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Oral history interview with June Schwarcz

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with June Schwarcz
Identifier:	AAA.schwar01
Date:	2001 January 21
Extent:	75 Pages (Transcript)
Creator:	Schwarcz, June, 1918-2015 Fisch, Arline M. Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Language:	English

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

June Schwarcz (1918-2015) was an enamaler from Sausalito, California. Arline M. Fisch (1931-) is a metalsmith from San Diego, California.

Scope and Contents

An interview of June Schwarcz conducted 2001 January 21, by Arline M. Fisch, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in Schwarcz's home and studio, Sausalito, California.

Scope and Contents

Schwarcz speaks of her family background; early interest in color and form; studies at Pratt Institute; working in as a package designer and free-lance designer for department stores such as Macy's in New York and Hochschild-Kohn in Baltimore; living in Chicago, Brazil, and Denver; learning about enamels from a group of "housewives" in Denver; reading Kenneth Bates's book [Enameling: Principles and Practice] "as if it were the Bible"; visiting America House and meeting Dominick Maillard; settling

in Sausalito, California, in 1954; the comparison of natural erosion in streams and rocks to etched surfaces; sources of inspiration including fog, folk art, African art, ancient Chinese ceramics, the Japanese aesthetic, ethnic clothing and fabrics, pleats and folds, and works by Isamu Noguchi, Constantin Brancusi, Morris Louis, and Mark Rothko; the practice of working on several pieces at one time; the influence of two books, Santayana's "The Sense of Beauty" and Junichiro Tanizaki's "In Praise of Shadows;" her desire to "making things that are beautiful"; her husband's support and assistance with tools, materials, and techniques; the significance of various tools and equipment; developing forms through paper patterns; the body as vessel; color as "personality"; technical pitfalls of the enameling process; technical problems of electroplating; the 1974 World Craft Conference in which Stanley Letchzin presented his findings on electroforming; meeting Letchzin and comparing processes; the difficulties in selling work; the lack of an audience; teaching workshops at Arrowmont and Vail; aversion to teaching and commissions; relationships with Susan Cummins Gallery, Bellas Artes Gallery, Japoneseque Gallery, De Vera Gallery, Sybaris Gallery, and Mobilia Gallery; travel to Europe and Japan; honors and awards; and interest in transparent enamels. Schwarcz also describes her use of basse taille, plique-à-jour, electroplating, electroforming, brush plating, raku, scotchbrite, and Mi-Tique (patina solutions). She also recalls development of each piece in her retrospective catalog, "June Schwarcz : forty years, forty pieces" (San Francisco Craft & Folk Art Museum, 1998) and concludes the interview by discussing five current pieces in progress.

General

Originally recorded as 4 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 7 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hr., 36 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Decorative arts
Enamels and enameling -- Study and teaching
Enamels and enameling -- Technique
Metal-workers -- California -- San Francisco -- Interviews
Women artists

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Bellas Artes (Santa Fe, N.M.)
Brancusi, Constantin, 1876-1957
De Vera Gallery
Japoneseque Gallery
Letchzin, Stanley
Louis, Morris, 1912-1962
Mobilia Gallery
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Noguchi, Isamu, 1904-1988

Pratt Institute
Rothko, Mark, 1903-1970
Susan Cummins Gallery
Sybaris Gallery

Occupations:

Enamellers -- California