

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

Interview with Anne Ogden

September 19, 2008

Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz

WILLIHNGANZ: This is Greg Willihnganz interviewing Anne Ogden at her home in Louisville, Kentucky, for the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association. It is Friday, September 19, 2008. Good morning, Anne.

OGDEN: Good morning.

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter. Thank you for doing this interview. We appreciate your time. Can you possibly, in one sentence, sort of summarize what your career has been like (laughter)?

OGDEN: Laughter. Well, it's been thirty-five years in the arts really, but in kind of different capacities. It's kind of fascinating. I had an art history degree, and it's manifested itself in a lot of ways that I don't really think I would have expected (laughter). First, oh, you said in a sentence (laughter).

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, that's alright, nobody yet has done a sentence (laughter).

OGDEN: Oh, okay.

WILLIHNGANZ: I ask, but they never do it.

OGDEN: Right after college I went to New York, and was offered a job at House Beautiful Magazine as the Editorial Trainee, I guess it was, and it usually...people didn't move up in that business and women's shelter magazines. And, I had a lot of luck, and a lot of things kind of broke my way, and I ended up being the Art Editor and Craft Editor. And, I have to say I didn't know anything about crafts at the time and it was a very wonderful way of kind of opening up the whole field to me. And, it was actually people in Kentucky who really helped me. When I was first trying to do articles for the magazine, Alma Lesch, whose necklace I'm wearing, was one of the really great helpful people, and Julia Duncan, and they gave me the contacts I needed to be able to really do some stories that were I think quite wonderful. And, that's how I got really excited about the field to start with.

WILLIHNGANZ: Let's talk a little bit about your growing up and your history, how you sort of got into this. Are you a native of Kentucky?

OGDEN: I am.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did you grow up here?

WILLIHNGANZ: So you were born in Louisville?

OGDEN: I was born in Louisville. I've lived in this house, well, when I was six, we moved in. And then after my parents died, I moved back here, so I am turning up in the same place that I was when I was six years old.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow!

OGDEN: A long of history, but I was away from Kentucky also for oh, maybe ten years, and then back in Kentucky to work for the Kentucky Arts Commission, and then back to Louisville to work for the Speed Art Museum. So those are the three, that the House Beautiful Magazine in New York, and the Arts Commission, and the Speed would constitute my thirty-five years of arts activity.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, when you were growing up in Louisville, were you taking art classes? Were you interested in craft work?

OGDEN: You know, I don't really know. I don't really know why I got interested in art history. It seems, I mean, I think, I always took...yeah...art classes. I painted a frog once that Franklin Page, who was then director of the Speed Art Museum, said it was the "Essence of Frog." And I think I did that when I was twelve.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow!

OGDEN: I think that was probably the height of my artistic (laughter) career in the actual doing of art. But no, I didn't really particularly...mother took me to museums, and I loved the Speed, and we traveled some, and I looked at art. I've always looked at art.

WILLIHNGANZ: Where did you go to school?

OGDEN: Here, I went to college for twelve years. And then I went to Vassar College. And for some reason, which is I just really don't know how, I ended up with the art department, but I ended up with an art history degree, and I really loved it. And you don't really know how that translates into...usually it translates into an academic career or a museum curator, or something like that. But, its kind of evolved in a...I don't know...I think for the magazine, when I was doing articles, writing articles, I think that the training of learning how to look at objects, and then write about them, was an art historical kind of training.

WILLIHNGANZ: This is for House Beautiful?

OGDEN: This is for House Beautiful. But, I think that kind of training at looking at things, looking at rooms, looking at objects, and then trying to describe them or talk about them in someway, was the kind of training that helped me do well on that job, and that's art history.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, you were writing articles about it, and then you got basically promoted at House Beautiful into what area?

OGDEN: Well, when I was the editorial trainee, I was getting coffee for the secretaries and flowers for the editor. I mean I was making \$85.00 a week, and the Executive Editor's Assistant went to work for John Lindsey's campaign. And I got her job, and he taught me. His name was Guy Henley, and he taught me everything I knew about copywriting and proofreading, and that whole part of the business. And then, I was doing fractional page editing for the magazine, this was, of course, way before computers, and it just evolved. And, they wanted somebody to cover art and craft, and since I had this art history interest, they gave me this job. And, I honestly did not know very much about the field, and so it was exciting (laughter). I was young enough then. I was in my twenties so, you know, you're fearless, and at that stage you don't say, well, I don't know enough to do this (laughter). So I did it! And I did some wonderful things. They were stories about Wendell Castle, for instance. It was a fabulous time in the crafts field in this country. I was there in the late sixties and the seventies, early seventies to mid-seventies. It was a real resurgence of really extraordinary crafts people, work at studio crafts people mainly, and there were two shows that I remember. One was a wonderful show, Objects U.S.A. that was the Johnson Collection of Contemporary Craft. And, it was a traveling exhibition, as I recall, and a wonderful book. And actually, there was some people from Kentucky in it, Alma Lesch being one of them. This was probably 1970, and so it was in New York at least. It was around the country. It was a real resurgence of interest in crafts and in crafts as art as fine art in many ways. And, there was a lot of discussion about the difference between art and craft. And, Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb, who was an extraordinary woman... Eileen Osborne Webb started the American Craft Council and the World Craft Council, and she was a great presence in New York at the time. And, I interviewed her for a story for the magazine, but there were really, really interesting people... kind of beginning a very kind of intimate group of people... I mean, who knew each other and knew about each other, and the Johnson collection book was a very important book, I think, in 1970. There was another exhibition called "In Praise of Hands", that was the World Craft Council, and the show was in Toronto. I think, I think it was in Toronto, in the mid-seventies. So there were just sort of beginnings of a real resurgence. And so, I did some stories on contemporary craftsmen like Wendell Castle. We were all pretty young then (laughter), and it was a kind of a remarkable time. I loved it!

WILLIHNGANZ: What do you think caused this resurgent interest in craft work?

OGDEN: I don't know. I know certainly in Kentucky in the thirties, it had been really active, and then the same kind of thing was happening in Kentucky. I think that there was some kind of growing interest in the field in the sixties, and

seventies. I don't know what caused it. Maybe it was some sort of sense of going back to the kind of hands or going back to the core. I don't know. I do know from my perspective at the magazine, I mean House Beautiful. There was so much stuff, and it was so kind of materialistic that being involved in this field was really very refreshing. I mean, to see the objects that were being made by hand and not manufactured. There was a lot of heart in them, and you had the real person that you were living with, in a sense, instead of a manufactured design.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now writing about them and becoming knowledgeable and all of that stuff would seem to me to logically lead to a career in, perhaps, academics, or in writing or editing, or something along those lines. But, it doesn't seem to have taken you to that place.

OGDEN: Well, I had a very interesting experience actually. You know, there are these times in your life where things change you. And, I was doing an interview, as I said, with Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb, and she was quite formidable. She was a large woman. I'm not. And, I was interviewing her, and she was talking about crafts, and I said, "Mrs. Webb, what do you think the difference is between art and craft?" Well, she brought herself up to her full formidableness and she said, "I suggest that you read a book by Soetsu Yangi called The Unknown Craftsman." The title is a Japanese insight into beauty, and she said the library at the American Craft Council has a copy if you want it. Well, she didn't answer the question but she sent me to that book. And, I have to say the book really changed my thinking about a lot of things. It was about the Japanese Folk Craft Movement. It was about people who work with their hands anonymously a lot. People who were not working for fame or fortune, nor had their name remembered, but they were working out of heart and with their hands. And, I don't know, but the book itself was handmade. It had a handmade cover. I always had two copies of it, one to loan and one to keep and read myself. I thought, what am I doing here in New York, working for a magazine and promoting all this stuff, you know. I think I might go back to Kentucky and I really had, this was in the mid-seventies, and I really had this sense I really wanted to go home again. And so I did. And I came back, and I was doing some writing here for Louisville Magazine and...

WILLIHNGANZ: How old were you when you came back?

OGDEN: I was just thirty. I came back in the end of seventy-five. Well, so I was twenty-nine. I was not thirty. And so, I did some writing and I thought maybe I would do some...I had a got a, what do you call those writers? An agent...I had an agent in New York, and thought I would continue doing some writing, and Nash Cox called me from the Kentucky Arts Commission in the spring, I guess, or the summer of seventy-six. And she said, they were interested in the position of a Crafts Coordinator, and she wanted to talk to me about it. And so I did, and I talked to her about the job.

WILLIHNGANZ: What was her name again?

OGDEN: Nash Cox. She was the Director of the Kentucky Arts Commission at that time.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Now, was the Arts Commission a precursor to the?

OGDEN: Yeah. Most of the state arts agencies were started in the mid-sixties, sixty-five I think it was. And Kentucky was part of that national state arts agency trend. And so it was the state arts agency. Almost all of them had boards that were appointed by the governor, but they were citizen boards, and their purpose was to try to develop arts programming in each state.

WILLIHNGANZ: This would have been under John Y. Brown?

OGDEN: No, no. This was way before that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Way before that.

OGDEN: I guess it was Burt Combs maybe.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right. Now that's when the art train started, too.

OGDEN: That's right! The art train, I believe, was under Burt Combs. And Virginia Minnish, who was from Louisville, was involved with that. And, so was a woman named Susan Black Brown.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh, hum, I've heard these names.

OGDEN: Yeah. And, there was, I think, Jerry Workman in Berea...was involved in it, and probably Garry Barker was. I don't know whether he was or not.

WILLIHNGANZ: I've interviewed both of those guys.

OGDEN: And, that was really what the state was doing. And, it was kind of a great new thing, and to try to promote what was going on, I think, a lot of the crafts of Eastern Kentucky. There was a group called Hound Dog Hookers, and they were a number of Eastern Kentucky groups that were a part of it.

WILLIHNGANZ: What exactly were Hound Dog Hookers (laughter)?

OGDEN: Isn't that a great name? You haven't heard that one yet, have you?

WILLIHNGANZ: No. I haven't (laughter).

OGDEN: They hooked rugs.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow!

OGDEN: The women were rug hookers.

WILLIHNGANZ: Huh, interesting.

OGDEN: Is that a great name (laughter)?

WILLIHNGANZ: That's a hysterical name (laughter).

OGDEN: But, I bet you the Hound Dog Hookers were part of the art train or the craft train.

WILLIHNGANZ: Huh, interesting.

OGDEN: That had gone, and it disappeared by the time I came along.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right. Yeah. I think it was only going for about seven years.

OGDEN: Uh, hum.

WILLIHNGANZ: And, I haven't isolated exactly the seven years, although I think it was sixties.

OGDEN: It would have been late sixties.

WILLIHNGANZ: I think it was sixty to about sixty-seven.

OGDEN: Oh, really.

WILLIHNGANZ: I think that's when it was. But, it may have been a little later than that, because they started the Guild right about that time. And, it took them, I think, a year or so to get up to speed to get the art train actually physically manifesting. I think that's when Jerry told me they started. But, I need to check on some of that just to try to get my history down.

OGDEN: Yeah, I don't really remember the years of that. And, Mrs. Minnish is gone now, and I don't know where Susan is, if she's around or not.

WILLIHNGANZ: Couldn't tell you, don't know. So seventy-five you're writing for Louisville Magazine and other things (laughter).

OGDEN: Yeah, just zinging my way into whatever was next.

WILLIHNGANZ: And then you got...

OGDEN: And Nash approached me.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right.

OGDEN: And, said they wanted a Crafts Coordinator. What had happened was that there were a number of people...Jerry Workman, I think, was one of them, and maybe Garry. I think Garry was who went to Nash and said that the Kentucky Arts Commission isn't really doing anything in the crafts field, and we want representation on a state arts agency level. The Arts Commission was divided by medium at the time, so there was a Performing Arts Director and there was a film and video person, and there was a Visual Art Director. And, the real emphasis, I think, in the early times of the state arts agencies, was really performing arts more than visual arts, although Kentucky had a visual arts person in it, and that was Irwin Pickett. And the person who had, I can't remember his name, who was the performing arts person who had worked for Elvis, had been a musician (laughter) in Elvis' touring group. I think I'm right about that, but anyway, the crafts groups came together with Nash, and said we really want somebody who can represent the crafts field on a state level. And, who can really bring the crafts into the programming that the arts commission was doing, and so the job was really to try to find out what the needs of the field were. And, I spent a lot of time in the beginning doing that, traveling around the state. But, finding out what both studio crafts people and production centers, what they needed from a state agency, and what the Kentucky Arts Commission could do to really strengthen what was going on in the state. The Commission's philosophy really wasn't so much doing programming, although they did do some touring exhibitions that we'll have to talk about too, cause we got involved with crafts with that. But, the purpose was really trying to get visibility and money out to crafts people and crafts groups, to try to strengthen their ability to do their work, and to develop really. Education was a big part of that too, professional development, how to not only get their work better known, but to do things that would help improve the quality of it, too. So, there was definitely that side of it, the quality both of the work itself and the quality of the administration of the organizations. We had, for instance, a Salary Assistance Program to help. You know, I can't really remember exactly who had it and who didn't, but we did get salary positions to some craft groups, that to try to get things going on a more stronger administrative basis, to keep the groups going.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, did the Kentucky Arts Commission become the Arts Council or?

OGDEN: It did.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, when did that transition take place?

OGDEN: That was during the Brown administration.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

OGDEN: It was an interesting time. Actually I guess I would say that the, the administration was interested in raising the visibility of the crafts field, and so actually the Arts Commission was abolished. And the Department of the Arts was formed in which the Arts Commission was kind of absorbed in that. We lost a lot of staff at the time, and a program that I want to go back and talk about, which was the traveling exhibition service. But, there was a lot of turmoil at the time, and the National Endowment for the Arts threatened to withdraw federal funds, because the citizen board had been abolished. The citizen board that had authority over how the money was spent, and the National Endowment for the Arts was worried that one governor, or one political person, could make decisions based on personal politics instead of trying to broaden the way the moneys were distributed by a broader citizen board. And so, I don't know whether that would have been the case or not, but there was a lot of turmoil.

WILLIGHNGANZ: Was that at the point at which the Commission became the Arts Council?

OGDEN: Well, what happened was because of this, the Brown Administration then reinstated the Council. In order to make it clear that it was a different agency, they called it the Council instead of the Commission. It was essentially the same idea though. It was a governing board that had authority over how the money was distributed and used, and it was people from all over the state. When it was reinstated, Al Smith, who has been well known for his comment on Kentucky program, agreed to be the chairman. And Barry Bingham, Sr., Al said he would do it if Barry would do it, and Barry said he would do it if Al would do it. So they did, and it was really wonderful, because it kind of revitalized the whole energy of the importance of a state arts agency with a citizen board. And, it was for a long time part of the Department of the Arts, and then all things got moved to Commerce, and then they got moved back later to Education. I think it showed the importance of the crafts, and the kind of tension, in some ways, of the field, because there is the kind of education side of it. We used to be the Education and Arts Cabinet, and then were moved to Commerce, and there was real emphasis on the commercial of the sales of crafts. But, the Arts Council, I would say, and Commission before it, was interested in the commercial side of it, but it was a broader approach to the arts, and a broader approach to the craft field. So, that's what happened!

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. So you were there for a couple of years in that position, I believe?

OGDEN: Yeah, seventy-six, probably seventy-eight.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, right, as Crafts Coordinator, then you became the Director of the Arts Program.

OGDEN: What that really meant was I was overseeing all the grants programs, and we had kind of moved from a disciplined based agency to one of function, and so I was overseeing all the grants. I think the most important thing, the greatest accomplishment in a sense about the position, was not so much what I did, but the fact there was a position that was a Crafts Coordinator, and it really brought the crafts into the main stream of the State Arts Agency Programming. And so, crafts became important in the traveling exhibition service. I mean there were a number of well...a furniture show, for example, of Kentucky Furniture, that we ended up actually buying pieces from the show; the show toured around the state, and then we bought pieces for state agencies, including the Arts Commission. So, our desks were all hand made, which was wonderful.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow!

OGDEN: I might add, probably, not as expensive as something that would have been, you know, manufactured. But, it was...so we were trying to do things that incorporated the crafts in the programs that the Arts Commission was already doing. And, one of the important things was making sure that the funding, both state and federal funding, went to support crafts initiatives as well as performing arts and other visual arts. And so, I think that was one of the, really, beginnings of really trying to have the state's support, and the visibility, and what was going on in the field.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, there were a major outlet for craft people has been down the years, the gift shops at the state parks went on.

OGDEN: Absolutely.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did you have an influence on it?

OGDEN: Oh, my gosh! That was always one of the biggest issues. I worked a lot in that, and I must say it was discouraging a lot of the time. It was very hard to get. Most of the state parks had gift shops, and we were trying to really upgrade what was in them, and to try to really include more of Kentucky crafts and less kind of tourist stuff. And, a lot of those positions were local. And, a lot of them were political. And, they were a number of people and were not particularly well versed in the arts or in the field or in design or anything. And so,

we were trying to upgrade the kind of doing education programs trying to help the state park people do a better job of finding crafts people and including them. I'm sure what Fran has done...I'm sure what the Crafts Marketing Program has done has really helped that more than anything. But, it was our emphasis...was always trying to get people out and around the state to take responsibility, to actually, to find the crafts people, and to sell them, and to upgrade their quality. It was, I don't know how successful we were at the time. I have seen some beautiful things in the gift shops in recent years, so I think like Churchill Weavers, sadly is not going any more. But, they still have a lot of tourist things. But, I think they seem to have some nice handmade things too.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, that's great! Now tell me a little bit about how the craft marketing program...how did that intersect with your organization, with the Arts Council?

OGDEN: Well, when the Department of the Arts was formed the Craft Marketing Program was started as a kind of separate division. There was the Craft Marketing Program, and there was the film commission...was brought into all of that. It was a separate program. And the Kentucky Arts Council continued to do in a sense what it had been doing before. So we really...I was still doing what I was doing before, in one way. I mean, I was working with organizations to try to help them get grants, and get programs started, and strengthen their operations. So I was doing that, but I was not involved in the marketing programs that the Department of the Arts had, the Craft Marketing Program. I really was not.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. I'm trying to look at how all these different organizations sort of intersected and interlaced as they moved along. And, you know, you have the Southern Highlands Group, which is only part of the state. But was very large, because of all the other states that it included, and very powerful in terms of being a marketing tool.

OGDEN: Right, and the Guild.

WILLIHNGANZ: Then you have the Guild forming and organizing its various activities.

OGDEN: It was interesting, sort of regional, when I kind of came on the scene. We did in that two year period, I believe, there was a National Craft Administrators conference that three of us really put together. There was a person from the TVA, and a person who worked in Tennessee, and there might have been a person, I think, in South Carolina, too. And, we put together a National Craft Conference, so that there was beginning to be, at least from a State Arts Agency point of view, this was for State Arts Agency people, much more dialogue about what programs were going on in different states. And later, there was something called the National Craft Planning Project that I was also

involved in, that was on the test force of and trying to really develop relationships between crafts groups nationally. And, having a real sense of what the needs are in the field, and whether they were regional needs, or whether they were national needs, or was it all local. And so, I would say they were kind of (you were to get back to your question) they were kind of overlapping areas of interest. And certainly the Southern Highland Guild had a lot of Kentucky members. And so, I would say they were not duplicating each other so much as they were various options for crafts people to have more visibility both in Kentucky and regionally. And then, the American Craft Council was a very important organization, which we talked about a little bit with Mrs. Webb. But it was doing regional workshops, regional shows as well as, some national things, and so there was kind of layers that were developing. And this was really beginning in the seventies...sixties and seventies more the seventies, I would say, layers of support that would be both national and regional. And then, state agencies, and then independent private agencies, and I don't know what the Kentucky Arts Council...what its sort of philosophy is right now, but while the Crafts Marketing Program was going on with the state, I would say the Arts Council's interest was still more in how to strengthen the Guild, and to make sure that they were independent organizations apart from the vagaries of state government. I mean, you know, it's important, I think, as it is in funding to have to not be counting on just one source. And certainly, you know, if you rely all on state money, it's a big problem. And, I would say that was probably true from the point of view of the independence of crafts people. I think it's really important to have agencies other than the state agency.

WILLIHNGANZ: Some of this, most of this in fact, we've probably already covered. But perhaps, not exactly the way they phrase it. So, I'm just going to read these to you the way they are, and if you want to comment further about them, that's fine. If you don't, we can move along. What was your background experience, education and career that brought you to the Kentucky Arts Council?

OGDEN: Yeah, I think we kind of talked about that.

WILLIHNGANZ: We've pretty much covered that.

OGDEN: Artistry and the House Beautiful Magazine Crafts Editor World, and the change that made me really want to come back home. I think it's always exciting when something happens and it totally changes your life. And, it's a big surprise, and that book that Mrs. Webb sent me to was one of those occasions.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow!

OGDEN: I've had several of them in my life, including getting married for the first time at age fifty-three.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yes, that would be a change.

OGDEN: Laughter.

WILLIHNGANZ: That would definitely be a change (laughter).

OGDEN: It's like a sea change, which is what we call our cottage in Maine (laughter).

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, that's terrific!

OGDEN: Transformation.

WILLIHNGANZ: Indeed!

OGDEN: But, this was, in fact, that for me coming back here.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow! Hum, that's terrific! You said your title was Craft Coordinator. Did this position exist prior to your hiring?

OGDEN: No. I think we mentioned this, too. A number of crafts people had come to Nash Cox, who was the Director of the Arts Commission, and said we want somebody on the staff who has our interests in mind, and have the Arts Commission itself pay more attention to our needs and interest.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. What were your responsibilities as a KAC staffer?

OGDEN: Well, I probably had that written down in some form that makes (laughter) a lot of sense than what I'm going to say. But, I think it was to determine the needs of the field, and then to try to develop more visibility, more funding sources, more connections for crafts people and crafts groups in the state, based on the needs that they expressed.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

OGDEN: And it turned into really more of administering grants, too. I mean I did that. That was a big part of the job was making sure that people around the state...that crafts people knew what was available, and that the people who were overseeing the decisions had crafts people's interest in mind. So, I actually was involved in choosing the jurors or the panelists, so to make sure that the people who were applying for funds had people who really understood what it is they needed.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow, a lot of responsibility there! What was the status of the craft movement at the time you came on board?

OGDEN: Well, in Kentucky we talked quite a little about the national scene, and that show Objects U.S.A., and In Praise of Hands, and how the whole field was just beginning a resurgence. Because clearly, in the earlier thirties and so forth, there was more active and then there was sort of a less active. And, I definitely think that the whole field was just getting ready to want to be more visible in Kentucky at the time. There were a lot of wonderful organizations that had been going for quite a while. And, we talked about Berea College and the importance it had in the field, and the Arts Center Association in Louisville. There were studio crafts people as well as the craft production centers, and so forth, and it was, I think, it was just a time that there became considerably more interests in the field. As evidence, Phyllis' interest, Phyllis George wouldn't have been interested at all if it hadn't been that the field was beginning to become more active, I think.

WILLIHNGANZ: It may seem like a trivial observation, but it seems to me like the interest in the crafts area, art in general, sort of surged and drew down according to whether we were at war or not.

OGDEN: Well that's interesting, yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Just we get preoccupied with all of the drama and trauma of the war process and it's interesting.

OGDEN: Well, and then I guess in the thirties certainly there were needs...income needs, and some of the organizations...a lot of various organizations in eastern Kentucky got started originally, to try to help people in areas that had a lot of poverty find alternate sources of income, and in that, the Hound Dog Hookers. There were people who came into east Kentucky from outside of the area to help start some of these places. There was a place called the Quicksand Craft Center and Vest. And, there were Lost Creek Craftsman, and various groups that were really started as economic development engines early on.

WILLIHNGANZ: But, don't you think that to some extent the introduction of commercial interest can change radically the quality of the craft production?

OGDEN: I think it is something to be very careful about. And, I would say one of the things that Nash and I did was to go to Ecuador. We have a partnership, Kentucky does, with Ecuador, and to try to develop a kind of partnership in the crafts field there, so we would have exhibitions here, and would send Kentucky crafts people's work there. And, I can't remember exactly what actually happened, but we did go to Ecuador. And, at the time, I remember thinking, you know, when they're trying to really promote these big craft production facilities, you really could lose a lot of the original kind of the quality of the craftsmanship of the time it takes to do things. And, another trip that I did once was, that was really fascinating, was I was in China right after Nixon in

seventy-eight. And, a group of people who were involved in the crafts nationally went. And, one of the reasons China let us in, People's Republic, let us in, because I mean, most people weren't traveling there then...was that they wanted us to look at their craft production and make recommendations. Well, these were a lot of museum people, and a lot of us didn't know, really, a lot about jade factories, or they had old looms that they had gotten in England, that were terrible on people's ears and stuff, and making a terrible racket. And the jade factory was using water to carve them with no masks on or anything. But, going back to your question, I think, when you try to develop a production, you have to be really, really careful about the quality, because you can really slip up on it if you're not careful. And, I think some of the organizations in Kentucky, like the group that Jerry Workman worked with, the Save the Children Federation, and Appalachian Fireside Crafts, always cared a lot about keeping the quality up as well as trying to develop opportunities for more of crafts people to be involved, so they would get more income. But, it's a slippery slope, I have to say.

WILLIHNGANZ: It is a slippery slope, and I think any group or artist has to make decisions in terms of where they're going to be along that line. I was interviewing Walter Cornelison from Bybee Pottery.

OGDEN: Sure, yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: And, I got the chance to drive to the original Bybee Pottery and go through it, and I shopped some of it.

OGDEN: That's in Richmond isn't it?

WILLIHNGANZ: Yes. And, you go in there and the roofs are, you know, about five foot eight or so, and I'm ducking down in there, and he was telling me that, you know, they got basically approached. And I don't know if this was the Phyllis George initiative or how this came about. But, they got approached by Bloomingdale's, and they wanted production on such a level they said, you know, we would have to completely change our process in order to meet those kinds of.

OGDEN: They didn't do it.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, they didn't do it.

OGDEN: Well. There were complaints at the time, I remember, about...because the Bloomingdale's program had Christmas ornaments made out of old quilts. And, there was a kind of hue and cry that somebody was cutting up old quilts to make Christmas ornaments, to try to go into the sort of House Beautifully kind of, you know, approach. I did a little investigating on it, and found at least people were saying that they were old quilts that wouldn't have been used anyway. I don't know. I don't know whether that's true or not, but it

certainly is an example of how you can get a real problem if you're not on top of that kind of issue.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. Well, there was a point at which crafts weren't art. They were, I need a chair to sit on I'm going to make myself a chair.

OGDEN: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: And then at some point, they became stylishly designed, and then you had the merging of functionality, and the Shakers probably emphasizing this more than any group. They have functionality, and at the same time, they have a style on aesthetic that's terrific. And you look at that transition, and how we've gone to now we make chairs that you don't actually sit on because their so beautiful. I wouldn't want you know.

OGDEN: Or, they're not functional.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah (laughter).

OGDEN: And, they've got sharp (unintelligible) things sticking out of them, or I don't know what, or tea pots that don't pour.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah (laughter). A certain number of those too.

OGDEN: Laughter.

WILLIHNGANZ: But, they're beautiful to look at, and terrific on the table. They look great (laughter)!

OGDEN: It's definitely...there's a continuum on there between. But, I think, I mean, that's the great genius of a lot of the Kentucky things is, they were so beautifully designed. And I don't know why that's the case. Seems that in Kentucky, instead of other places, that the things that were utilitarian were so beautiful...the coverlets and the quilts.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

OGDEN: There is a quilt that the Speed has that's just magnificent, that's a Kentucky quilt. And you wonder where this vision...kind of some of these people came from, because they were not necessarily...didn't go to art school (laughter).

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter.

OGDEN: And some people did, but not.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's true. I'm always curious about where the line is between what we call hand crafts, because for instance, I was talking to some people from Louisville Stoneware, and I interviewed at one time the Manager of Production there. And, I was at the time writing resumes, and I wrote his history. And he was telling me basically about how they made a decision to be sort of middle of the road between actual handcrafting and manufactured bowls. So, they developed various processes which involved a certain amount of hand work.

OGDEN: People actually threw the pots on a wheel.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right. But they could do this at a level at a speed which made it semi-industrial.

OGDEN: Right.

WILLIHNGANZ: And you talk to Richard Belando about the development of the overhead hanging looms.

OGDEN: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: That could move five times as fast as the old traditional hand looms, and how he trained people to basically shoot that shuttle across there, and work the pedals. And those looms just cranked, and they just put out material. I was interviewing another lady who does embroidery. Okay, embroidery is pretty neat stuff. I like that design, and she shows some of her stuff, and it's wonderful. And, she tells me she does most of this on the computer. And she'll design it on the computer, and the computer feeds it into a machine, and it embroiders for her.

OGDEN: Wow (laughter)!

WILLIHNGANZ: Now where's the line there (laughter).

OGDEN: Right.

WILLIHNGANZ: I mean is this really a hand...I mean she does hand typed.

OGDEN: Yeah. It has a lot similar with the whole book field. You know, like my friend in Monterey. I mean you set everything, all the type, by hand.

WILLIHNGANZ: Shoo! Not many people are doing that anymore.

OGDEN: I'll show you a book that I did. It was wonderful! But, you know, I don't know if one could answer when that line happens. And in the same way, when I was talking to Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb, and I said, "What's the difference

between art and craft?” And her answer was not an answer. She didn’t answer me, she said, “Go read this book (laughter).”

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter.

OGDEN: And the book changed my life, but I still don’t know the difference between arts and craft (laughter).

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, I understand what you’re saying.

OGDEN: (Laughter) I think intention always is something. I don’t know how you fund intention, or make a decision about intention. But, I think these things seem to work themselves out. It’s probably impossible to make a definition, but maybe the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsman has, or maybe Fran did, and you know how they chose what they chose. We used to make definitions about, in order to get state funding, you had to do certain things that involved the public in certain ways. And so, I suppose somebody who’s like the Craft Marketing Program would have to do that, would have to make certain rules. And the Guild used to, I think.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. Okay, let me return some (unintelligible).

OGDEN: You want an answer, right (laughter).

WILLIHNGANZ: I’ve covered my bases (laughter). Well, at some point it would be nice to have one. I’m not sure there is an answer.

OGDEN: Yeah, I think there is.

WILLIHNGANZ: And I think it changes as we go along. What craft programs or initiatives occurred during your tenure as part of the Kentucky Arts Council, as part of the Department of Arts?

OGDEN: Well, I would say that the most important thing, going back to the sort of reason for the position, was to make sure that the state was, and the state programs were including the crafts as part of what they were doing, which they really hadn’t been so much in the past. And so, that was a really important thing. And I think that the whole trying to bring both the national and a regional prospective, working coordinating regionally and nationally, was a really important part of it. There were certainly organizations that got state’s help that I hope that help was something that made them stronger and better at what they were doing. I haven’t looked at a list of who we funded in a long time. I hope that the Artists’ Fellowship Program, that funded crafts people, as certainly equal partners in the arts, lists something that was helpful in the long run both, to the people who cut the fellowships, but also in making much more visible the work that was being done by Kentucky artists’ and crafts people. I hope that the

Governor's Awards in the Arts that was started during our time there, was something that raised the visibility of crafts people. Alma Lesch was one of the first people to get one of those awards. We had a very collaborative way of working at the Arts Council, so a lot of us were working in ways that I think were helping boost the image of the crafts in the field. And I hope it helped.

WILLHNGANZ: Wow! Okay. How did the changes during the Brown administration affect your work, craft activities in the state?

OGDEN: Oh, well. I think that certainly when the Brown administration started the Craft Marketing Program, it was a very big help to a lot of crafts people financially. And gosh, it's been a lot of years that that program, is still going, which I think is wonderful. So, I would say it was, you know, clear that the Brown administration made marketing and promotion with Phyllis' help. It made things much more visible. Now Fran would be able to tell you much more than I would, what the actual results of that are, and what better incomes of crafts people, and how many, and what the impact of that was. I really, I don't have those figures. But anytime you have, I think, that kind of visibility, it's going to be a benefit to the people who are working in the field. Now, as far as the, I think, a lot of people, became interested in the craft field who might not have otherwise let them take the chance, for as one example. I mean Al and Mary started collecting Kentucky crafts at the time, and it was really because of their involvement with the Brown administration, and they became interested. And now Al's interest has really changed since then. He's collecting contemporary art in a major way, but it all came about because of that. And so, I...it never hurts to have a star (laughter).

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter.

OGDEN: For visibility and I think they did quite a job of that (laughter). There were some things that were difficult for the Arts Commission. We lost our traveling exhibition service, because funding kind of shifted to get the crafts marketing started. The Arts Council had lost some staff, and that we lost that program, and I think that was too bad, because I think it was, it was Albert Sperath that ran it, it was a fabulous program. Not only did we do the furniture show, but there was a show that traveled...supported the Guild's twenty-fifth anniversary. The Kentucky Guild and it was a wonderful show. There were shows on bookbinding, and gosh, I'm trying to remember. But, there were a number of shows that were really Kentucky Crafts people. And, I think, that was a really important program in terms of getting crafts out in galleries, in spaces, in the state, and I think it's too bad that they're not doing it anymore.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, I'd like to stop for just one moment. Let us continue on, okay. Were you involved in the development of the Craft Marketing Program within the Department of the Arts?

OGDEN: I was not.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, just not.

WILLIHNGANZ: Were you involved in any efforts to coordinate activities among the various craft based organizations, at the time new programs such as the Craft Marketing and the Kentucky Art and Craft Foundation came (unintelligible) or beginning?

OGDEN: The job I had, really, at the Arts Council, at that point, was running the grants programs. And so, I would say it would be presumptuous of me to say that I was doing any real coordinating of any craft programming at that point. But, I was certainly in touch with artists, and with organizations that were supporting the crafts. And I was, I hope, I had really incorporated the crafts as a full player in the work that the Arts Council was doing.

WILLIHNGANZ: You know, it seems to me almost like what I should do, doing the project I'm working on, is draw a timeline, and try and say, you know, in 1925. I think it is LVAA starts.

OGDEN: Right. When the Speed, and all that.

WILLIHNGANZ: All that, and when did the Speed start, and when did the Guild start...was 1960 and, you know, look at how those all intersect, and put in dates for particular events as well.

OGDEN: Absolutely, that would be interesting.

WILLIHNGANZ: That would be worth doing. There isn't book or anything like that about Kentucky's craft art history is there?

OGDEN: I don't think so. Surely there must have been something through, if it would be, it might be through Berea College.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. I haven't even really been to Berea. I mean I've been through Berea, and done many interviews there, but I have not gone to the College itself.

OGDEN: That's a really interesting question. I don't remember.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, I should talk to Tim Glotzbach. I bet he'd know about this.

OGDEN: I mean, there are other people who have been around in the field long enough too, like Adrian Swain. And, I mean, they might be helpful about knowing if there is something.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. Well, it's worth researching at some point here. Okay, well there's the (unintelligible). What changes did you see within the craft movement statewide, while you were at the Kentucky Arts Council? What organizational changes occurred as part of State government and elsewhere in the state?

OGDEN: I don't know how to answer that, I don't think.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh, hum.

OGDEN: What would some examples be of changes? Fran would probably know more if they were new organizations started. I mean, that would be one thing to talk about, and I don't know if there were lots more crafts people working. I mean, that's an interesting question, statistically, of how do you measure activity? And were there more groups getting grants? Yes. Were there more groups that had professional, well, maybe not, that had professional directors, but maybe they were being paid more, maybe. You know. Were there more crafts people in Eastern Kentucky, or whatever, than there were when I started? I don't know.

WILLIHNGANZ: I guess what I would think would be of interest, would be wondering if there were changes in philosophy, or values.

OGDEN: You were talking about changes in values from a State prospective?

WILLIHNGANZ: Well. Yeah, from a prospective, I assume, that some of the people on the Arts Commission were appointed or.

OGDEN: All of them were appointed.

WILLIHNGANZ: All of them were appointed.

OGDEN: And they have staggered terms, so that it's not one administration comes in and appoints all of them. That's part of the checks and balances for it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right.

OGDEN: So, I mean the chairman is usually appointed by whoever is the governor, and although right now it's, I believe it's Todd Lowe, who was Chairman of Actor's Theatre. He's on the Speed board. I mean, he's definitely a really great art supporter with a lot of integrity in terms of his interests in the arts. But, I think what you want to do is to have enough of a balance so that you don't have necessarily one focus during, say, the Brown administration, another focus

during the Collins administration, another focus. I think you don't want to do that. You want to try to have some consistency in the ways of supporting the arts. And I would hope that certain governors would up the ante some, and provide more support that would continue. And so, I don't know enough about the Arts Council right now and its values, but I would assume that given the fact that who's the people I do know who are on the board, and the way the staff is structured and so forth, that they're is still working to try to really support the needs of the state. I know they've done a great planning process that updated their long range plan, and are very much responsive to broadening, and it goes back to issues that you brought up. Are you broadening or are you deepening? They had a grant from the Wallace Foundation. The Speed also did to take a kind of approach that did try to broaden and deepen, and they are still doing that at the Arts Council. So, I assume that the overall support, philosophically, would be similar. I don't know.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well. I wonder, you know, some of the things you were speaking of earlier in terms of support for the visual arts, as opposed to the performing arts, and the mechanical arts if you will.

OGDEN: Right.

WILLIHNGANZ: You know you look at the different conflicting things that, you know, I don't mean to be a reporter who is digging into the seedier sides of things. But, I do wonder if there's a certain amount of competition among various arts organizations for a limited pool of dollars.

OGDEN: Well. It's interesting that, not this administration at the Arts Council, but several years ago, the Speed was sited as being one of the best managed, I love to say, best managed organizations. That it was doing great work in the community, and it got the highest rating of any of the organizations that had applied for state money. And they said, "Well, Speed doesn't need the money. So let's just not give it to them or something." I mean, we really had to struggle to say why state support was really important to what we were doing. So there's that kind of stuff, and certainly when I was at the Arts Council there was tension between how much money went to Louisville and how much money went to the outside the Louisville area. I don't know whether that's still a big deal, but it was a big deal when I was there.

WILLIHNGANZ: I'm sure it's still a big deal.

OGDEN: Big deal. And a group like Appalshop had a lot of strength, in terms of lobbying for the Arts Council...not lobbying the legislature for a greater share of the funds to go to east Kentucky, and to go to support areas that weren't so urban. There's a lot of that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Yeah.

OGDEN: Probably still is.

WILLIHNGANZ: I'm sure there must be.

OGDEN: I don't think those things go away (laughter).

WILLIHNGANZ: No (laughter). People are people. What changes did you see within the craft movement statewide while you were...I just did that one?

OGDEN: You did that.

WILLIHNGANZ: What long term impact did these changes have on crafts in the state? What benefits?

OGDEN: Well, I would love to know what Fran's take on that is, because she's been there so much. I mean it's been thirty years since I was.

WILLIHNGANZ: Is that right?

OGDEN: Well thirty years since I was a Craft Coordinator. Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow! I guess it has.

OGDEN: And uh (laughter), so I mean I've been at the museum. I was at the Speed for fourteen years and I left there in.

WILLIHNGANZ: Only twenty, you left in eighty-nine so that's.

OGDEN: To the State. Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right.

OGDEN: Still that's twenty years, I think. So, I really don't know the answer to that (laughter) exactly, except from the Speed's perspective, which is where I really was seeing things, although I was seeing it more administratively than I was artistically. It seemed to me that the development of crafts is an art form. It certainly developed a lot since I was first Craft Coordinator. I mean, I think there's a lot more interest in the kind of expression, artistic expression in Louisville anyway. This interview makes me want to get in my little car and travel around the state like I used to do all the time. I really spent a lot of time in Eastern Kentucky. I spent a lot of time in west Kentucky. And I really miss it. I love the state. It's wonderful. It's so exciting. It was such an exciting time to be a part of all of that. It really was.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow! Did you have any ongoing involvement with craft activities in the state in your position with the J.B. Speed Museum?

OGDEN: I really didn't, no. I mean I was really focused on the development of the Speed from an administrative point of view, and I used to go down and look in the galleries occasionally (laughter) ...try to feed myself, 'cause I could have been some ways working anywhere when you're dealing with personnel issues, and dealing with long range planning issues.

WILLIHNGANZ: Sure.

OGDEN: And budget issues, and how to get everybody together on what the budget was going to be. I mean it's, I really did that. That's what I did, and I was not really involved in the Crafts Movement. I would go to the Art and Craft Foundation. I have been a member of the Visual Art Association and the Art and Craft Foundation, of course, interested in seeing what's going on. But, that's only from an observer and enjoyer's point of view, and not really from a professional point of view. Fran's been there much longer than that, I mean, she's really had that perspective that has lasted so long.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, I've done one interview with her, and I'm about to do another one with her, because there's just a lot that I didn't cover in the first interview that I think is probably important.

OGDEN: Yeah. She and I just did such different things. I mean, her perspective is going to be so really different from mine, just because of the way we were working in the field.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, okay. What groups or individuals do you feel have had the greatest impact on craft development in the state?

OGDEN: Well, we talked about Berea College. I mean, if you think about the production centers, the Guild...Larry Hackley was real involved with Folk Arts. I think he did a lot to really promote and develop the Folk Arts as Adrian Swain. Let's see, who...gosh there were some people who worked tirelessly. I mean you talked about Marie Hochstrasser, and talking to her and Arturo Sandoval, and there are people who've really been.

WILLIHNGANZ: How about Rude Osolnik?

OGDEN: Oh, I adored Rude. Oh, he's one of my favorite people in the world.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did you know him?

OGDEN: Oh, yes. I've got work of his. I just loved him. We gave him...at the Arts Council...he got the Milner Award, or the Artist Award or something. And I'm just crazy about him.

WILLIHNGANZ: Why was he hard on you?

OGDEN: Oh, because it was never good enough and always wanted things improved, and he was right you know. He always wanted the crafts people to be supported. He really had his fingers in everything. He was nationally and internationally. He was, I think, part of that Objects U.S.A. Collection too, which was the book we talked about. Major figure, I think, as a teacher and a person who helped young people, and who inspired, and was challenging to people. He thought, you know, wanted more, and wanted to be the crafts to have more support. And he was a great guy. The state really lost a major figure.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, that's pretty clear.

OGDEN: And the Speed has work in its collection of Rude's. They had a gallery in Berea at one point, and he and his wife. His studio was so much fun to go to. I mean there were wood chips everywhere (laughter).

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter.

OGDEN: I mean Ed Multhorpe was a big figure in this National Craft Movement in wood, but so was Rude, and he was right up there with some of the best that have ever come out of this country. He was really a good person in a lot of different ways.

WILLIHNGANZ: What other observations, looking back, do you have about the development and advancement of crafts in the state over the last fifty years?

OGDEN: Laughter. Well, let's see.

WILLIHNGANZ: In particular, the last twenty or twenty-five?

OGDEN: I was only twelve in that (laughter).

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter.

OGDEN: I mean, I hope that it will continue, and that people will appreciate what is going on here, because it's a pretty remarkable state in a lot of ways. And I think it's remarkable for not only the more traditional crafts. I honestly don't know if those are still being produced in a way that they were, you know, thirty years ago. But I hope they are. I'm afraid that a lot of the, sort of

older techniques, are fading some as young people may not want to take up some of this. I certainly think that the artistic expression as we talked about is alive and well in the state, and I hope that those studio craft and more production craft will continue. I mean, I think there's still a lot of interest in it. I hope there is.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

OGDEN: Things go through cycles, and it's just such a rich heritage here. And it's so important, I think, to the identity of the state and to the identity of all of us who live here.

WILLIHNGANZ: I certainly would agree with you on that. We have a local catholic church that does an annual craft fair for their, basically their parishioners. And you go in and frankly (laughter), their craft work...I looked at some, and very little there that I could do with no training at all. I know I could do this.

OGDEN: Yeah, it's really.

WILLIHNGANZ: But you know, even that humble, as it is, serves a function. It makes people aware of what you start doing, and it brings people into an awareness.

OGDEN: Right, more as an audience in a sense.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

OGDEN: We worked the Homemakers. I mean, that was one of the groups that I went out and tried to convert into, you know, working with the crafts in the state. Some things were pretty artsy, crafty, but there were a lot of, and still are people who do a lot of things that maybe aren't, you know, gorgeous or beautifully designed, or whatever...is still doing things that come from the heart and come from the hand. And I think that's a really important thing to be doing.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. And it's the more you come involved, I think, the more you see the possibilities for things you just didn't see before. I did one interview recently with Linda Fifield, and you know Linda?

OGDEN: I don't.

WILLIHNGANZ: She's a bead stringer (laughter).

OGDEN: Ah, hah!

WILLIHNGANZ: She strings beads, which I thought stopped in about second grade. Boy was I wrong about that!

OGDEN: Oh, yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: I mean what she does with beads is just terrific!

OGDEN: Is extraordinary.

OGDEN: Sort of like Native American.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

OGDEN: I mean that's the bead work that the Speed has that the Plains Indians are just amazing.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, she sells at the craft show for the Smithsonian and it's just fabulous.

OGDEN: What I don't understand is the concentration and how you can, I mean, I just have such admiration for it.

WILLIHNGANZ: It's incredible!

OGDEN: For people who do that kind of work.

WILLIHNGANZ: I said, "Don't you get tired of this?" She sitting there stringing little beads you know these tiny little beads she uses.

OGDEN: But I think it's therapeutic in some ways too.

WILLIHNGANZ: She does it for nine hours at a time, and is surprised when her husband comes home from work can't believe she has to stop (laughter).

OGDEN: Yeah, well I got into when I was making pots. And when I was actually setting type I would get so absorbed in it for some reason. It was almost like meditation in a way, I mean it was a kind of transporting me into a different state of being.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow!

OGDEN: Laughter.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

OGDEN: I wish the results had been more magnificent but (laughter).

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter. I think that completes my questions for you.

OGDEN: Okay.

WILLIHNGANZ: If there are any other comments you would like to make, you're certainly welcome to do that.

OGDEN: Well it's a remarkable...I feel as if I was involved in the crafts in the state at a remarkable time, and I feel very grateful for that. It's a wonderful feeling for me I have to say.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, terrific! I think you contributed a lot.

OGDEN: I hope so.

WILLIHNGANZ: And it's terrific, and thank you for everything you did today (laughter).