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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Peter Shire

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 Peter Shire
Date:	2007 September 18-19
Identifier:	AAA.shire07
Creator:	Shire, Peter (Interviewee) Lauria, Jo (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	77 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Peter Shire, 2007 September 18-19, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Peter Shire, 2007 September 18-19, 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.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Peter Shire (1947-) is a sculptor from Los Angeles, California. Jo Lauria is a curator and arts writer also from Los Angeles, California.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Peter Shire conducted 2007 September 18-19, by Jo Lauria, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at Shire's studio, in Los Angeles, California.

Scope and Contents

Shire speaks of being a native Californian; his childhood growing up in the Los Angeles community of Echo Park; his parents' socialist political ideas; memories of FBI surveillance of his home and parents; defining the term kitsch as "the substitution of spurious values for real ones," using plastic flowers as an example; the essence of the craft movement as the handmade, the real; attending Saturday classes at Chouinard Art Institute while in high school; clothing fashion in his neighborhood during the late 1960s; the influence of high school teacher Anthony Scaccia; attending Los Angeles City College for one semester; discovering Domus magazine in the school library; receiving his B.F.A. from Chouinard in 1970; teaching at InterPace; being inspired by H.C. Westermann's work; traveling to Milan, Italy and visiting Ettore Sottsass; his interest in a humanistic, personal expression in art; encountering resistance to his "art furniture"; his 2007 show at Frank Lloyd Gallery, "Peter Shire Chairs"; the desire to create a total spatial experience of his work by charging the everyday function of objects with an emotional impact; and his public art commissions. Shire also recalls Gonzalo Duran, Juanita Jiminez, Millard Sheets, Adrian Saxe, Wendy Maruyama, Gary Knox Bennett, Marco Zanini, Matteo Thun, Aldo Cibic, Robert Koshalek, and others.

General

Originally recorded as 13 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hr., 8 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Decorative arts
Sculptors -- California -- Los Angeles -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Bennett, Garry Knox, 1934-
Chouinard Art Institute (Los Angeles, Calif.) -- Students
Cibic, Aldo, 1955-
Duran, Gonzalo
Jiminez, Juanita
Kashalek, Robert
Los Angeles City College -- Students
Maruyama, Wendy, 1952-
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Saxe, Adrian Anthony, 1943-
Scaccia, Anthony
Sheets, Millard, 1907-1989
Thun, Matteo
Westermann, H. C. (Horace Clifford), 1922-
Zanini, Marco