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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Katherine Westphal

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Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Katherine Westphal
Date:	2002 September 3-7
Identifier:	AAA.westph02
Creator:	Westphal, Katherine (Interviewee) Austin, Carole (Interviewer) Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
Extent:	58 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .

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.

Restrictions

Use requires an appointment.

Restrictions

Access is to transcript only.

Biographical / Historical

Katherine Westphal (1919-) is a fiber artist in Berkeley, California. Carole Austin is an interviewer, curator, and writer in Orinda, California.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Katherine Westphal conducted 2002 September 3-7, by Carole Austin, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Scope and Contents

This interview took place in Berkeley, California. Westphal speaks of drawing every day; her rewarding education experience teaching at University of California, Davis' Applied Behavioral Sciences Department; her college encounters; the World Crafts Conference in Vienna in 1980; the significance of her travels in

her artwork, including trips to Egypt, Hawaii, Wyoming, and Indonesia among others; her fascination with different types of art; the non-functional aspect of her artwork; the lack of necessity to sell artwork due to her job teaching, and the personal nature of her work not driven by a "craft market"; working for the textile industry; working with agent Frederick Karoly in New York; the considerable collection Daphne Farago has made of both Katherine's and her husband, Ed Rossbach's, artwork; her working environment; her storage condo; her most precious possession, her dogs; remodeling her Berkeley home and installing a glass elevator; the artist community at UC Davis and Fiberworks before it became a school; people she took workshops with at Fiberworks; a chronology of her work from the 1960s to present day; her and Ed's retirement in 1979 and their subsequent trip to Bali; her relationship with the home health care industry when Ed became sick; her development of baskets; her love of color; her artist in residency at Rhode Island School of Design in 1980, learning to work on the Jacquard loom; her very personal collection of postcards, which she created while on trips; her dog stories; several of the shows she has been in, including "Objects: USA" and "American Crafts at the Vatican"; the commission she completed for a hotel in Tokyo; and her copy machines and the various technological advances made during her career. Westphal also recalls Gyöngy Laky, Chere Lai Mah, Pat Hickman, Greg Lynn, Helen and Tio Giambruni, Jack Lenor Larsen and others.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Decorative arts
- Fiber artists -- California -- Berkeley -- Interviews
- Textile crafts
- Women artists
- Women textile artists

Types of Materials:

- Interviews

Names:

- Farago, Daphne
- Fiberworks, Center for the Textile Arts
- Hickman, Pat (Patricia Lynette), 1941-
- Karoly, Frederic, 1898-1987
- Laky, Gyöngy, 1944-
- Larsen, Jack Lenor
- Lynn, Greg
- Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America
- Rhode Island School of Design
- Rossbach, Ed
- University of California, Davis -- Faculty