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Oral history interview with Ramona Solberg

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Ramona Solberg
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.solber01
<b>Date:</b>	2001 March 23
<b>Extent:</b>	35 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Creator:</b>	Solberg, Ramona Halper, Vicki Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
<b>Language:</b>	English

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## 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.

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## Biographical / Historical

Ramona Solberg (1921-2005) was a jeweler from Seattle, Washington. Vicki Halper is a curator at the Seattle Art Museum.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Ramona Solberg conducted 2001 March 23, by Vicki Halper, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in Solberg's apartment, Seattle, Washington.

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## Scope and Contents

Solberg speaks of her family background and childhood in Seattle; her jewelry studies with Ruth Pennington at the University of Washington in Seattle and her use of found objects; her service in the United States Army; attending the Edison Vocational School on the GI Bill and pursuing a masters degree in jewelry at the University of Washington; studies with Coralyn Pence; her travels to Mexico and her fascination with pre-Columbian objects; enameling in Norway; collecting beads from around the world; her

book, "Inventive Jewelry-Making" (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1972); leading tours for a Seattle-based group, "Friends of the Crafts," to the Middle East, Asia, Antarctica, and elsewhere for 16 or 17 years; teaching at Central Washington State College and creating her first bead and found object pieces there in 1956; her fondness for turquoise, lapis, and coral; inviting Don Tompkins to teach at Central Washington State College; Tompkins's "tongue-in-cheek" use of metals; her desire to make jewelry that can "shake, rattle, and roll"; teaching and workshops; her use of preliminary sketches; her soldering technique; fasteners; the weight of her jewelry; the "restraints of jewelry"; her lack of interest in making matched sets and bracelets and rings; the lack of social commentary in her work; her series of pieces inspired by the book, "Watership Down;" the influence of Fred Woell and his use of "American throw-aways"; her involvement with the Northwest region of the American Craft Council; her association with a group of jewelers in the Northwest including Ron Ho, Laurie Hall, Nancy Worden, and Kiff Slemmons; making beaded fibulas; curating exhibitions such as Ubiquitous Bead (1987) and Ubiquitous Bead II (1998) at the Bellevue Art Museum in Seattle; exhibitions at Facère Jewelry Art Gallery in Seattle and the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington in Seattle; working in small spaces; getting into the exhibition Objects: USA "through the back door"; her status as an international artist; pricing her work; her pieces in museum collections; and her health. She recalls Russell Day, Jack Lenor Larsen, Sam and Frieda Maloof, John Marshall, Marvin Lipofsky, LaMar Harrington, Mary Lee Hu, and others.

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## General

Originally recorded on 3 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 5 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hr., 13 min.

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

- Art -- Technique
- Decorative arts
- Jewelers -- Washington (State) -- Seattle -- Interviews
- Women artists

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- American Craft Council
- Bellevue Art Museum (Wash.)
- Central Washington State College -- Faculty
- Day, Russell
- Edison Vocational School -- Students
- Hall, Laurie
- Harrington, LaMar, 1917-2005
- Ho, Ron
- Hu, Mary Lee, 1943-
- Larsen, Jack Lenor
- Lipofsky, Marvin, 1938-2016

Maloof, Frieda  
Maloof, Sam  
Marshall, John, 1936-  
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America  
Pence, Coralyn  
Penington, Ruth, b. 1905  
Slemmons, Kiff  
Tompkins, Don  
University of Washington -- Students  
Woell, J. Fred, 1934-  
Worden, Nancy