

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Cedric Smith

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Smith, Cedric, 1970-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Cedric Smith,
Dates:	January 23, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:43:12).
Abstract:	Painter and photographer Cedric Smith (1970 -) was an artist whose work was found in the Tubman Museum, the New York Historical Society museum and public collections. Much of Smith's work was devoted to redressing the absence of African Americans in advertising and on the labels of popular brands. Smith was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 23, 2007, in Savannah, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_027
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Artist Cedric Lamar Smith was born on May 17, 1970 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As a young boy, he moved with his mother, Geraldine Smith, to Thomaston Georgia. Smith attended Southwest DeKalb High School in Decatur, Georgia.

After school, he began working as a barber. Smith did not consider art as a career until one of his clients, who was a self-taught artist, invited Smith to his art studio. Smith was inspired by his client's work. As a self-taught artist, Smith creates a personal genre of work. He draws on a wide range of influences and sources, both traditional and contemporary, including landscape art, pop art, brand advertising, and photography. Much of Smith's current work is devoted to redressing the absence of African Americans in advertising and on the labels of popular brands.

In 1998, Smith held his first solo exhibition in Atlanta, Georgia. His work can be found in the New York Historical Society museum and public collections, the Coca-Cola Company (Atlanta, Georgia), the Francis Walker Museum (Thomaston, Georgia), the Tubman Museum (Macon, Georgia), King & Spalding LLP (Atlanta, Georgia & London, United Kingdom), the Washington, D.C. Arts Commission, and Philander Smith College (Little Rock, Arkansas).

Smith was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 23, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Cedric Smith was conducted by Denise Gines on January 23, 2007, in Savannah, Georgia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Painter and photographer Cedric Smith

(1970 -) was an artist whose work was found in the Tubman Museum, the New York Historical Society museum and public collections. Much of Smith's work was devoted to redressing the absence of African Americans in advertising and on the labels of popular brands.

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:

Smith, Cedric, 1970-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Smith, Cedric, 1970- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Painter

Photographer

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 Cedric Smith, January 23, 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 Cedric Smith, Section A2007_027_001_001, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Cedric Smith was born on May 17, 1970 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Geraldine Smith Burke and Orlando Olivia. Smith's maternal grandfather, George Smith, a golf course manager, passed away when Smith was young. His maternal grandmother, Catherine Smith, lived in Thomaston, Georgia, where she owned a general store. Smith often visited his grandmother in Thomaston, where he attended Friendship Baptist Church, and played with the local children. In Philadelphia, Smith's mother worked multiple jobs while raising Smith and his half-sister, Erica Smith, as a single mother. When Smith was about to begin school, his family moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where he attended Rosalie Wright

Elementary School and Frederick Douglass High School. In his junior year, his family moved to Lithonia, Georgia. Smith attended Lithonia High School, and then Southwest DeKalb High School in Decatur, Georgia. Before graduating, Smith was arrested for petty crimes, and sent to the Milledgeville Intensive Treatment Unit in Milan, Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Cedric Smith, Section A2007_027_001_002, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Cedric Smith served fifteen months at the Milledgeville Intensive Treatment Unit in Milan, Georgia. While there, Smith earned his GED certificate, and cut his fellow inmates' hair. At the end of his sentence, Smith returned to Lithonia, Georgia, and obtained a position the Salem Crossing Barber Shop. There, he met artist William Tolliver, who invited Smith to his studio. After learning of Tolliver's successful career and his upbringing in a poor area of Louisiana, Smith quit his job, and decided to become an artist. As Smith was dropping off his early paintings at a local gallery, a woman stopped him and asked to purchase them. His first exhibition was held at the Archer Locke Gallery in Atlanta, Georgia. Smith describes his paintings, which resembled vintage signs, and incorporated found photographs of African Americans. These photographs were among his primary inspirations. He was also inspired by the music of rap group Public Enemy, and his early memories of visiting his grandmother in Thomaston, Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Cedric Smith, Section A2007_027_001_003, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Cedric Smith began his career as a mixed media artist, and incorporated vintage photographs into his paintings. Smith, who knew little about his family background, was drawn to the photographs because of their history. Over time, Smith began to take his own photographs. His work was exhibited with artists like Kara Walker and Jack Spencer, whose photographs of rural landscapes greatly influenced Smith when he began his transition to photography. Smith talks about his patrons, who were primarily white, and his perception that the African American community did not prioritize collecting art. At the time of the interview, Smith's work was displayed in several galleries and museums, including New York City's Dillon Gallery, and the Tubman Museum in Macon, Georgia. Aside from his artwork, Smith enjoyed cooking for his neighbors, and collecting antiques. His maternal great uncle, Huggie Smith, and his great aunt were golf champions, although Smith himself did not often play.

Video Oral History Interview with Cedric Smith, Section A2007_027_001_004, TRT: 0:16:42 ?

Cedric Smith usually portrayed positive images of the African American community in his artwork, although he also created several paintings about minstrel shows and segregation. Smith talks about his family's opinions of his artwork, including the positive responses of his mother, Geraldine Green Burke, and daughter, Shanique Brewer. His mother originally tried to stop him from transitioning to a career in art, as she did not think that it would be a profitable occupation, but later expressed her happiness that he did not follow her advice. Smith reflects upon his own advice for aspiring artists, as well as his life and legacy. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.