

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Theaster Gates

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Gates, Theaster, 1973-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Theaster Gates,
Dates:	August 4, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	3 uncompressed MOV digital video files (1:12:38).
Abstract:	Visual artist and urban planner Theaster Gates (1973 -) was the director of Arts and Public Life at the University of Chicago and founded the Dorchester Projects and The Rebuild Foundation. He has exhibited his artwork and performed at numerous cultural institutions. Gates was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 4, 2014, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_176
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Visual artist and urban planner Theaster Gates was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1973. He was raised in Chicago's East Garfield Park, where he sang in his church choir and helped with his father's roofing business. Gates graduated from Lane Technical College Preparatory High School and went on to receive his B.S. degree in urban planning from Iowa State University in 1996. He later obtained his M.A. degree in fine arts and religious studies from the University of Cape Town in 1998 and his M.S. degree in urban planning, ceramics and religious studies from Iowa State University in 2006.

In 2000, Gates was hired as an arts planner for the Chicago Transit Authority. He then went on to work at the Little Black Pearl Art and Design Center as director of education and outreach. Beginning in 2006, Gates purchased a small number of abandoned homes on Chicago's South Side in the Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood. He restored the structures using repurposed materials and turned them into alternative cultural spaces, which he collectively called Dorchester Projects. Gates then founded the non-profit Rebuild Foundation to program the spaces.

In 2007, Gates was hired as a coordinator of arts programming for the University of Chicago's Humanities Division. In 2009, he became an artist in residence and lecturer in the Department of Visual Arts and was appointed as the director of arts program development for the University of Chicago; in 2011, he was named the director of the Arts and Public Life initiative. In 2014, Gates was appointed as a professor in the Department of Visual Arts.

As an artist, Gates is represented by White Cube of London, England. Gates has exhibited his artwork and performed at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Whitechapel Gallery, London; Punta della Dogana, Venice; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the

Milwaukee Art Museum; the Santa Barbara Museum of Art; and Documenta 13, Kassel, Germany; among others.

Gates has received awards and grants from the Knight Foundation, Anderson Ranch, Creative Time, the *Wall Street Journal*, the Vera List Center for Art and Politics, Creative Capital, the Joyce Foundation, the Graham Foundation, the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, and Artadia. In 2010, Gates served as a Loeb fellow at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design; in 2012, he became a fellow of United States Artists. In 2013, *ArtReview* ranked Gates fortieth on its list of the hundred most powerful people in the art world.

Theaster Gates was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 4, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Theaster Gates was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on August 4, 2014, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 3 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Visual artist and urban planner Theaster Gates (1973 -) was the director of Arts and Public Life at the University of Chicago and founded the Dorchester Projects and The Rebuild Foundation. He has exhibited his artwork and performed at numerous cultural institutions.

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:

Gates, Theaster, 1973-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Gates, Theaster, 1973---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Visual Artist

Urban Planner

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 Theaster Gates, August 4, 2014. 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 Theaster Gates, Section A2014_176_001_001, TRT: 1:29:51 ?

Theaster Gates was born on August 28, 1973 in Chicago, Illinois to Lorine Allen Gates and Theaster Gates, Sr. His mother was born in 1937 in Silver City, Mississippi, and his father was born in 1935 in Yazoo City, Mississippi. They met on Gates' maternal grandfather's farm, and moved to the West Side of Chicago to raise their family. In Chicago, Gates' mother worked at the Westinghouse Electric Corporation and later as a nursery school teacher, while his father worked at a refrigeration manufacturing company and owned several rental properties. Each summer, his family returned to Mississippi to work on his maternal grandfather's farm. Gates was the youngest of nine siblings and the only son, and was raised by his mother and sisters. Each Sunday, his family attended services at the New Cedar Grove Missionary Baptist Church, where Gates joined the choir and eventually became the minister of music. Once a month, they saw the Thompson Community Singers perform at the Christ Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church.

Video Oral History Interview with Theaster Gates, Section A2014_176_001_002, TRT: 2:31:13 ?

Theaster Gates was a member of the New Cedar Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois, where the services focused on emotional worship. He belonged to the church's gospel choir, and participated in the musical consecration ritual for the first time at twelve years old. He also attended Sunday school classes taught by Brother Frank Holten, where Gates' curiosity about scriptural interpretation was encouraged. Gates began his education at Richard Wright Elementary School on Chicago's West Side; and, because of his high test scores, was selected to attend the majority-white Frank W. Reilly Elementary School on the North Side. He went on to be bused to Lane Technical College Preparatory High School, another majority-white school outside of his neighborhood, where he experienced racial and class discrimination. During his adolescence, Gates also became more aware of the limitations on gender and sexual expression in the gospel music community, and developed an interest in Chicago's house music scene.

Video Oral History Interview with Theaster Gates, Section A2014_176_001_003, TRT: 3:11:34 ?

Theaster Gates grew up during the 1970s and 1980s on the West Side of Chicago, Illinois. He was raised by his mother and eight older sisters, who influenced his gender expression and sense of style. His identity was also shaped by gospel singers like Daryl Coley, whom he saw perform at the Cosmopolitan Church of Prayer in Chicago. During his adolescence, Gates began to express his masculinity through styles from the Chicago house music scene, such as a bright orange cashmere sweater and lime green bellbottom pants that he designed for a fashion show at Lane Technical College Prep High School. Gates reflects upon the role of gender norms in the black church, and his experiences of discrimination because of his gender expression.