



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Robert Chapman Turner

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.

Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
Business Number: Phone: 202-633-7950
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical	1
Scope and Contents	1
Names and Subjects	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Robert Chapman Turner
Date:	2001 June 11
Identifier:	AAA.turner01
Creator:	Turner, Robert Chapman, 1913-2005 (Interviewee) Carney, Margaret, 1949- (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	48 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Robert Chapman Turner, 2001 June 11, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Robert Chapman Turner, 2001 June 11, 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

Robert Turner (1913-2005) was a ceramic artist from Alfred, N.Y. and Sandy Spring, Maryland. Margaret Carney (1949-) is the director of the Schein-Joseph International Museum of Ceramic Art in Alfred, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Robert Turner conducted 2001 June 11, by Margaret Carney, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at Smithsonian Productions, in Washington, D.C.

Scope and Contents

Turner speaks of his childhood in Brooklyn, N.Y.; his father's business, Turner Concrete (now called Turner Construction); drawing classes; attending the George School for a post-graduate year before attending Swarthmore College, where his major was economics; the importance of Quakerism in his life and work; traveling throughout Europe and the Southwestern United States; his marriage to Sue, their trip to Europe during the outbreak of World War II and the difficulty of coming home to America; his involvement in war activities as a conscientious objector; the transition after the war ended into a "different reality"; visiting the different schools of craft, including Penland, Alfred, and Haystack; attending Alfred University, the teachers and students there during his years there; his relationships with other students, such as Ted Randall and Bill Schickel; teaching at Black Mountain College immediately after his graduation from Alfred; his admiration of Marguerite Wildenhain; his involvement in the first Super Mud phenomenon in 1966; how African culture fits into his work; the collaborative effort at Penland; the establishment of the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA), and his experience as the third president of the group; his "retirement" since 1979; the types of materials he uses; the awards he has received; galleries and exhibitions in which he has exhibited; and recollections of Bill Brown, founder of the Penland School of Crafts. Turner also recalls Josie Adams, Charles Harder, Kurt Ekdahl, Marion Fosdick, Bill Pitney, Jessie Shefrin, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 2 digital audio tapes. Reformatted in 2010 as 2 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hr., 23 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Ceramicists -- Maryland -- Interviews
- Ceramicists -- New York (State) -- Interviews
- Ceramics
- Decorative arts
- Quakers
- World War, 1939-1945 -- Conscientious objectors

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
- National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (U.S.)