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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Patti Warashina

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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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
General.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Patti Warashina
Date:	2005 September 8
Identifier:	AAA.warash05
Creator:	Warashina, Patti, 1940- (Interviewee) Jeck, Doug, 1963- (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	42 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Patti Warashina, 2005 September 8, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Patti Warashina, 2005 September 8, 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

Patti Warashina is a Japanese American ceramicist and sculptor. She was born in 1940 as Masae Patricia Warashina in Spokane, Washington to third generation Japanese emigrants. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Washington, Seattle, where she studied with sculptors Robert Sperry, Harold Myers, Rudy Autio, Shoji Hamada, Shinsaku Hamada, and Ruth Penington. She received her first solo exhibition in 1962 at the Phoenix Art Gallery in Seattle the same year she graduated with an M.F.A. from the University of Washington. Warashina later married fellow student Fred Bauer and from 1964 to 1970 exhibited as Patti Bauer.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Patti Warashina conducted 2005 September 8, by Doug Jeck, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, at the artist's home and studio, in Seattle, Washington.

Scope and Contents

Warashina discusses her childhood in Spokane, Washington, as the youngest of three children of Japanese immigrants; her first experience with art, which was working on murals in elementary school; getting through school by doing visual art projects, including one on fashion design for a French class; her great-grandmother who sold pottery and rice off a cart in her native Japan; her working processes and moving from high-fire to low-fire glazes, as well as dealing with color and decoration in her work; making increasingly larger pieces and thus discovering more surfaces on which to paint; learning how to make hand-built pieces, and in general learning how to control her material; spending her early years working in a vacuum because she was busy raising a family during the day and working in the studio all night; the influence of Surrealism, the Funk movement, and the Chicago Hairy Who on her work; her love of clay as a medium because it presents challenges and technical variables that keep the work interesting; the status of clay as a valid artistic material, and how that has changed over the course of art history; her own personal definition of art as something that "raises your blood pressure," and what makes a "a good pot into a work of art instead of just a pot"; the difference between her early and later work, which she calls cumulative process; her move to the figure, which came naturally out of her earlier work and was in keeping with the Surrealist images to which she was so attracted; recent series of her work, including Mile Post Queens, and Sake Sets: The Drunken Power Series; the role of the figure in her work and the unique challenges they present; being a self-proclaimed "news junkie" and listening to jazz while she works; spending 30 years teaching and the influence it had on her career; her mother as a strong influence and role model in her life, as well as her mother's interest in crafts and gardening; and the influence of artists such as Hieronymous Bosch, René Magritte and Joan Miró on her work. Warashina recalls Robert Sperry, Fred Bauer, Peter Voukos, Robert Arneson, Toshiko Takaezu, Henry Takemoto, Garth Clark, Howard Cotler, Matthew Kangas, Warren McKenzie, Nan McKinnell, Bernard Leach, Shoji Hamada, Soetsu Yanagi, and others.

General

Originally recorded on 3 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 5 digital wav files. Duration is 1 hr., 54 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
- Asian American sculptors
- Decorative arts
- Japanese American art
- Japanese American artists
- Women 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