

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Brian Lane

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Lane, Brian, 1954-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Brian Lane,
Dates:	January 18, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:28:42).
Abstract:	Fashion designer Brian Lane (1954 -) designed clothing for Members Only, Phat Farm and Brooks Brothers, in addition to creating his own menswear line. Lane was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 18, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_017
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Fashion designer Brian Vincent Lane was born on June 4, 1954, in Brooklyn, New York. At nine years of age, Lane won an art contest, and his drawing was exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum. At age seventeen, Lane sold hand drawn t-shirts to Bloomingdale's in New York City. Lane continued to study art and received his diploma in 1972 from New York's High School of Art and Design. Continuing his studies, Lane graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology in 1977, and began a career in fashion illustration and advertising before becoming a fashion designer.

In 1983, Lane joined M. Rubin and Sons where he worked on the creative design team and helped to develop Sergio Valente's Sportswear and Outerwear; in 1985 he left to join Europe Craft Imports. Lane became the first African American designer to work as the design director of outerwear for Members Only and Perry Ellis Outerwear. For eleven years, Lane worked to increase sales and brand identity; eventually Members Only jackets became a fashion icon of the 1980s. In 1996, Lane was hired as the men's design director for London Fog Industries, developing trend, color, fabric and working with marketing and packaging until 1999.

Consulting with Phat Farm in 1999, and again in 2006, Lane worked with Russell Simmons's team to create new trends in urban wear. As consultant, Lane worked for several of the fashion industry's luminaries, including Brooks Brothers where he designed and developed their men's outerwear line for Fall 2007. Within the fashion industry, Lane was known for his ability take the development of product lines from start-up to profitable status. In 2006, Lane began designing his first men's clothing line, which would carry his name. Featuring men's outerwear and sportswear, Lane developed a line that would be sold in stores nationwide. Lane went on to design the Fall 2008 Brooks Brothers Men's Outerwear Line as their in-house designer; this position was created especially for Lane.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Brian Lane was conducted by Shawn Wilson on January 18, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Fashion designer Brian Lane (1954 -) designed clothing for Members Only, Phat Farm and Brooks Brothers, in addition to creating his own menswear line.

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:

Lane, Brian, 1954-

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Lane, Brian, 1954- --Interviews

African American businesspeople--Interviews

African American fashion designers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Fashion Designer

HistoryMakers® Category:

StyleMakers

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 Brian Lane, January 18, 2007. 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 Brian Lane, Section A2007_017_001_001, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Brian Lane was born on June 4, 1954 in New York City to Etta Walker Lane and Edward Lane. His mother was raised by her uncles in Brooklyn, New York after her mother died. Lane's father was born in Youngstown, Ohio, and moved to New York City after the Korean War. He met Lane's mother at Kings County Hospital Center, where she was a candy stripper. Lane grew up in Brooklyn,

where he played punchball, and stole quarters out of parking meters. There was gang activity in the neighborhood, but neither Lane nor his older half-brother were affiliated. In middle school, Lane was nearly attacked by a group of high school students, but was rescued by his classmate. He enjoyed music and art; and, when Lane was nine years old, his drawing of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy's memorial coin was displayed at the Brooklyn Museum. His parents divorced a year later, and Lane was raised partly by his mother's boyfriend, a police detective. While his family was religious, Lane only attended church on Christmas and Easter.

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

African American farmers--Georgia--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Brian Lane, Section A2007_017_001_002, TRT: 0:29:31 ?

Brian Lane was a student at New York City's High School of Art and Design, where he majored in illustration, and also attended fashion illustration classes. Lane went on to Hunter College for three years, and then transferred to the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). His mother supported his aspiration to design clothes, but worried about his income, as she could not help him financially. In 1977, Lane left FIT before completing his degree. He worked for artist Ron Fritts, and then at the Retail Reporting Bureau until 1983. During this time, African American designers like Willi Smith and Scott Barrie, and models like Beverly Johnson were gaining prominence. Lane remained interested in fashion, and admired illustrator Antonio Lopez. He once met model Pat Cleveland backstage at a fashion show, and was acquainted with fashion show manager Audrey Lavinia Smaltz and fashion editor Andre Leon Tally. Lane also describes model Iman's first fashion show, and Stephen Burrows' unique scalloped dress designs.

Video Oral History Interview with Brian Lane, Section A2007_017_001_003, TRT: 0:29:31 ?

Brian Lane was hired as an illustrator at Sergio Valente, upon the recommendation of designer Patti Carpenter. He also continued to work at the Retail Reporting Bureau, and worked as a freelance illustrator for Members Only. At Sergio Valente, Lane recreated Michael Jackson's red jacket from the 'Thriller' music video, and marketed it with an illustration technique that he learned from artist Ron Fritts. After two years, Lane accepted a full time position at Members Only. While there, he designed a jacket for the Perry Ellis label that sold seven thousand units on its first day. Lane talks about being the first black male designer at Members Only and Sergio Valente, and designing for the traditionally white Perry Ellis brand. He also explains how brands like Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger transitioned to the urban market. After eleven years at Members Only, Lane left to design outerwear at London Fog.

Video Oral History Interview with Brian Lane, Section A2007_017_001_004, TRT: 0:30:54 ?

Brian Lane left London Fog to serve as a consultant at Russell Simmons' Phat Farm fashion line in 1999. Lane explains the difference between high-end designer markets and urban markets. He also talks about how technology impacted production in urban markets, and the lack of designer brands controlled by African Americans. In 2005, Lane designed his own small, high-end line of menswear. The line included three in one jackets, as well as an alligator bag priced at six thousand dollars, and a wool bag inspired by his travels in Guatemala. Lane could not afford to hire a sales representative, and struggled to market his brand. He eventually sought work at Brooks Brothers, where he was contracted to serve as a temporary designer for the outerwear division. After a successful first season, Brooks Brothers offered Lane a permanent position. He describes his sources of design inspiration, which

included world travel and color schemes from his everyday life.

Video Oral History Interview with Brian Lane, Section A2007_017_001_005, TRT: 0:29:31 ?

Brian Lane oversaw outerwear construction for Sears, Roebuck and Co. He also designed leather jackets for Schott NYC, including a biker jacket that was picked up as the signature garment for a line of BMW motorcycles. Lane frequently travelled to China to design for brands like Star City Clothing Company. He shares his predictions about future fashion trends, and explains how Willi Smith's designs in the 1970s prompted a move toward more casual styles. Lane also talks about African American fashion preferences. He reflects upon his career in the fashion industry, and his hopes to sell his clothing line and to design lines of accessories and home goods. Lane was married to Marva Lane from 1983 to 2000. At the time of the interview, he had two sons, Evan Lane and Ian Lane. Lane concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.