

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Edward Clark

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Clark, Edward, 1926-2019
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Edward Clark,
Dates:	August 23, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:15:20).
Abstract:	Painter Edward Clark (1926 - 2019) is an internationally renowned artist who is credited as being the first painter to work on a shaped canvas. Clark was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 23, 2005, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_201
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Abstract painter Edward Clark was born in the Storyville neighborhood of New Orleans on May 6, 1926. Internationally renowned for over five decades for being a groundbreaking artist, Clark was credited as being the first painter to work on a shaped canvas. Influenced by the sand art techniques of the Pueblo people of the American Southwest, Clark also developed an innovative technique of working with dry pigments.

Clark received his formal training at the Art Institute of Chicago between 1947 and 1951; and at L'Academie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris, France in 1952. Clark was heavily influenced by two of his instructors, Louis Ritman at the Art Institute of Chicago, and Edouard Goerg at the Grande Chaumière, though Nicolas de Staël's painting *The Football Game* is often credited with having the largest impact on his artistic vision.

After his five year stay in Paris, Clark returned to the United States, where he moved to New York City. It was in New York that Clark became involved with the Brata Gallery on Tenth Street. At the Brata, Clark worked and exhibited alongside such artists as George Sugarman, Sal Romano, Al Held, John Krushenick, and Ronald Bladen. While associated with the Brata, Clark first worked with the shaped canvas medium, which he exhibited in the Brata Gallery Christmas Group Show in 1957; a later painting using this shaped canvas method was acquired by the Art Institute of Chicago for their permanent collections.

Throughout his career, Clark also became known for utilizing a push broom technique of painting, which allowed him to sweep large quantities of pigment across the painting surface; boldly manifesting his visions onto canvas. Clark received several awards for his work, and his pieces were collected by museums internationally.

Clark passed away on October 18, 2019.

Edward Clark was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 23, 2005.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Edward Clark was conducted by Shawn Wilson on August 23, 2005, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Painter Edward Clark (1926 - 2019) is an internationally renowned artist who is credited as being the first painter to work on a shaped canvas.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Clark, Edward, 1926-2019

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Clark, Edward, 1926-2019 --Interviews

African American painters--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Painter

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Edward Clark, August 23, 2005. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Clark, Section A2005_201_001_001, TRT: 0:29:59 ?

Edward Clark was born on May 6, 1926 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Merion Hutchinson Clark and Edward Clark, Sr. Clark's maternal grandfather was a carpenter. Clark's mother was born in Covington, Louisiana. She identified as Creole and was raised as a devout Catholic. After her mother died, Clark's mother moved to Detroit, Michigan and washed dishes. Clark's father was born in 1906 in Louisiana and played cards to support the family. While listing his

favorite vacation spots, Clark shares an anecdote about painting during his travels in Mexico and explains his preference for working in dilapidated studios. African American painters--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Clark, Section A2005_201_001_002, TRT: 0:29:31 ?

Edward Clark's father was born to a teenage mother and a sheriff in Louisiana. Even though Clark's father was not close to his parents, he inherited \$30,000 from his mother when she died, which he spent in a year. Clark recalls the racial tension between Creole people and African Americans in his childhood neighborhood of Storyville in New Orleans, Louisiana. Identifying as Creole, Clark's mother denied her African American roots. Clark's family lived in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, before moving to Chicago, Illinois. Clark remembers how his mother fed him nuts and bread with gravy due to their poverty. Growing up, Clark admired boxer Joe Louis. Clark struggled as a student in Catholic school, but enjoyed drawing. Clark drew a detailed tree for a classroom contest, but instead of naming him the winner, his teacher dismissed the class, giving Clark his first lesson in rejection. Clark recalls holiday celebrations; his earliest childhood memory; and the sights, sounds, and smells of his childhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Clark, Section A2005_201_001_003, TRT: 0:30:44 ?

Edward Clark attended Catholic schools in Chicago where his teachers encouraged his drawing talents. Clark struggled with reading and after failing sixth grade twice, Clark's mother transferred him to public school. Clark's grades improved, and he aspired to be a pilot. Instead of finishing high school, Clark enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Forces. Clark was denied entry to the Civilian Pilot Training Program, but he became a sergeant major while stationed in Guam. After leaving the Air Force in 1945, Clark attended the School of the Art Institute in Chicago on the G.I. Bill where he learned about reflected colors from Louis Ritman. In 1952, Clark moved to Paris, France and attended Académie de la Grande Chaumière, studying under painter Edouard Goerg and sculptor Ossip Zadkine who taught him to add more depth to his paintings. In Paris, Clark worked in his own studio creating figurative paintings before moving to abstract art, which allowed him to be more creative.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Clark, Section A2005_201_001_004, TRT: 0:30:18 ?

Edward Clark had a showing at the American Center in Paris, France. Afterward, he was featured in the French newspaper Le Monde as a Negro artist. Unhappy with the emphasis on his race, Clark contacted the writer, Michel Conil-LaCoste, and after developing an understanding, the two became friends. Conil-LaCoste helped Clark with his first show at Galerie Raymond Creuze in Paris where he sold three paintings. Clark's artwork was also shown in another prestigious art show in 1955. Of his time in Paris, Clark recalls African American artists like Beauford Delaney, Richard Bogusz and an acquaintance named Kelly. While noting Paris' beauty, Clark also recalls the racism he saw in France. He describes his personal relationship with a patron. In the 1960s, Clark moved to New York City. Clark notes how international artists like Manet, Cezanne, and Picasso inspired contemporary art and describes his experimental work with shaped canvas paintings.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Clark, Section A2005_201_001_005, TRT: 0:30:58 ?

Edward Clark, upon moving to New York City, joined 10th Street Galleries, a co-op that included artists like George Sugarman, Al Loving, and Claes Oldenburg. Clark had the first one-person show at New York City's Brata Gallery in 1957. Clark's artwork was also shown at the Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of Art in New York City in 1973 and at the Randall Galleries.

Clark was featured in the Herald Tribune. In the 1970s, Clark received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and was a visiting artist at The Ohio State University in Columbus and in Louisiana. To create wider brush strokes in his artwork, Clark began using a push broom. While visiting the painter Joan Mitchell in Vétheuil, France, Clark was inspired by the scenery and produced paintings that later became popular. Clark remembers fellow artist Daniel LaRue Johnson. Clark also describes his motivation as an artist and his trip to Crete with HistoryMaker Jack Whitten.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Clark, Section A2005_201_001_006, TRT: 0:31:08 ?

Edward Clark, after his inspiring trip to Crete, travelled to Africa to paint. On a small budget, Clark could not find affordable housing in Ife, Nigeria until the locals introduced him to writer and professor Ulli Beier. Beier taught Clark about African sculptures. Upon realizing they had a mutual friend in Bill Hudson, Beier helped Clark by sending him to the local chief who found housing for him. Inspired by the culture and colors of the landscape, Clark painted his Ife series. To save money, Clark travelled by bus from Nigeria to Cameroon. He recalls a tense interaction he had with a prejudiced and unhelpful customs agent. Clark also travelled to Bahia, Brazil where he worked in Emanuel La Rueszo's studio. Cultural traditions of Bahia, like Carnival and voodoo, inspired Clark's art. Clark has sold his art to people like entrepreneur Reginald F. Lewis and advertising executive HistoryMaker Thomas J. Burrell. Clark recounts personal stories from his trip to Bahia, Brazil.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Clark, Section A2005_201_001_007, TRT: 0:12:42 ?

Edward Clark narrates his photographs.