

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reginald Thomas

PERSON

Thomas, Reginald, 1957-2018

Alternative Names: Reginald Thomas;

Life Dates: October 21, 1957-June 25, 2018

Place of Birth: Lake Wales, Florida, USA

Residence: Chicago, IL

Work: Chicago, IL

Occupations: Fashion Designer

Biographical Note

Fashion designer Reginald Thomas was born in Lake Wales, Florida, on October 21, 1957. As a child, Thomas enjoyed drawing, especially the faces of women. In kindergarten, he was often punished because he would draw rather than do his lessons. Following the deaths of his mother at age five and his father when he was nine, Thomas was sent to Chicago to live with his oldest sister, and there his artistic talents blossomed.

With his sister's approval, Thomas would often find clothes that had been thrown away by others, and he would refashion them into new articles of clothing as presents. At thirteen, he was given a sewing machine for Christmas, and he spent long hours sewing in the closet of his home. While in high school, Thomas designed prom dresses for his classmates. After high school, Thomas attended Northern Illinois University, hoping to become a special education teacher, but following a successful fashion show, he transferred to the Art Institute of Chicago. There, he held his second show, and sold his collection to Chicago boutique Fiorucci. Thomas graduated from the Art Institute in 1983, and the following year, his signature line, Reginald Designs, was born.

Since then, Thomas has been a key figure in the Chicago fashion scene, consistently taking part in the Red Hot Chicago! fashion show. His designs are known for their clean lines, flowing fabrics, interchangeable pieces and comfort, and he takes pride in ensuring that his work is available to all, regardless of size or physical handicap. Thomas credits much of his success to encouragement from family and friends, including Joan and George Johnson and Leigh Jones.

Thomas passed away on June 25, 2018.

Related Entries

Myra Bradwell Communications Arts & Sciences Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Urban Prep Charter Academy for Young Men: Bronzeville Campus [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

diploma

Northern Illinois University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

no degree

School of the Art Institute of Chicago [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.F.A.

Reginald Fashions [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1984 to ?]

Founder, designer