

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Mary Schmidt Campbell

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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>	Campbell, Mary Schmidt
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Mary Schmidt Campbell,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 1, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:43:02).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Academic administrator and museum executive Mary Schmidt Campbell (1947 - ) was dean of the Tisch School for the Arts at New York University. Campbell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 1, 2002, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_001
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Born to Elaine and Harvey Schmidt in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on October 21, 1947, Mary Schmidt Campbell has distinguished herself as an educator and prominent advocate of the arts.

After earning a B.A. at Swarthmore College in 1969, Campbell taught English literature at Nkumbi International College in Zambia. Campbell returned to the U.S. and studied art history at Syracuse University, graduating with an M.A. in 1973. In 1974, she became both a curator of the Everson Museum of Fine Arts in Syracuse, New York and the art editor of *Syracuse New Times*.

From 1977 to 1987, Campbell served as Executive Director of the Studio Museum in Harlem, a fine arts museum that exhibits, collects and interprets the work of black artists. During this time, she earned a Ph.D. from Syracuse University. She then served as Commissioner of Cultural Affairs for the City of New York until 1991, managing an agency which funds New York cultural institutions and organizations.

After establishing herself as a leader in the field of arts and public policy, Campbell became Dean of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, a preeminent center of theatre and film. Many of the country's leading film directors, Broadway producers, actors and writers as well as theatre historians and critics have matriculated from the school, and recent graduates have won major awards at festivals around the world. Campbell has dramatically improved enrollment, funding and programs. She established and chairs the Department of Art and Public Policy.

Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell lectures nationally on arts policy issues and American cultural history; is professionally associated with various institutes and academies; and has frequently won awards for her good work. Campbell is married to physicist Dr. George Campbell, Jr. They have three sons: Garikai, Sekou and Britt, and three grandchildren.

*Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America* / Introduction by Mary Schmidt Campbell, New York: Studio Museum in Harlem: Abradale Press, 1994.

*The Life and Work of Romare Bearden* will be published by Oxford University Press.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Mary Schmidt Campbell was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on March 1, 2002, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and museum executive Mary Schmidt Campbell (1947 - ) was dean of the Tisch School for the Arts at New York University.

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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:**

Campbell, Mary Schmidt

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Campbell, Mary Schmidt--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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Tisch School of the Arts

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Studio Museum in Harlem

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## **Occupations:**

Academic Administrator

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Museum Executive

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

EducationMakers

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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 Mary Schmidt Campbell, March 1, 2002. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### **Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 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 Mary Schmidt Campbell, Section A2002\_001\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:00 2002/03/01

Mary Schmidt Campbell describes her family's history. Her mother, Elaine Schmidt, was born on December 28, 1917 in Amelia, Virginia to tobacco farmers Watsey and Mary Harris. Elaine Schmidt was raised by her wealthier aunt and uncle in New Jersey. Campbell's father, Harvey Schmidt, was born on November 13, 1914 in Denmark, South Carolina to Edward and Elizabeth Schmidt and moved to Philadelphia when he was three. Harvey Schmidt was a lawyer and Civil Rights activist who ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the United States House of Representatives against Robert Nix in 1957. He was also head of Community Legal Services from 1967 to 1971, and was appointed as a judge in 1972. Campbell remembers her privileged childhood and her father's intelligence, presence, and demeanor.

Video Oral History Interview with Mary Schmidt Campbell, Section A2002\_001\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:48 2002/03/01

Mary Schmidt Campbell discusses growing up in Philadelphia. She met George Campbell in 1960 while attending the Girl's High School in Philadelphia, and became interested in sculpture, literature, film, and poetry. Her family often discussed the events of the Civil Rights

Movement during her childhood. In 1965, Campbell enrolled in Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, where she was in the first class at Swarthmore to have more than three black students. On August 24, 1968, Campbell married George Campbell and moved to Syracuse, New York. Campbell graduated with a B.A. degree in English literature from Swarthmore in 1969. In 1970, Mary and George Campbell moved to Zambia where George served his alternative duty as a conscientious objector of the Vietnam War.

Video Oral History Interview with Mary Schmidt Campbell, Section A2002\_001\_001\_003, TRT: 0:24:53 2002/03/01

Mary Schmidt Campbell describes her experience in Zambia, the birth of her two sons, and her tenure as Executive Director of the Studio Museum in Harlem. Campbell describes her experience teaching English at Nkumbi International College in Zambia and her culture shock at the closeness of the Zambian community and their treatment of women. While in Zambia, Campbell gave birth to her son Garikai Campbell on May 14, 1970. After returning to the United States, Campbell obtained her M.A. degree in art history from Syracuse University in 1973 while continuing to work on her Ph.D. degree. In 1977, Campbell was hired as Executive Director of the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Before Campbell was hired, the Studio Museum had lost its reputation, had no permanent collection, and survived on government funding. Between 1979 and 1982, Campbell revitalized the Studio Museum by restructuring the board of trustees, securing a permanent location, increasing federal and private grants, and getting the museum accredited.

Video Oral History Interview with Mary Schmidt Campbell, Section A2002\_001\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:10 2002/03/01

Mary Schmidt Campbell discusses her careers as Executive Director of the Studio Museum in Harlem, Cultural Affairs Commissioner of New York City, and Dean at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. She reflects on the Studio Museum's legacy as a space that nurtured museum professionals, created a body of literature about African American art, and fostered a vibrant arts community. In 1987, Campbell was appointed

as Cultural Affairs Commissioner of New York City, New York by Mayor Ed Koch, where she focused on making New York cultural institutions more visible to the people of New York City and bringing the arts into schools. Campbell worked with New York artistic institutions including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Natural History Museum to establish successful after-school arts and culture programs for public housing residents. In 1991, after the birth of her third son, Campbell left public life and became Dean of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

Video Oral History Interview with Mary Schmidt Campbell, Section A2002\_001\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:03 2002/03/01

Mary Schmidt Campbell describes her accomplishments as Dean of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and reflects on the role of black artists and black cultural institutions. Campbell believes that art programs should allow students an opportunity to incubate their own ideas and ask questions about cultural differences. She recalls the difficult decisions she made at the Studio Museum in Harlem as an example of the financial and cultural challenges faced by black-run institutions. As a collector of African American art, Campbell shares her perspective on the black arts movements, the Harlem Renaissance, and her favorite contemporary black artists. Campbell believes that her thirty-three years of marriage to George Campbell have been successful because of their mutual give-and-take of sacrifice and generosity.

Video Oral History Interview with Mary Schmidt Campbell, Section A2002\_001\_001\_006, TRT: 0:19:08 2002/03/01

Mary Schmidt Campbell reflects upon her legacy and how she wants to be remembered. She also narrates her photos.