

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Steven A. Cutting

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Cutting, Steven A., 1961-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Steven A. Cutting,
Dates:	August 30, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:26:27).
Abstract:	Fashion designer Steven A. Cutting (1961 -) was the head designer for Philippe Monet. He was a designer for Reebok, Kenneth Cole, Collage, and Pony and is also the president of the Fashion and Arts Exchange. Cutting was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 30, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_242
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Fashion designer Steven Alan Cutting was born in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, New York on June 8, 1961 to Russaloin and Clement Cutting. Cutting learned to sketch at six years old, and by the time he graduated from Queens' Christ the King Regional High School, he was determined to pursue a career in fashion. Cutting earned his B.F.A. degree from the Fashion Institute of Technology in 1983.

After college, Cutting worked on Seventh Avenue with the design firm Enrico Masei. Then he moved to Italy and worked at a freelance studio owned by Anna Schpioni. Cutting worked in Italy and Germany where he was a designer for Krizia and Chiwitt from 1983 to 1985. In late 1985, Cutting returned to the United States and became the head designer for Philippe Monet. While at Philippe Monet, Cutting traveled extensively and began to specialize in leather and cloth outerwear. In 1990, he established his own freelance company, Steven A. Cutting, Inc. The company's clients included Kenneth Cole, Reebok, Collage, and Pony. Cutting worked for himself until 1996, when he became head designer for Perry Ellis America. In 1999, he joined First Manufacturing Company, where he was the design director for Jimmy and Marylou and the Whet Blue Collections. In 2000, Cutting was hired by the Larry Levine and Boston Outfitters labels. Cutting has worked with the House of Dereon owned by Beyoncé and Tina Knowles and has also established his own label, Katalyst.

Cutting joined the faculty of the Fashion Art Department of the Fashion Institute of Technology in 2001, where he teaches design techniques with leather. From 2003 to 2005, he was the president of the Fashion & Arts Xchange, a networking organization for people of color in fashion and the arts. In 2006, Cutting joined the board of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, working to fight AIDS. Cutting lives in New York with his wife, Asha Shetty, and has three children.

Steven Cutting was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 30, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Steven A. Cutting was conducted by Adrienne Jones on August 30, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Fashion designer Steven A. Cutting (1961 -) was the head designer for Philippe Monet. He was a designer for Reebok, Kenneth Cole, Collage, and Pony and is also the president of the Fashion and Arts Exchange.

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:

Cutting, Steven A., 1961-

Jones, Adrienne (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Cutting, Steven A., 1961- --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 Steven A. Cutting, August 30, 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 Steven A. Cutting, Section A2007_242_001_001, TRT: 0:29:07 ?

Steven A. Cutting was born on June 8, 1961 in Brooklyn, New York to Russaloin Merritt Cutting and Clement Cutting. His maternal grandmother, Grace Merritt, was adopted as an infant by restaurateur Anna Biggs, and raised in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where Cutting's mother was born. At five years

old, Cutting's mother was sent to live with her relatives in New York City's Harlem neighborhood, where she was later joined by her adoptive grandmother and mother, who found work as a domestic. Cutting's paternal grandmother, Ethelyn Cutting, was born in Cuba, and moved to New York City, where she met Cutting's paternal grandfather, a Barbadian immigrant. Cutting's parents married at nineteen years old, and separated after Cutting's two older siblings were born. From that time, his mother worked as a nurse, and purchased a home in Brooklyn, where she raised Cutting's siblings. Cutting's parents reunited prior to his birth, and then separated again during his childhood.

African American families--New York (State)--New York.

Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)--Social life and customs.

Video Oral History Interview with Steven A. Cutting, Section A2007_242_001_002, TRT: 0:29:54
?

Steven A. Cutting's mother became the second African American homeowner on her block in Brooklyn, New York in 1952. There, Cutting spent little time with his older siblings, both of whom left home when they were nineteen years old. Instead, he frequented the Brooklyn Museum, and began his education at the St. Teresa of Avila School. In the sixth grade, he transferred to the Robert F. Kennedy Incentive Program school, where he visited Europe and Mexico with his class. He also learned to speak Spanish from his paternal grandmother, Ethelyn Cutting, who was Cuban. Cutting went on to attend Christ the King Regional High School, where he joined the National Honor Society and student government. Aspiring to become a fashion designer, he matriculated at New York City's Fashion Institute of Technology, despite his art teacher's discouragement and a scholarship offer from Princeton University. During his freshman year, Cutting learned to drape and sew clothing for the first time.

African American students--Education (Primary).

African American fashion designers.

African American students--Education (Secondary).

Video Oral History Interview with Steven A. Cutting, Section A2007_242_001_003, TRT: 0:29:10
?

Steven A. Cutting enrolled at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in 1979, and worked hard to develop his sewing skills. He admired African American designers like Scott Barrie and Willi Smith, as well as French fashion designer Claude Montana, who specialized in leather garments. As a student, Cutting participated in a competition for black designers hosted by Harveys Bristol Cream, where he met Willi Smith, as well as fashion commentator Audrey Lavinia Smaltz. The show was emceed by Diahann Carroll, and included Pat Cleveland and Mario Van Peebles as models. Cutting was named the most promising young designer for his evening wear design, which was modeled by Billie Blair. After graduating from FIT, Cutting moved to Italy, where he worked for Italian designer Enrico Masei, and the Italian fashion house Anna Scipioni. In 1985, Cutting returned to New York City in search of more lucrative employment, and began designing leather garments for Philippe Monet.

Fashion Institute of Technology (New York, N.Y.)

Fashion design--Study and teaching.

Video Oral History Interview with Steven A. Cutting, Section A2007_242_001_004, TRT: 0:29:09
?

Steven A. Cutting designed leather garments for Philippe Monet in the late 1980s. In 1990, he founded Steven A. Cutting, Inc., a fashion design consulting firm, which contributed to projects for Pony and Reebok, and worked directly

with designer Kenneth Cole. He also secured a partnership with Wal-Mart, until problems with his manufacturers led him to close the firm in 1996. That year, Cutting began designing for Perry Ellis America. He went on to work for First Manufacturing Co., and then S. Rothschild and Company, Inc. During this time, Cutting met his wife, flight attendant Asha Shetty Cutting, on a business trip to India. A native of Mumbai, India, her parents did not like African Americans due to negative depictions in the media, but approved of the marriage after meeting Cutting's family. The couple held weddings in India and New York City, and their reception at the Brooklyn Museum was attended by fashion icons like Audrey Lavinia Smaltz. Cutting and his wife had three children.

Fashion designers--Germany.

African American business enterprises--New York (State).

Fashion designers--Italy.

Fashion Institute of Technology (New York, N.Y.)--Faculty.

Video Oral History Interview with Steven A. Cutting, Section A2007_242_001_005, TRT: 0:29:07
?

Steven A. Cutting studied at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), where he planned to start a business with his classmate, Kevin Pinnock. However, when Cutting and Pinnock traveled to Europe in 1982, Pinnock decided to remain in Spain, while Cutting returned to New York City to be mentored by FIT professor Clara Branch. In 1996, Cutting himself became a professor at FIT, where he taught courses on menswear, textiles and design. He also served on the board of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, and joined the Fashion and Arts Exchange. While serving as its president from 2003 to 2005, he organized a fashion show that raised \$3,000 for the American Cancer Society. Around this time, Cutting reestablished the Steven Cutting, Inc. consulting firm, where his accounts included Beyonce's fashion lines, House of Dereon and Dereon. Cutting also created his own line, Katalyst, which specialized in leather garments; and, at the time of the interview, had recently launched a line of leather handbags.

Fashion design--Study and teaching.

Fashion designers--Professional associations.

African American fashion designers.