



Duration

Track 1: 00:31:09 / Track 2: 00:06:49

Reference

OH8.1 / OH8.2

Subjects

Woodcarving / Sculpture / Bowl Making

Recording date

17 June 2015

Recording location

Interviewee's home, Bucknell, Herefordshire

Interviewee

Caton, Paul (PC – speaker, male)

Interviewer

Lin, Gloria (GL – speaker, female)

Synopsis

The woodcarver and sculptor Paul Caton (b. 1950) began creating hand-carved pieces when he was 20 and continues to do so from his rural home in North Herefordshire. In this 2015 First Decade interview, Caton talks about his affinity with trees and nature, teaching himself to carve and being accepted into the Crafts Council Index in 1976. Caton began woodcarving in his spare time when he joined the Swiss forestry commission. In this interview he describes his making process, enjoying being a 'full-time bowl maker' and creating pieces with tactile, visual and sculptural qualities. He also talks about being in the presence of makers of a previous generation, such as Hans Coper and Lucie Rie, who had a great influence on his work.

Recording

Track 1

00:00 PC begins by talking about his woodwork teacher, woodcarving, chisels and his first pieces. He recalls his experience in Switzerland and joining the Swiss forestry commission. 'I bought some chisels and mallets and I just started, instead of sitting there and reading the paper and stuff [...] I did some woodcarving. I got known as this English woodcarver out in the woods and people used to come and see me, which was really nice [...] I made the connection that I could make things in hand [*sic*] and then sell them.'



03:31 PC describes drawing inspiration from logs he found and selling his pieces, and how this in turn made him become a 'full-time bowl maker'.

04:39 PC mentions his first contact with the Crafts Council (CC) in 1976 and being accepted onto the CC Index. He talks about how his work 'took off' through shows at craft galleries: 'I do remember being very happy having the association, the "umbrella" of the Crafts Council, and in those days it was very much dominated by more traditional craft, and I was [a traditional craftsman] [...] and there was [*sic*] stonecutters and potters and weavers, and some of those people have become you know, really very well known and famous [...] it was a really nice thing to be part of.'

07:18 PC talks about the potter Hans Coper, who was the stepfather of his roommate at boarding school. He describes spending time with Coper and Lucie Rie and recalls meeting Barbara Hepworth in St Ives.

11:01 PC describes his feelings about his 'quality' of making and his envy of other carvers and sculptors. He mentions his current work for Hereford Cathedral, carving a Christmas nativity scene.

14:03 PC talks about sourcing wood near his home in North Herefordshire, where he has lived for 26 years: 'I'll quite often get phone calls and things saying "oh [a certain] tree's just come down, and I do a bartering system where I'll go and clear up the tree and take bits away that I want and then I'll give them a bowl in return, so no money changes hands and it's very nice [...] and so I get a good selection of hardwoods (I only carve hardwoods). [Points] There's walnut, there's cherry down here, there's lime and ash...' PC continues to talk about the process of splitting trees and shaping bowls, and says the 'tactile quality is important' for customers.

18:57 GL and PC discuss his piece in the CC Handling Collection, *Wooden Bowl (1986; HC387)*, and how he became a member of the CC Index.

23:10 PC talks about the various meanings of the word 'craft', highlighting the difference between commercial and museum-shop items and the CC's role: '[You could pay] three or four pounds for these "gifted"-made crafts rather than several hundred or something for an item that maybe took a week or two weeks to make, and I think the Crafts Council was really trying to support the traditional crafts.'

25:09 PC talks about the process of making and his joy in using his hands to produce work: 'I like the "hand of man" – I like the hand of the craftsman, which is why



you'll often see with my work [...] chip marks or rasping marks or sandpaper marks and things and [...] you know, there's no such thing as a perfect human being, we've all got scars and dents and things, and [it's] the same with work! I think it's lovely to see Henry Moore sculptures [...] and Michelangelo, and you can see all the chisel marks, and you think "gosh they were actually chiselling that and sawing that".'

28:41 PC discusses teaching and leading workshop groups.

Track 2

00:08 PC talks about the grant from the CC that facilitated his six-week trip to Carrara, Italy, to carve marble. He describes his experience in Italy in detail.

02:08 PC mentions his other grant from the CC, which helped to refurbish his 'run-down' workshop in 1986.

04:23 PC questions how one should value one's own work.