

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Patric McCoy

---

## 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>	McCoy, Patric, 1946-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Patric McCoy,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 7, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:32:00).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Art collector and curator Patric McCoy (1946 - ) co-founded Diasporal Rhythms, a not-for-profit arts organization that promotes the collection of contemporary art works by artists of African descent, in 2003. The organization has collected more than four hundred paintings, drawings, sculptures, collages, and assemblages of African American art. McCoy worked for the Environmental Protection Agency from 1979 to 2006. McCoy was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 7, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_129
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Art collector and environmental chemist Patric Gregory McCoy was born on December 20, 1946, in Chicago, Illinois. McCoy graduated as class valedictorian from Englewood High School in Chicago in 1964. He received his B.A. degree in chemistry in 1969 from the University of Chicago. Beginning in 1972, McCoy was employed as the chief chemist for the Gary, Indiana, Air Pollution Control Department while taking graduate courses part-time. He received his M.A. degree in environmental science from Governors State University in 1979. From 1979 to 2006, McCoy worked with the Air and Radiation Division of the United States Environmental Protection Agency Regional Office in Chicago, inspecting sites to ensure their conformity with EPA standards. While there, he authored a number of technical papers on environmental science and industry regulation. McCoy retired from the EPA in 2006 after serving for 10 years as a national expert on air pollution control measures for the petroleum refining industry. Building upon his interest in art that began in college, McCoy co-founded Diasporal Rhythms in 2003. Diasporal Rhythms is a not-for-profit arts organization that promotes the collection of art works by living artists of African descent. McCoy is president of Diasporal Rhythms and a member of its board of directors. His collection contains more than one thousand paintings, drawings, sculptures, collages, and assemblages of African American art. McCoy enjoys taking part in artistic community outreach efforts such as panel presentations and art contests. In May 2008, McCoy was part of a panel presentation on the topic, *Black Enough: Black Representation in Contemporary Art Theory and Practice*. It investigated the intersection of race, ethnicity, and aesthetics in contemporary art and sought to explain the complexity of race and representation in the art market. In October 2008, McCoy published an article with Dawoud Bey entitled, "Translation," in the Chicago Artists' Coalition's *Prompt Art Journal* in October 2008.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Patric McCoy was conducted by Thomas Jefferson on November 7, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Art collector and curator Patric McCoy (1946 - ) co-founded Diasporal Rhythms, a not-for-profit arts organization that promotes the collection of contemporary art works by artists of African descent, in 2003. The organization has collected more than four hundred paintings, drawings, sculptures, collages, and assemblages of African American art. McCoy worked for the Environmental Protection Agency from 1979 to 2006.

---

## 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:

McCoy, Patric, 1946-

Jefferson, Thomas (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

McCoy, Patric, 1946- --Interviews

---

Art--Collectors and collecting--Interviews.

---

African American chemists--Interviews.

---

African American environmentalists--Interviews.

---

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

## Occupations:

Art Collector

---

Curator

---

## 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 Patric McCoy, November 7, 2008. 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 Patric McCoy, Section A2008\_129\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Patric McCoy was born on December 20, 1946 in Chicago, Illinois. His mother, Jeannetta McCoy Wheatley, was born on May 28, 1923 in Kansas City, Missouri. Wheatley migrated to Chicago in the 1940s and worked as a seamstress, as a drugstore clerk, and at University National Bank. His father, Thomas Mercer McCoy, was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1917 and raised between Chicago and Detroit, Michigan. McCoy describes the history of his paternal grandmother's and grandfather's ancestors and the lynching of a paternal great uncle. McCoy's father attended Cass Technical High School in Detroit and was awarded a full-tuition academic scholarship to the Pittsburgh Institute of Art in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. However, his scholarship was revoked once the institution learned he was black. McCoy describes the emotional trauma his father experienced after the repeal of his admission. He also describes his memories of his childhood home in which he was surrounded by art, and the furniture his father designed.

Art--Collectors and collecting--Interviews.

African American chemists--Interviews.

African American environmentalists--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Patric McCoy, Section A2008\_129\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Patric McCoy's father was an amateur artist. McCoy talks about his father's artwork and art collection. McCoy has two brothers, one older and one younger, both are artists. McCoy grew up on 63rd Street in Chicago, Illinois, near the 'L' tracks. He describes his best friend, attending Austin Oliver Sexton Elementary School, and his elementary school teachers. McCoy and his siblings were sent briefly to live with their maternal grandmother in Detroit, where he attended Fellrath Junior High School in Inkster, Michigan. Inkster was settled by African Americans working in the Ford factories in Dearborn, Michigan who were forbidden from living in Dearborn. McCoy attended Englewood High School in Chicago, and graduated as the class valedictorian in 1964. McCoy describes coping with narcolepsy as a student, his high school teachers and his experience working in the mailroom for an Illinois legislative committee. He remembers the Cold War and Sputnik, and also talks about attending church.

Video Oral History Interview with Patric McCoy, Section A2008\_129\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Patric McCoy graduated from Englewood High School in Chicago, Illinois in 1964. He was accepted at the University of Chicago in 1964, where he was one of nine black students in his class. He talks about the emergence of the black arts movement and Black Nationalism. McCoy remembers racist teachers, difficult classes, and exceptional instructors at the University of Chicago including chemistry professor emeritus Nathan Sugarman, a developer of the atomic bomb. McCoy lists black professors in the 1960s including HistoryMakers Reverend Dr. Jeremiah Wright and Dr. James Bowman, a genetics pioneer. McCoy failed his Western Civilization course because on his final exam he criticized the course's exclusion of contributions by black people. McCoy earned a B.A. in chemistry in 1969, and began working on his M.A. in teaching at the University of Chicago. While he completed his M.A. he was hired as a teacher at Englewood High School. McCoy remembers being arrested for painting his science classroom at Englewood High.

Video Oral History Interview with Patric McCoy, Section A2008\_129\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:05 ?

Patric McCoy was transferred from Englewood High School to Lane Tech College Prep in an effort to integrate the faculty of Chicago, Illinois' public

schools. He left Lane Tech for a position with the City of Gary, Indiana as chief chemist in the air pollution division. McCoy developed an interest in environmentalism; in 1977, he enrolled full-time as a graduate student at Governor's State University, where he studied air deposition to the Great Lakes with the Environmental Protection Agency. McCoy earned his master's degree in 1979 and was hired at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Chicago. He describes his experience at the EPA, where he became a national expert in continuous emission monitoring. McCoy talks about developing a pollution team for the Environmental Protection Agency and challenging the national petroleum refinery industry. He describes the reforms made within the industry. He also recalls the beginning of his art collecting; and recognizing himself as an art collector.

Video Oral History Interview with Patric McCoy, Section A2008\_129\_001\_005, TRT: 0:28:45 ?

Patric McCoy met artist HistoryMaker Jonathan Green in 1988; and, in 2002, spoke on a panel of art collectors which included HistoryMaker Daniel Texidor Parker. In 2003, The Art Institute of Chicago hosted the Century of Collecting: African American Art in the Art Institute of Chicago, an exhibition of African American artists from the late eighteenth to twentieth century. McCoy remembers the artist's panel, featuring HistoryMakers Kerry James Marshall and Dawoud Bey, was critical of the Art Institute's unimpressive black art collection. McCoy co-founded Diasporal Rhythms, an organization designed to promote the collection of art works by living artists of African descent. He describes the development of the organization, and of the Collectors Invitational exhibition of members' personal collections. He explains the origin of Diasporal Rhythms' name; he talks about work in his collection from non-black artists; and he talks about submitting an article to the English pop culture platform, The Drum.

Video Oral History Interview with Patric McCoy, Section A2008\_129\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Patric McCoy describes his current art collection: he lists the artists whose work is prevalent in his collection, including HistoryMakers Jonathan Green and Joyce Owens Anderson and talks about the organizing themes of his work including race, gender, sensuality, music, the African American experience, and motherhood. He speaks fondly of a painting called, 'Masturbation' that he acquired from his father, Thomas Mercer McCoy. McCoy explains the process he uses to select artwork and describes what impacts the value of an art piece. McCoy also describes his favorite medium. McCoy talks about the 'Not Just a Pretty Face' exhibition at the Hyde Park Art Center in Chicago, Illinois, where patrons were asked to commission artists to complete a work. McCoy never plans to give up collecting and is committed to reinventing who the decisionmakers are in the visual arts. He describes his ultimate goal for Diasporal Rhythms.

Video Oral History Interview with Patric McCoy, Section A2008\_129\_001\_007, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Patric McCoy believes it is difficult to isolate any one piece from his collection and talks about opening up the collection to the public. He describes hosting artist socials and the process of insuring artwork. McCoy envisions eventually creating a digital database of the Diasporal Rhythms' art collection, and talks about the history of art collecting within his family. McCoy also talks about Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, a person of African descent who is considered the first permanent resident of Chicago, Illinois. McCoy reflects upon his legacy; he considers what else he would like to do in his life; and he narrates his photographs.