



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with John Roloff

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with John Roloff
Identifier:	AAA.roloff09
Date:	2009 August 17-18
Creator:	Roloff, John, 1947- (Interviewee) Riedel, Mija, 1958- (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	13 Items (Sound recording: 13 sound files (8 hr., 50 min.); digital, wav file) 155 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with John Roloff, 2009 August 17-18, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with John Roloff, 2009 August 17-18, 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 online.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

John S. Roloff (1947-) is a sculptor and ceramicist and lives and works in Oakland, California. Roloff also taught at the San Francisco Art Institute and Mills College.

Scope and Contents

An interview of John Roloff conducted 2009 August 17-18, by Mija Riedel, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at Roloff's studio, in Oakland, California.

Scope and Contents

Roloff speaks primarily about the intersection of art and science; his desire to look at these disciplines from multiple perspectives in his work; the relationship between materials and their geological histories; his exploration and exposure of the physical processes associated with the making of art objects; Roloff talks at length about ceramics; the chemical properties of the clays and glazes; their connection to geological landscapes; and their transformation through the firing process; moreover, he discusses site specific works; the importance of location in giving context to a piece; as well as referencing a site through site based materials; furthermore, he expounds his theory of anthroturbation; discusses the parallels between man-made and natural structures; and ruminates about his work's visual engagement with ecological systems; Additionally, Roloff converses about several formative childhood experiences; how they shaped his later artistic interest and evolved into thematic elements in his work; studying marine geology at University of California-Davis; taking a ceramics class with Robert Arneson; becoming a dual art and science major; the spirit of experimentation at UC-Davis, which led to his early ceramic discoveries; pursuing graduate work at Humboldt University; teaching at the University of Kentucky-Lexington; developing his Exile and Rower series; showing his sculptures at Lester Gallery and Fuller Goldeen Gallery in California; his shift from studio work to landscape/installations; the development of his Ship and Kiln series; as well as his later photographic work; Roloff also recalls Stephen Kaltenbach, Deborah Butterfield, Peter Voukos, Jim Melchert, Dennis Oppenheim, Joseph Beuys, Kenneth Baker, in addition to the following galleries: Lance Fang, Paule Anglim and Reese Paley.

System Details

Originally recorded on 5 sound discs (digital, 2 5/8 in.).

General

Originally recorded on 2 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 13 digital wav files. Duration is 8 hr., 50 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art -- Study and teaching
- Art -- Technique
- Ceramicists -- California -- Oakland -- Interviews
- Ceramics -- Technique
- Science -- Study and teaching
- Sculptors -- California -- Oakland -- Interviews
- Submarine geology

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Arneson, Robert, 1930-1992
Beuys, Joseph
Butterfield, Deborah, 1949-
Fuller Goldeen Gallery
Gallery Paule Anglim
Gallery Reese Palley
George Lester Gallery (Rome, Italy)
Humboldt State University -- Students
Kaltenbach, Stephen J.
Lance Fung Gallery
Melchert, Jim, 1930-
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Oppenheim, Dennis, 1938-2011
University of California, Davis -- Students
University of Kentucky -- Faculty
Voukos, Peter, 1924-2002