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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Akio Takamori

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Akio Takamori
Identifier:	AAA.takamo09
Date:	2009 March 20-21
Creator:	Takamori, Akio, 1950- (Interviewee) Riedel, Mija, 1958- (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	8 Items (wav files (7 hr., 51 min.); digital) 184 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Akio Takamori, 2009 March 20-21, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Akio Takamori, 2009 March 20-21, 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

Akio Takamori (1950-2017) was a Japanese American ceramist based in Seattle, Washington.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Akio Takamori conducted 2009 March 20-21, by Mija Riedel, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at Takamori's studio, in Seattle, Washington.

Scope and Contents

Interview of Akio Takamori, conducted by Mija Reidel for the Archives of American Art, in Seattle, Washington on March 20, 2009. Takamori speaks of growing up in Nobeoka, Japan where his father ran a medical clinic in a diverse part of town; the post war structure of society and the buildings themselves; his interest in art

as a young child drawing figural scenes; class and social situations he observed as a child; his father's interest in both Japanese and Western art; an interest in Peter Bruegel that turned into a lifelong inspiration; the role of politics in his family; moving to Miyazaki, Japan as a young teenager to live with his grandparents while going to school; joining the art club in high school and his fellow club mates who introduced him to more contemporary Japanese and European art; creating Happenings in high school; his interest in county folklore and superstitions and its eventual role in his art; the interaction between Western contemporaries and Japanese traditions in his work; his interest in art history; attending Musashino Art College in Tokyo, Japan where he majored in industrial ceramics; being dissatisfied with college; his political activism while in college; experimenting with paper mache to create three dimensional objects; the mingei movement; his apprenticeship in Koishiwara, Japan where he learned the fundamentals of functional potter; meeting lifelong friends such as Christ Holmquist and mentor Ken Ferguson while in Koishiwara; moving to the United States in 1974 and attending Kansas City Art Institute under the direction of Ferguson; various projects he undertook while finishing his degree at Kansas City; receiving his MFA from Alfred University, where he experimented with the idea of what contemporary art should be; his slab pieces; his first residency at the Archie Bray foundation in Helena, Montana and his continued relationship with the Foundation; traveling between Japan and the United States while acting as a substitute professor at various universities; his relationship with Garth Clark's gallery for over 20 years; teaching full time as a professor at the University of Washington in Seattle, beginning in 1993; the importance of stressing both technique and creativity; his joy at watching the development of his students; transitions in his work brought on each decade and through constant travel; the role of globalization in his work; the narrative of the group pieces he has created in recent years; his memory as constant inspiration and more recent projects, including larger, figurative works. Takamori also recalls Victor Babu, Val Cushing, Wayne Higby, Tony Hepburn, Ted Randall, Robert Turner, William Perry, Peter Voukos, Rudy Autio, David Shaner, Jun Kaneko, Jamie Walker, Doug Jeck, Amie McNeel, Mark Zirpel, Patti Warashina, Viola Frey, Betty Woodman, Elizabeth Brown, Josh DeWeese and others.

General

Originally recorded on 4 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 8 digital wav files. Duration is 7 hr., 51 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Asian American art
- Asian American artists
- Asian American ceramicists
- Japanese American art
- Japanese American artists

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

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

Occupations:

Ceramicists -- Washington (State) -- Seattle