



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Michael Simon

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Michael Simon
Identifier:	AAA.simon05
Date:	2005 September 27-28
Creator:	Simon, Michael, 1947- (Interviewee) Shapiro, Mark, 1955- (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	52 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Michael Simon, 2005 September 27-28, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Michael Simon, 2005 September 27-28, 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

Michael Simon (1947-) is a ceramist from Colbert, Georgia. Mark Shapiro (1955-) is a ceramist from Worthington, Massachusetts.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Michael Simon conducted 2005 September 27-28, by Mark Shapiro, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at the artist's home, in Colbert, Georgia.

Scope and Contents

Simon discusses studying at University of Minnesota with Warren MacKenzie; the counterculture and chaotic atmosphere at the university in the late 1960s; moving to Athens, Georgia, after college to open a studio on Jerry Chappelle's farm; his first pottery sales; obtaining conscientious objector status and working at a

hospital in Athens; the influence of Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada on his work; developing shapes and expanding his repertoire; being inspired by Korean folk potters and by other Asian pottery; teaching at the Penland School of Arts and Crafts and being influenced by fellow potters there; art fairs in Atlanta, Florida, and elsewhere; using various materials for his pots, including Georgia kaolin and grolleg; applying for a fellowship at the University of Georgia, where he completed his Master's of Fine Arts; seeing Mark Pharis's pots in the summer of 1980, which compelled him to build his own salt kiln, which changed subsequent work dramatically; his marriage to Susan Roberts in 1992; experimenting with images on his pots, including fish and bamboo; getting a large commission for dinner plates from the Nakato Restaurant in Atlanta, Georgia, one of the city's oldest sushi restaurants; visiting the Freer Sackler Galleries and being inspired by Chinese Yangshao pottery from the Neolithic period; the influence of Persian jars on his work; the success of his pottery sales with Ron Myers; going to Cortona, Italy, to teach pottery for the University of Georgia; teaching at a school in Santiago, Chile, exploring the countryside, and learning Chilean pottery techniques; the writing of Michael Cardew and its influence on his work and career; what constitutes a typical work day and what motivates him; and the community of American potters and the support he has received over the years. Simon also recalls Angel Lillo, Laurie Samuelson, Gib Krohn, Mark Pharis, Wayne Branum, Sandra Simon (née Lindstrom), Earl McCutcheon, Shoji Hamada, Cynthia Bringle, Ron Myers, Andy Nasisse, Robert Briscoe, Michael Cardew, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 3 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 8 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hr., 30 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Ceramicists -- Georgia -- Interviews
- Ceramics -- Equipment and supplies
- Ceramics -- Technique
- Ceramics. -- Economic aspects
- Decorative arts

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

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