

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Leslie King-Hammond

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	King-Hammond, Leslie, 1944-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Leslie King-Hammond,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 26, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:23:54).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Academic administrator Leslie King-Hammond (1944 - ) was elected Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture. King-Hammond was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 26, 2007, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_164
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Academic administrator Leslie Ann King-Hammond was born on August 4, 1944 to Evelyne Alice Maxwell King and Oliver King. King-Hammond is of Caribbean ancestry and grew up in South Jamaica and Hollis, Queens, New York. She attended New York City Public Schools and won a full stipend-tuition scholarship by the SEEK Grant at the City University of New York, Queens College. King-Hammond accepted the scholarship, attended Queens College and graduated in 1969, earning her B.F.A. degree. She went on to earn her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from John Hopkins University in 1973 and 1975 respectively.

King-Hammond officially started her career after finishing her undergraduate education in 1969 serving as Chairman of the Art Department for the Performing Arts Workshops of Queens, New York. She remained in this position until 1971, when she became program writer for Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU) in Harlem, New York. HARYOU-ACT, Inc. worked to increase opportunities in education and employment for young blacks in Harlem. In 1973, King-Hammond began lecturing at the Maryland Institute College of Art. By 1976, she was promoted to Dean of Graduate Studies at the Maryland Institute College of Art, a position she still holds. Between 1977 and 1981, King-Hammond served as Doctoral Supervisor for Howard University's Department of African Studies. Between 1980 and 1982, she served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts. Between 1983 and 1987, King-Hammond worked as Commissioner for the Civic Design Commission in Baltimore, Maryland. Between 1990 and 1996, she served as art consultant for the Afro-American Historical & Cultural Museum. Between 1985 and 1998, King-Hammond served as Project Director of the Phillip Morris Scholarships for Artists of Color. From 2000 to the present, she has served on the Board of Directors of the International House of Art Critics.

King-Hammond has been honored and awarded several times over during her career including the Kress Fellowship, 1974-1985; Mellon Grant for Faculty Research at the Maryland Institute College of Art, 1984; the Trustee Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1986; and the National Endowment for the Arts Award, 2001.

In 2007, King-Hammond was elected Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture.

King-Hammond was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 26, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Leslie King-Hammond was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 26, 2007, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator Leslie King-Hammond (1944 - ) was elected Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

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

### Persons:

King-Hammond, Leslie, 1944-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

King-Hammond, Leslie, 1944---Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Arts Administrator

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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## 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 Leslie King-Hammond, April 26, 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie King-Hammond, Section A2007\_164\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:38 ?

Leslie King-Hammond was born on August 4, 1944 in the Bronx, New York to

Evelyn Maxwell King and Oliver King, Sr. Her maternal great-grandmother was of English descent, and immigrated to Barbados, where she married King-Hammond's maternal great-grandfather, and had seven children. Her maternal grandmother, Ottalie Adalese Maxwell, was a seamstress in the Garment District of New York City, and her maternal grandfather, Clifford Maxwell, Sr., was a merchant marine. Her mother was born in Brooklyn, New York, but grew up in Barbados. She later returned to New York City, where she attended the Lincoln School for Nurses, and went on to work as a registered nurse at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center and Hillcrest General Hospital in Queens. After King-Hammond's paternal grandmother's death in New York City's Harlem neighborhood, her paternal grandfather, Avelyn King, sent her father to an orphanage in Barbados. As a teenager, he returned to New York City, where he faced discrimination for his Caribbean heritage.

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie King-Hammond, Section A2007\_164\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:17 ?

Leslie King-Hammond's father, Oliver King, Sr., was a member of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. He trained as a carpenter in Barbados, and worked as a ship welder at New York City's Brooklyn Navy Yard. Her parents met, married and raised their four children in the Hollis neighborhood of Queens, New York. At eleven months old, King-Hammond underwent surgery to remove a brain tumor, which left her partially blind. She became interested in art at an early age, when she watched a glass blower create her artificial eye. In Queens, she attended P.S. 104, The Bays Water School, where she once defended her all-black class from their white teacher's accusations of theft. She went on to attend the integrated P.S. 142, Shimer Junior High School, and then the overcrowded Andrew Jackson High School. King-Hammond recalls her response to a poster of Emmett Till's body that she saw while walking home from school, which further influenced her interest in art. She also describes her three siblings.

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie King-Hammond, Section A2007\_164\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:21 ?

Leslie King-Hammond aspired to become an archaeologist from an early age. She subscribed to Archaeology magazine, and was fascinated by ancient Paleolithic art and the bog mummies discovered in Northern Europe. Her mother secured a volunteer position for her at New York City's American Museum of Natural History, where King-Hammond sorted geological samples. King-Hammond's maternal uncle, concert pianist Clifford Maxwell, Jr., tried to teach her play piano, but her disinterest led him to enroll her in Saturday art courses at the Brooklyn Museum Art School instead. There, she learned to paint, and created a self-portrait that was later featured in an exhibit curated by artist Deborah Willis at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. King-Hammond's family attended church every Sunday; but, after white congregants refused to acknowledge her presence outside of church, she refused to return. King-Hammond also talks about how her individuality and feminist outlook developed during her childhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie King-Hammond, Section A2007\_164\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:49 ?

Leslie King-Hammond and her cousin travelled by bus from New York City to Washington, D.C. to attend the March on Washington in 1963. From 1964, King-Hammond studied for two years at the State University of New York at Buffalo, where she was one of few African American students. Then, she returned to New York City, where she took night courses at The New School for

Social Research, and worked at General Electric's housewares service station in Grand Central Terminal. In 1967, she obtained a position at a community program in the neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant, where she taught art in the parks. That year, she was offered a full scholarship and stipend to attend to Queens College, and decided to major in art. During this time, King-Hammond supported herself by designing clothes for clients like singer Ysaye M. Barnwell and athlete Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. She was also a member of the CORE and SNCC, and an active protestor of the Vietnam War.

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie King-Hammond, Section A2007\_164\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:28 ?

Leslie King-Hammond was selected to receive a Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge grant, which funded her studies at Queens College in Queens, New York. There, she studied studio art from 1967, and was the only African American in the program. While in college, King-Hammond focused on acrylic painting and ceramic sculpture. She also befriended art history student Lowery Stokes Sims, and was mentored by her art professor, German painter Herbert Aach, who instructed her in color theory. During her studies, King-Hammond's art transitioned from color field paintings to works influenced by the Civil Rights Movement. King-Hammond recalls the assassinations of Malcolm X, who lived in Queens, and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She talks about the connection between art and activism during the Black Arts Movement, and how the National Conference of Artists during the 1950s led to the formation of the African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists, and the South Side Community Art Center in Chicago, Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie King-Hammond, Section A2007\_164\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:02 ?

Leslie King-Hammond graduated from Queens College in 1969, and was awarded a Horizon Fellowship to the doctoral art history program at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. There, she joined the Black Student Union, and became politically active on campus. King-Hammond raised concerns about the high attrition rate of African Americans at the university, and her department head tried to force her out prematurely by setting her graduate exams early. She passed, but was still told that she could not continue with her doctorate. She called lawyer Robert Mack Bell, who represented her case pro bono. It was brought before university president Steven Muller, who reinstated her fellowship. When King-Hammond chose African American artist William Henry Johnson as the topic of her dissertation, she was told by her next department head that there were no black artists worthy of study. King-Hammond contacted Smithsonian Institution curator Adelyn Dohme Breeskin, who advocated on her behalf to the department.

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie King-Hammond, Section A2007\_164\_001\_007, TRT: 0:30:58 ?

Leslie King-Hammond graduated with a Ph.D. degree in art history from Johns Hopkins University in 1976. She then taught black art courses at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Maryland, and was appointed as dean of its graduate school. In 1985, she instituted a fellowship program for artists of color, and collaborated with four graduate art schools to offer M.F.A. degrees to minority artists. The program graduated over two hundred students, including artists Dawoud Bey, Nick Cave and Tom Miller. In 1988, King-Hammond co-curated 'Art as a Verb: The Evolving Continuum: Installations, Performance and Videos by 13 Afro-American Artists' with art historian Lowery Stokes Sims at the Maryland Institute College of Art. The exhibit featured black artists'

perspectives on the new millennium, and included live installations. In 1989, King-Hammond curated the 'Black Printmakers and the WPA' exhibit in New York, which showcased prints created by African American artists during the Great Depression.

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie King-Hammond, Section A2007\_164\_001\_008, TRT: 0:29:53 ?

Leslie King-Hammond co-curated the 1996 exhibit, 'Three Generations of African American Women Sculptors: A Study in Paradox,' which featured nine sculptors, including Edmonia Lewis, Elizabeth Catlett and Geraldine McCollough, and travelled the United States for three years. In 1998, she exhibited her own work at the Smithsonian Institution, 'Barbadian Spirits: Altar for My Grandmother Ottalie Adalese Maxwell (1882-1991),' which honored her maternal grandmother. Following September 11, 2001, King-Hammond designed a commemorative altar, which was showcased in Ms. Magazine for a year, and later reinstalled in Arthur C. Danto's 'The Art of 9/11' in 2005. King-Hammond collaborated with her life partner, architect Jose J. Mapily, on a themed birdhouse sculpture, which was purchased by artist Jonathan Green and his partner, Richard Weedman; and the 'Celestial Praise House for Seneca Village,' an installation about New York City's slave history, which was commissioned by the New-York Historical Society.

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie King-Hammond, Section A2007\_164\_001\_009, TRT: 0:26:28 ?

Leslie King-Hammond and her partner, architect Jose J. Mapily, showcased their installation piece, 'Celestial Praise House for Seneca Village' for the 'Legacies: Contemporary Artists Reflect on Slavery' exhibition at the New-York Historical Society in 2006. In 2007, King-Hammond and art historian Arlene Raven co-curated the multigenerational feminist exhibit 'Agents of Change: Women, Art and Intellect,' which featured artists such as Kara Walker. King-Hammond talks about her two sons, videographer and producer Rasaan Hammond and psychologist Terrence Hinton. She reflects upon her life and legacy, as well as her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and then concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.