

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Madeline Murphy Rabb

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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>	Rabb, Madeline Murphy, 1945-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Madeline Murphy Rabb,
<b>Dates:</b>	October 7, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:29:21).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Art consultant and curator Madeline Murphy Rabb (1945 - ) owns Murphy Rabb, Inc., an art consulting company. Rabb has also traveled the country lecturing, serving on panels and participating in workshops on a wide variety of issues. Rabb was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 7, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_248
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Collector, dealer and lover of art Madeline Murphy Rabb was born in Wilmington, Delaware, on January 27, 1945. The second of five children, Rabb is the daughter of a television personality and a judge. After completing high school, Rabb attended the University of Maryland in 1961. Leaving there in 1963, she went to the Maryland Institute College of Art, earning a B.F.A. in 1966. After moving to Chicago, she attended the Illinois Institute of Technology, earning an M.S. in 1975.

Upon completing her bachelor's degree, Rabb moved to Chicago and took a position with Tuesday Publications as assistant director of art and production. After taking several years off to devote herself to her family and various civic activities, Rabb became the vice president and business manager of Myra Everett Designs in 1977. From there, she went on to Corporate Concierge as an account executive in 1978, and in 1979 she opened Madeline Murphy Rabb Studio, where she created and sold original works. In 1983, Rabb was hired by the city of Chicago to serve as its executive director of fine arts, a position she held for seven years, during which time she heightened the organization's national visibility. After working as a freelance art consultant for a few years, Rabb once again opened her own business, Murphy Rabb, Inc. (MRI), in 1992, where she remains as president. MRI serves corporate, governmental and private clients, helping them conceptualize and build important art collections. Recently, MRI implemented the art program for the John Stroger, Jr. Hospital of Cook County.

Rabb has also traveled the country lecturing, serving on panels and participating in workshops on a wide variety of issues. She is the curator of African American art collections at Ariel Capital Management and Brown Capital Management, and she has served on the Illinois Arts Council, the Folk Art Advisory Committee of the Field Museum of Natural American History, and the Woman's Board of the Museum of Contemporary Art. She has testified before congressional panels on the National Endowment for the Arts and has had her original works published in several books. Rabb has also made several television appearances, including on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. Her husband, Dr. Maurice Rabb, passed away in 2005. They have two children.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Madeline Murphy Rabb was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 7, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Art consultant and curator Madeline Murphy Rabb (1945 - ) owns Murphy Rabb, Inc., an art consulting company. Rabb has also traveled the country lecturing, serving on panels and participating in workshops on a wide variety of issues.

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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:**

Rabb, Madeline Murphy, 1945-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Rabb, Madeline Murphy, 1945---Interviews

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## **Organizations:**

## **Occupations:**

Art Consultant

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Curator

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ArtMakers

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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 Madeline Murphy Rabb, October 7, 2003. 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 Madeline Murphy Rabb, Section A2003\_248\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:19 2003/10/07

Madeline Murphy Rabb was born on January 27, 1945 in Wilmington, Delaware. Her mother, Madeline Wheeler Murphy, was born in 1922 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She worked as a secretary for attorney Louis L. Redding, authored the column 'Madeline Murphy Speaks' in the Baltimore Afro-American, and appeared on the television debate program 'Square Off.' Rabb's maternal great-aunt, Laura Wheeler, was an illustrator and portrait painter who taught at Cheyney State College in Pennsylvania. Rabb's father, HistoryMaker William H. Murphy, Sr. was born in 1915 in Baltimore, Maryland. His maternal family founded Hughes Catering Company in Baltimore; and his grandfather, John Murphy, was the founder of the Baltimore Afro-American newspaper. Rabb's father was a lawyer who represented poor people and eventually became a judge on the Maryland District Court. Rabb's parents were activists in the community and did not socialize with Baltimore's black bourgeoisie. Rabb was raised in the Cherry Hill neighborhood of Baltimore.

Video Oral History Interview with Madeline Murphy Rabb, Section A2003\_248\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:30 2003/10/07

Madeline Murphy Rabb's father was frugal and tough. Rabb discovered her aptitude for visual art after painting a still life with her mother's paints. She attended Cherry Hill Elementary School, Robert E. Lee Junior High School No. 49 and Eastern High School, an all-girls, predominantly white public school in Baltimore, Maryland. Rabb did not enjoy Eastern High. A high school counselor insisted she

would not do well in college and discouraged her from applying. Rabb's parents maintained she could be successful in a college environment and her mother encouraged her to apply to art school. She attended the University of Maryland and transferred to the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. Rabb was engaged to be married at nineteen years old, but cancelled the wedding at the last minute. She earned a B.F.A. degree in painting in 1966, married HistoryMaker Maurice F. Rabb and moved to Chicago, Illinois where she worked at Tuesday magazine, an African-American newspaper insert.

Video Oral History Interview with Madeline Murphy Rabb, Section A2003\_248\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:35 2003/10/07

Madeline Murphy Rabb talks about the black cultural arts movement in Chicago, Illinois in the 1960s and 1970s which she observed, but felt excluded from participating in because the subject matter of her work and her own socioeconomic experience differed from that of its leading artists. She exhibited at the South Side Community Art Center and served on its board. She sold original artwork at the National Medical Association Convention, which she and her husband, HistoryMaker Dr. Maurice F. Rabb, attended annually. In 1982, Rabb organized a lucrative fundraiser for Harold Washington's mayoral campaign. In 1983, she was appointed by Mayor Washington as the Executive Director of Fine Arts for the City of Chicago. In this role, Rabb oversaw grant-funding for the Public Art Program and changed the composition of the program's grant-making committees to include more people from communities of color. Rabb was sued due to the controversy over the artist commissioned for the Sulzer Regional Library in Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Madeline Murphy Rabb, Section A2003\_248\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:00 2003/10/07

Madeline Murphy Rabb was appointed Executive Director of Fine Arts for the City of Chicago by Mayor Harold Washington. During his term, Washington elevated the Department of Cultural Affairs to a cabinet level position and made an effort to attend the city's cultural events. As Executive Director of Fine Arts, Rabb's agenda was to

make art spaces more inclusive. She fought to exhibit more artists of color at the Chicago Cultural Center and helped conceptualize the Center as a public space. She helped plan a collaborative exhibition between the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Art Institute of Chicago that featured African American masters and photographers from the nineteenth century. Rabb talks about controversy surrounding a Chicago Artists' exhibition at the Chicago Cultural Center. The event was advertised as a multicultural event, however, few artists of color had been accepted. Rabb left the Department of Cultural Affairs in 1990, and began the precursor to her private art dealing business.

Video Oral History Interview with Madeline Murphy Rabb, Section A2003\_248\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:57 2003/10/07

Madeline Murphy Rabb has curated HistoryMaker John Rogers' collection of African American art and curated an art collection for the John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital of Cook County in Chicago, Illinois. Rabb talks about black-owned galleries in Chicago; she explains how an artist gets her attention; she shares her perspective on whether a black artistic aesthetic exists; and, she talks about 'Mirth & Girth,' a controversial posthumous painting of Mayor Harold Washington. Rabb describes her hopes for the African American community and how she would like to be remembered. She reflects upon her legacy and concludes by narrating of her photographs.