

Interviewee: LORE KADDEN LINDENFELD
Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS
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[The following incorporates images from the videotape as well as changes made by Lore Kadden Lindenfeld to interview no. 166. Numbers refer to the BMC catalog for Lindenfeld's retrospective in Asheville at the Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center.]

DESCRIPTION OF WORK DONE AT BLACK MOUNTAIN (VIDEOTAPED):

[RAY JOHNSON DRAWING]

[Begins p 31 of transcript]

MEH: You tell me what this is.

LKL: This is a drawing which Ray Johnson gave to me.

It's called "The hat makes the man." And I think it expresses some of the humor that he showed in his work.

MEH: And this was done at Black Mountain.

LKL: Yes. It was done at Black Mountain. It was a – probably a birthday present to me or something like that.

[Discussion of positioning the images before the camera]

MEH: This is Lore Lindenfeld and we're looking at samples of work from Albers' classes.

LKL: (9) This was a study for the design course, using stripes – first very, very fine lines, then stripes that were spaced further apart but arranged in such a way so as to suggest three-dimensional space by overlapping shapes and changing the direction. The problem is the same for both compositions.

[Discussion of positioning.]

[NEW STUDY]

LKL: (7) This was one of the problems of figure-background and it is arranged in horizontal stripes. Within each stripe, there are various shapes which are of equal value in terms of light and dark.

MEH: You say equal value in terms of light and dark –

LKL: In spacing. The fact that it has a black frame takes away a little bit from – it's not quite as convincing as it would be if this was mounted on an entirely different background. I think the yellow and the black would be seen as equal partners.

MEH: What is the real purpose? What was he trying to do? I know what the assignment was but what was he trying to teach you through this?

LKL: To see shapes in such a way as complementing each other so that the figure that you have chosen is of equal importance as the background AND that together they create a composition in which you cannot tell which is figure and which is background.

[New study]

LKL: (5) This is really the same idea translated into three colors in which they have been used in equal amounts, both solids and stripes and combined in various ways.

[New study]

LKL: (6) This is a color study in which there are three sections. In each of the sections, one of the colors has been eliminated and combined with – There are four colors all together. In this one there is no yellow in this section of the composition. In this one there is no red and this one does not have any purple so that the composition is shown recombining the various color combinations.

MEH: Was the idea here to show how a color changes in relationship to other colors.

LKL: That is one purpose. And the other purpose is also to have one basic idea of a composition and that it can be shown in its variations. And that each time it projects another kind of image.

[New study]

LKL: (2) This is a study in which transparency was suggested as a topic. These are overlapping shapes which are not transparent really but where one tried to figure out what the third color would be if the two colors were to merge. And that is what was done here.

MEH: This is something that it seems would be particularly useful as a weaver – this concept.

LKL: Yes.

MEH: Have you explored this deliberately in your weaving or is it just part of the process?

LKL: Well, I have at times also explored it, especially in my later work where there was a possibility of being quite free and to do things that are part of the composition and using these possibilities.

MEH: It would seem that in weaving because of the relation of the threads you would almost create this effect.

LKL: Well, sometimes. Sometimes I think that you have to make a deliberate attempt to do that.

[New study]

LKL: (12) This was made for the project of
matière, showing the nature of material.
And it suggests wood grain which, of
course, it is because I did this rubbing of
wood that was on my desk in my study,
changing the direction, turning the piece of paper around to create this
composition that you see here.

[New study]

LKL: (11) The aim of this composition was to show
the possibility of creating a sense of volume, of
three dimensional space, by using thick and
thinner lines by spacing the lines closer
together and further apart to give the illusion of
kind of an in and out wavy shape.

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MEH: Using straight lines.

LKL: And these are all straight lines.

[New study]

LKL: I mean these are still the leaves.

MEH: Real leaves. And this is one of the leaf studies.

LKL: (14) This was a leaf study. It was also in the category of matière where you tried to change the appearance of leaves and use them in ways that we don't really see in nature. What contributes to the appearance is the fact that the leaves already at that time had holes in them, were eaten away, and that the background is complementary to the kind of curved shapes that leaves have.

MEH: What was Albers trying to teach you through an exercise like this?

LKL: With leaves? Well, actually to see shapes and to change the appearance that these shapes have as if we see them in nature while we combine them in a composition.

[New study]

LKL: (10) This is also in the group of figure-background studies using all these curved shapes.

MEH: What did you do for your papers at Black Mountain? Was it available?

LKL: Construction paper. How did we get it?

MEH: Did Albers have a supply or did you get your own?

LKL: I think we probably bought it from this card store or something. It was there.

None of us had cars. None of us ever went to Asheville to buy anything. It all had to really be there. But it was inexpensive material. It was not anything very precious. I'm amazed that it's lasted.

[New study]

LKL: (11) This is a piece that was made for Anni Albers' class in weaving. Before I started her course, she gave the assignment to make a study of a piece that would not use weaving, that would not use yarn, but that would suggest a woven fabric. These are metal shavings. They came from a fountain pen factory in which this material was used. It was sent to me by somebody and I used them in this piece.

[New study]

(13) This was a matière study in which we used material that was around and transformed it in some way. This is a piece of masonite seen from the back on which I did this drawing and filled in with gold paint. It was done in India ink. It now gives the illusion of looking at a gauzy material or something of this kind.

MEH: It looks almost like a felt. [Irrelevant comments]

LKL: We've come back to drawing and, of course, this has a very graphic feeling to it and sometimes I do something and I want to repeat something in a similar way and I can't [can?] because it's like my own handwriting. You know, I just bring the same feeling to it.

[New study]

LKL: (3) This is to show the change of color. One color is seen against two different backgrounds. They do seem like two different colors, but it is the same one that continues from the pink to the green area.

MEH: That really is a very successful example of that.

LKL: That, of course, is also something that was very important when I designed materials for industry because I used the same pattern in various color combinations and they had to have the same kind of value.

[New study]

LKL: (24) This was one of the first weavings I did in the plain weave construction in which each thread just goes up and down and repeats after the second row and what gives this a textural surface is that the threads that were put in the horizontal direction are first of all much finer than the ones which were in the loom when it was set up and are of various textures. There is one nubby thread which is heavier and the successive

threads which are thinner are dominated by the curvatures that are created by the nubby thread and sometimes can move very close together and sometimes they are kept apart by those nubby threads and take on the appearance of a wavy line.

[New study]

LKL: (23) As I became more interested in weave constructions, I was particularly fascinated with the possibility of combining weaves, in this case a plain weave with warp and weft effect twills. By setting up my loom in such a way that these technical possibilities were there, I could also then create designs that gave in this case the appearance of three-dimensional space.

[Irrelevant comments not transcribed]

[New study]

LKL: (22) As time went on, I became fascinated with the idea of double-weaves and asked the questions: do two layers have to be both layers woven? Do those layers have to be covering the whole width of the piece? I set up the loom in such a way that there were stripes that would float on the top layer, that they were sometimes woven and sometimes floating giving the possibility of a more transparent look and

combining colors in such a way that they seemed to be changing with the amount of float and the width of the floats and the spacing. I wanted the colors that are shown here in their combination to resemble some of the color studies I had made before that show the influence of color on each other, and this is really primarily color study but in the woven medium.

MEH: Also here again we get to transparency.

LKL: Uh-hum [positive]. Yes, a sense of transparency. Yes, that's right.

[New study]

LKL: (21) This is another sample in the category of double-weaves where I combined textured yarns of three colors as floats on top of the straighter yarn as background. The colors continue in the same vein vertically but are interchanged as other colors float across in the horizontal direction, recombining the color combinations. In this piece they are arranged in equal proportions that create a square pattern.

[New study]

LKL: (20) This is the same problem but carried a little further in that the second layer which is floating is not evenly spaced and is not of equal proportion, neither in the vertical nor the horizontal direction, and is of a contrasting color to the background.

[New study]

LKL: (25) This was the ultimate piece which I made for my graduation. It is a project in which I tried to use a double warp. One of the layers is woven all the time. Sometimes both layers are woven making pronounced horizontal and white and black stripes of various of proportions. At times the threads that float were twisted in a kind of leno pattern. Sometimes long floats, sometimes shorter ones, sometimes the white on black, sometimes the black on white. Spacing these horizontal bands in various widths and alternating solid areas with the open spaces.

LKL: [COMMENTS NOT RELEASED. SEE INSERT AS SEPARATE INTERVIEW]

LKL: I mean, she [Anni Albers] was perfectly polite and nice to me but it was certainly never, never a feeling of closeness.

MEH: It's interesting because Albers was much closer to the female students, than the male students.

LKL: I imagine so. [overtalk] But people ask me about him: wasn't he a difficult teacher? I mean I think I got along very well with him, you know. I certainly didn't have problems. [LAUGHTER - BREAK IN TAPING] Part of that gossip, you know, that went on about, you know – Either it eluded me or I was too busy. I was never really that involved in this kind of thing.

MEH: I was going to ask you if you could be in the community and not get involved in all the different controversies.

LKL: I tell you. I think the only time that I was aware of something happening that I really did not agree with was when somebody was there who made an attempt to organize the students into a kind of communist or a socialist movement. I don't know. An organization in North Carolina, I think it was, in the South. There were really these political overtones or something that I really didn't understand first of all because I was not really that familiar with American politics at the time. It was obviously also done in an underhanded way that I did not want to be identified with. But I do not really – you know, the ups and downs and the conflicts between Albers and others who were waiting for him to get out of there and leave and so on. This is not something I was very aware of really when I was there. I was just not involved in this.

[New study]

LKL: (16) This is a drawing from Albers' drawing class and the intent was to do something very quick, very spontaneously without looking at the page, just capturing a feeling of movement. Albers would say, "Don't paint the eyebrows." He really just wanted to scribble, scribble and do something that could be done very quickly and capture the essence of the pose.

MEH: Who modeled for the classes?

LKL: Other students, never in the nude.

[New study]

LKL: (17 or 18) These were drawings that emphasized just the opposite from making many lines. Instead, having very few, very selective, just really tuning in on the essence of the pose and to leave some areas incomplete so that they would be able to suggest three-dimensional space, volume by not fencing them in. These two drawings were made in accordance with that principle.

MEH: How would you relate this to what you are doing now?

LKL: Well, I'm using very much that same feeling because again in my drawing, I want to give a feeling of three-dimensional space. And so I am using this very much in the drawings I do now. I did a great deal of drawing at the time when I was at Black Mountain and didn't do any drawing during the time when I designed for industry, not until recently. And now I kind of have rediscovered drawing.

[TEXT DELETED FROM IMAGE FILE. SEE COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT.]

MEH: These are sample so of the work you did when you were working for industry?

LKL: Right. And these I made the sample on the handloom and I used the handloom as if it was a power loom. The same limitations. And I made samples, some in very, very fine yarn with lots of threads per inch.

MEH: Hold that up so we can see more clearly. [adjusts weaving]

LKL: And this was worsted suiting. When I made a design like this, it was important to have a warp in the loom that would lend itself to many different kinds of stripes and many different kinds of colors. So I really had to keep in mind what was possible and what was economical for a mill to make.

[New study]

This was suiting that I designed and actually I have a photograph [instructions on position].... This was the original design for a coating and then on the same loom with the same setup I would also create other kinds of patterns, other kinds of designs that could be done on the same loom. It was very important to be versatile because in industry, just as in the handloom, the setting up of loom is the expensive part. So the more things could be done with one setup, the better it was.

[New study]

When I designed for industry at the time, it was a time when very few women would design things that were actually made on the handloom that

would then have the technical knowledge that could be executed in exactly the same way in which they envisioned it on the power loom. Most of the time women were employed to make little sketches, little colored sketches, that would then be sent to the mill and would then be reinterpreted by somebody at the mill and woven in some way. As a matter of fact, I would make the sample and I would instruct the mill

[INTERVIEW CONTINUES. SEE MAIN TRANSCRIPT.]