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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Merryll Saylan

Funding for this interview was provided by the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America. Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Merryll Saylan
Date:	2006 May 20-June 5
Identifier:	AAA.saylan06
Creator:	Saylan, Merryll B., 1936- (Interviewee) Adamson, Glenn (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	7 Items (Sound recording: 7 compact discs (6 hr., 9 min.); digital; 2 5/8 in.) 116 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Merryll Saylan, 2006 May 20-June 5, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Merryll Saylan, 2006 May 20-June 5, 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

Merryll Saylan (1936-) is a wood artist from San Rafael, California. Glenn Adamson (1972-) is a museum professional, in London, England.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Merryll Saylan conducted 2006 May 20-June 5, by Glenn Adamson, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at the Victoria & Albert Museum, in London, England.

Scope and Contents

Saylan speaks of her childhood in Los Angeles, California; her early musical education in piano and viola; memories of World War II; her family's political views during the Cold War; meeting her first husband at UCLA; dropping out of school to move to Virginia and Georgia in fulfillment of her husband's military service; experiencing anti-Semitism in Georgia; the challenges of her eldest son's speech problems; traveling to France, Japan, Guatemala, Hong Kong and the Philippines; her interest in Japanese culture; completing her B.A. in design at UCLA and her M.A. in studio art at California State University, Northridge; anti-Vietnam sentiment on campus; early interests in environmental design; her second husband and his friends; her interest in furniture and woodworking; differing approaches to woodworking on the east and west coasts; her views on feminism and working women; her use of color and texture in woodworking; teaching experiences; popular perception of her work; receiving a grant to go to England and her involvement with English and German woodturners; the lack of collector interest in her work; forced absences from working because of illnesses; serving on the boards of the American Association of Woodturners and The Woodturning Center; her involvement in the International Turned Objects Show, the Sculpture Objects & Functional Art Biannual Exposition, and the International Turning Exchange; her thoughts on future work. Saylan also recalls George Foy, Bob Stocksdale, Michael Cooper, Pamela Weir-Quiton, Joanne Rapp, J.B. Blunk, Marvin Lipofsky, Gail Fredell, Wendy Maruyama, Ralph Evans, Del Stubbs, Jerry Glaser, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 7 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 7 digital wav files. Duration is 6 hr., 9 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Decorative arts
- Environmental engineering
- Feminism and art
- Furniture making
- Turning (Lathe work)
- Women artists
- Woodwork
- World War, 1939-1945

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- American Association of Woodturners
- Blunk, J. B., 1926-2002
- California State University, Northridge -- Students
- Cooper, Michael Jean
- Evans, Ralph
- Foy, George
- Fredell, Gail

Glaser, Jerry
International Turned Objects Show (1988 : Philadelphia, Pa.)
Lipofsky, Marvin, 1938-2016
Maruyama, Wendy, 1952-
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Rapp, Joanne
Stocksdale, Bob, 1913-2003
Stubbs, Del
University of California, Los Angeles -- Students
Weir-Quiton, Pamela
Wood Turning Center (Philadelphia, Pa.)
Woodstock School of Painting

Occupations:

Woodworkers -- California

Places:

England -- description and travel
France -- description and travel
Guatemala -- Description and Travel
Hong Kong -- Description and Travel
Japan -- Description and Travel
Philippines -- Description and Travel