

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Edward Parker

Overview of the Collection

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| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Parker, Edward E. |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Edward Parker, |
| Dates: | June 14, 2004 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2004 |
| Physical Description: | 4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:42:25). |
| Abstract: | Art professor, cultural heritage chief executive, and sculptor Edward Parker (1941 -) has taught at the Western Campus of Cuyahoga Community College for nearly twenty years. Parker is the founder and director of the Snickerfritz Cultural Workshop for the Arts, Inc., located in East Cleveland. His artistic achievements include numerous one-man and group shows in Ohio and other states. Parker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 14, 2004, in Cleveland, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2004_073 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Master artist, educator, and entrepreneur, Edward Everett Parker, was born in Pittsburgh's Hill District on Bentley Drive on February 7, 1941, to Augustine Washington and David Nathaniel Parker. When Parker was in elementary school, his parents moved Edward and his brother David to Toledo, Ohio, where he studied at the Toledo Museum of Art. Parker attended Lincoln Elementary School

and graduated from Scott High School; he earned his bachelor's degree in art from Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, and his master's degree in Art Education, with an emphasis in sculpting, from Ohio's Kent State University. Parker also completed additional graduate level work at the University of Illinois and in Ife, in West Africa.

Parker taught art education in the Cleveland Public Schools, where he served as the head of the art department at Audubon Jr. High for a number of years. Parker later attained the position of professor and arts coordinator at the Western Campus of Cuyahoga Community College where he taught for nearly twenty years. Parker founded and acted as the director of the Snickerfritz Cultural Workshop for the Arts, Inc., located in the Edward E. Parker Creative Arts Complex in East Cleveland, Ohio. The complex, which also includes gallery and classroom space, meeting rooms, and a number of small businesses, is housed in a converted nursing home that sat vacant and dilapidated for seventeen years before Parker purchased and rehabilitated the facility.

Parker's artistic achievements include numerous one-man and group shows in Ohio and other states, and commissions from Cleveland's Cuyahoga Community College and Florida Memorial College. Parker's vision as an artist has long been informed by African American history and culture; his better known works include a life-sized sculpture of the Chicken George character from Alex Haley's *Roots* and a celebrated series of African American clown sculptures and prints. After the 2008 election of Barack Obama as the forty-fourth President of the United States, Parker sculpted Obama's likeness and displayed the bust in his Snickerfritz Art Gallery. In addition to his work in the arts, Parker also served on the Board of Trustees for the East Cleveland Library.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Edward Parker was conducted by Regenia Williams on June 14, 2004, in Cleveland, Ohio, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Art professor, cultural heritage chief executive, and sculptor Edward Parker (1941 -) has taught at the Western Campus of Cuyahoga Community College for nearly twenty years. Parker is the founder and director of the Snickerfritz Cultural Workshop for the Arts, Inc., located in East Cleveland. His artistic achievements include numerous one-man and group shows in Ohio and other states.

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:

Parker, Edward E.

Williams, Regennia (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Parker, Edward E.--Interviews

African American artists as teachers--Ohio--Interviews

African American artists--Ohio--Interviews

African American college teachers--Ohio--Cleveland--Interviews

African American sculptors--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Sculptor

Art Professor

Cultural Heritage Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers|EducationMakers

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 Edward Parker, June 14, 2004. 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).

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 Edward Parker, Section
A2004_073_001_001, TRT: 0:29:54 2004/06/14

Edward Parker was born on February 7, 1941 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His mother, Augustine Washington Parker, was born in Georgia and her family moved to Toledo, Ohio. His maternal grandfather nicknamed him Snickerfritz which he later used as the name of his art gallery. His father, David Parker, was from Sandusky, Ohio and served in World War II. His parents married at an early age, and his father worked in Pittsburgh's steel mills until the family moved to Toledo when Parker was eight years old. Parker's father tailored clothes and his mother worked as a hairdresser. The family

belonged to the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church and lived in a housing project. Parker was a creative and athletic child, but he suffered from a speech impediment. His public school teachers paid for him to take Saturday art classes at the Toledo Museum of Art. After graduating from Scott High School in 1960, Parker attended Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio where he studied art and education.

African American artists as teachers--Ohio--Interviews.

African American artists--Ohio--Interviews.

African American college teachers--Ohio--Cleveland--Interviews.

African American sculptors--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Parker, Section
A2004_073_001_002, TRT: 0:22:40 2004/06/14

Edward Parker studied art in Ife, Nigeria and later applied what he learned about architectural design there to his Snickerfritz Art Gallery in East Cleveland, Ohio. Parker taught art education at Heffner School for mentally retarded children for a year in 1966 before teaching at Cleveland Public Schools where was head of the art department at Audubon Junior High School for a number of years. Parker describes his approach to teaching and the importance of staying true to his own cultural identity. He talks about turning down offers to serve on the Ohio Arts Council and to teach at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio. Parker talks about his two children, Micah and Unique, and why he prioritized art over marriage. Parker became a professor and arts coordinator at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio where he taught for nearly twenty years. He describes his successful clown series.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Parker, Section
A2004_073_001_003, TRT: 0:30:11 2004/06/14

Edward Parker talks about his artistic philosophy. He uses his sensitive and spiritual sides to create artwork that reflects the black experience. Parker's artistic vision is informed by African American history and culture. His best known works include a life-sized sculpture of the Chicken George character from Alex Haley's *Roots*, a

series on Malcolm X called The X Factor, and a celebrated series of African American clown sculptures and prints. Parker describes holding art shows, his commissioned art, and building his own art gallery called Snickerfritz in East Cleveland, Ohio where he holds art classes. Parker talks about his real estate endeavors. The African American artists who inspire Parker include Augusta Savage, Richmond Barthe, Romare Bearden and Huey Lee Smith. He also talks about people whose artistic talents have gone unrecognized. Parker comments on African American art history and his own artistic legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Parker, Section
A2004_073_001_004, TRT: 0:19:40 2004/06/14

Edward Parker talks about the artwork and clothes that he lost in a fire at his Snickerfritz Art Gallery. Parker concludes by narrating his photographs.