, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at Riis' home and studio, in Atlanta, Georgia.

Riis discusses recent visit to South Korea for the inauguration of new museum focusing on tapestry; recent work involving "tapes" of material and wrapping; talks about his family, his Swedish grandmother's collection of weaving equipment, his grandfather's graphic/advertising business in Chicago, his visits to Chicago to

his grandfather's business and to the Field Museum, where he saw textiles from numerous cultures that would remain lasting influences; making floats for parades in high schools; studying at the Art Institute of Chicago with Else Regensteiner, where he became interested in textiles; his attraction to the tactile nature of fiber work; his summer of study at Penland School of Crafts, Penland, North Carolina, where he later would teach; graduate studies at Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI; international travels (including England, Egypt, and Afghanistan), then traveling to India on a Fulbright scholarship to study traditional ikat weaving methods; teaching briefly at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana; teaching at Georgia State University, Atlanta, in the 1970s; trips to Asia in the 1970s; his burgeoning textile collection; a recent trip to Tibet and its influence on recent work; use of various materials, including feathers; working non-representationally; doing commission work, including working with architect John Portman on commissions for international projects in commercial structures in China and Saudi Arabia; beginning work as a dealer in textiles while renewing his studio work, when he begins to move into representational imagery; co-founding the Museum of Art and Design in Atlanta; the influence of Chinese textiles on his work, including the format of the collarless jacket shape; continuing his collection of international textiles and the interest in metallic thread and embellishment; his explorations of the notion of beauty, including in the series Blondes, Brunettes and Redheads; continuing interest in and influence of Peruvian textiles, including mythological elements; a turn toward implicit and sometimes explicit commentary in work, including Bomber Jacket and Freedom's Price; the use of coats as a metaphorical second skin and as an exploration of interior/exterior; national and international exhibitions since 2001, including "Triennial 9 Form and Contents" in Frankfurt, Germany and "One of a Kind" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; more discussion of issues of gender, race, and nationality in his work; the series Tiger Banners as a new direction, as well as working more three-dimensionally; the use of pearls and interest in luster and translucency; involvement in the Handweavers Guild of America and Friends of Fiber Art International; being a juror for exhibitions; the growing trend of mixed media in fiber work; the ongoing attraction and inspiration of materials.

General

Originally recorded on 3 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 10 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hr., 53 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Fiber artists -- Georgia -- Interviews.

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

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