



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Paul Soldner

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

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Paul Soldner
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.soldne03
<b>Date:</b>	2003 April 27-28
<b>Creator:</b>	Soldner, Paul Riedel, Mija, 1958- (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
<b>Extent:</b>	77 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Paul Soldner, 2003 April 27-28, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Paul Soldner, 2003 April 27-28, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)</a>

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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.

### Available Formats

Transcript available on line.

### Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

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## Biographical / Historical

Interviewee Paul Soldner (1921- ) is a ceramist of Aspen, Colorado. Interviewer Mija Riedel is a curator, writer of San Francisco, California.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Paul Soldner conducted 2003 April 27-28, by Mija Riedel, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, in Claremont, California.

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## Scope and Contents

Soldner describes his "wonderful" childhood; learning early in life that critiques hinder creativity; early interest in photography, including building his own enlargers; making a pottery wheel in high school; he recalls the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago and a wheel throwing demonstration by an "Appalachian potter"; his studies at Bluffton College in Ohio; teaching art in Ohio; his art studies at University of Colorado; working with Peter Voulkos at the Los Angeles County Art Institute [now Otis College of Art and Design] and constructing a studio with Voulkos; the importance of accidents, intuition, and invention in his work; how art movements and Eastern artists have influenced him; clay's durability and expressive qualities; he discusses his teaching philosophy and grading system; for beginners, the importance of producing quantity over quality; his role as the "godfather" of Anderson Ranch in Snowmass, Colorado; how he transformed the Scripps Annual ceramics show; he describes the evolution of his work in ten-year cycles, including his tall pots, raku, and "low-salt fuming" periods; his low-tech inventions; traveling and workshops; his definition of a craftsman; his evolution from pottery to sculpture; encouraging his students to "go farther" and experiment; dealers, galleries, and collectors; his aversion to art criticism; the impact of Eastern and Western religion on art; the importance of "surprise," "playfulness," and "energy" in the work; he compares his work to music; commissions and collaborations; subconscious and environmental influences on his work; and the future direction for contemporary ceramics. Soldner also recalls Katie Horsman, Kenneth Price, Jun Kaneko, Millard Sheets, Kaneshige, Cheever Meaders, Robert Arneson, John Mason, Fred Marer, Louana Lackey, and others.

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## General

Originally recorded on 5 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 6 digital wav files. Duration is 6 hr., 1 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 -- Philosophy
- Decorative arts
- Pottery -- Equipment and supplies
- Pottery -- Technique

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
- Voulkos, Peter, 1924-2002