Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Evangeline Montgomery

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Montgomery, Evangeline

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Evangeline Montgomery,

Dates: December 13, 2004

Bulk Dates: 2004

Physical Description: 4 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:00:59).

Abstract: Curator, printmaker, and mixed media artist Evangeline Montgomery (1933 - ) began her career as an arts administrator in San Francisco, California and since then, has worked tirelessly to create opportunities to showcase African American artists. Montgomery was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 13, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2004_258

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Curator, printmaker, and mixed media artist Evangeline "EJ" Montgomery was born on May 2, 1933, in New York. Her mother, Carmelite Thompson, was a homemaker and her father, Oliver Thompson was a Baptist minister. She discovered her artistic talents when she received her first oil painting set at the age of fourteen. After her parents separated, Montgomery and her mother moved to Harlem in New York, New York. In 1951, Montgomery earned her high school diploma from Seward Park High School in lower Manhattan, where she was a cheerleader, a member of the swim and basketball teams and a member of student government.

From 1951 until 1954, she worked at statuaries, painting the faces on dolls and religious statues. In 1955, Montgomery moved to Los Angeles with her husband and worked for Thomas Usher, an African American jewelry designer. She received her B.F.A. degree from the California College of Arts and Crafts (now California College of the Arts) in 1969 and she worked as an independent curator to museums, university galleries and art centers where she organized exhibits. In 1971, she served as the curator for the Rainbow Sign Gallery in Berkeley, California before becoming an exhibition specialist for the American Association for State and Local History in Nashville, Tennessee and coordinating eight national workshops on “Interpreting the Humanities through Museum Exhibits.” She also organized national exhibit workshops for the Association of African American Museums. In 1983, Montgomery began her career with the United States State Department as a program development officer for the Arts America Program, specializing in American exhibitions touring abroad. In this capacity, she developed and implemented successful American fine art programs in the United States and throughout the world. In her own art career, Montgomery is noted for her metal work, especially her metal ancestral boxes which were inspired by the Chinese incense boxes her mother used for praying. Her colorful lithographs have also garnered her attention, being prominently displayed in exhibitions funded by the United
States government.

In 1997, she was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease which has made it difficult for Montgomery to work with metal. However, she has not let the diagnosis limit her artistic vision, instead shifting her focus to printmaking, lithographs, and the digital arts. In 2005, Blacks In Government (BIG) began the Evangeline J. Montgomery Scholarship Program, to encourage and fund artists who are interested in working in government to spread the influence of the arts.

Evangeline "EJ" Montgomery was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on December 13, 2004.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Evangeline Montgomery was conducted by Racine Tucker-Hamilton on December 13, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 4 Betacam SP videocassettes. Curator, printmaker, and mixed media artist Evangeline Montgomery (1933 - ) began her career as an arts administrator in San Francisco, California and since then, has worked tirelessly to create opportunities to showcase African American artists.

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:

Evangeline Montgomery

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)
Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Evangeline Montgomery--Interviews

African American artists--Interviews.

African American arts administrators--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States Information Agency.

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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


Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/15/2011 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, December 13, 2004**

Video Oral History Interview with Evangeline Montgomery, Section A2004_258_001_001, TRT: 0:30:26 2004/12/13

Evangeline "EJ" Montgomery slates the interview and shares her favorites. She describes her parents, Carmelite and Oliver Thompson. Oliver was a Baptist minister, and Carmelite was a homemaker. Montgomery was adopted by the Thompsons when she was one year old in Boston, Massachusetts. Montgomery recalls growing up as the daughter of a Baptist minister; she spent much of her time in church. Her father received many well-known African Americans like Mary McLeod Bethune. Her earliest memory is riding her tricycle around the wrap-around porch of her father's house. The sights, smells, and sounds of her childhood were the ocean, beach, and popcorn because she grew up in resort towns like Westerly, Rhode Island. At the age of thirteen, her parents divorced and Montgomery, with her mother, moved to Harlem in New York, New York. Montgomery had to adjust from living in large houses to small apartments in large tenement buildings. Montgomery describes how she received her first oil paint set from her mother when she was fourteen years old and started painting landscapes.

African American families.
African American childhood.
African Americans--Baptist.
African American children.
Bethune, Mary McLeod, 1875-1955.
Harlem (New York, N.Y.).

Video Oral History Interview with Evangeline Montgomery, Section A2004_258_001_002, TRT: 0:31:12 2004/12/13

Evangeline "EJ" Montgomery describes her experiences in high school. She attended Seward Park High School, located in lower Manhattan in New York, New York. She was popular in high school, being involved with cheerleading and school government. She also took different art classes, including drawing, painting, and textile printing. After graduating from high school in 1951, Montgomery moved to Boston, Massachusetts with her mother. Montgomery recalls working for statuaries, using all different types of brushes to paint the faces of dolls and religious statues. She married a student from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1952 and moved with him to Los Angeles, California. She enrolled in Los Angeles City College and graduated with her A.A. degree in art in 1959. She began creating art in other media, including glass, silver, and enamel. She worked for Thomas Usher, a jewelry designer. She traveled to Nigeria with her husband and observed the different techniques of Nigerian artists. She attended the California College of Arts and Crafts and received her B.F.A. degree in 1969. She became interested in organizing exhibitions and creating audience for African American artists.

High school student activities.
Evangeline "EJ" Montgomery recounts her career as an artist and arts administrator. In 1968, she was a consultant for Oakland Museum to incorporate multiculturalism and diversity into exhibitions. In 1970, she curated exhibits for the Rainbow Sign Gallery, a private African American cultural center in Berkeley, California. One of the artists she always made sure to include was Sargent Claude Johnson. After seven years of working for Rainbow Sign Gallery, she moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to work for the American Association for State and Local History and taught workshops to museum administrators, teaching them to organize and curate exhibitions that showcase the humanities. In her own artistic career, she began creating ancestral boxes inspired by her mother's Chinese incense boxes. Montgomery describes her move to Washington D.C. to work for Howard University's television station. She left Howard University to work for the United States Information Agency, curating exhibitions to travel aboard. She organized several national and international exhibitions for famous and noted artists like Betye Saar, Sam Gilliam, and Roy DeCarava. She describes her own works of art. Her artistic vision includes mixing textures and mediums, such as metal and lithographs. Her work tends to be abstract in nature.

Evangeline "EJ" Montgomery discusses her diagnosis of Parkinson's disease in 1997. As a result of the disease, she stopped metalsmithing and has turned her attention to printmaking, lithographs, and digital art. In 2005, Blacks In Government (BIG) started a scholarship in her name. The Evangeline J. Montgomery Scholarship Program is for visual artists who work in government and want to further their education. The scholarship is funded through the sale of works of art. Montgomery advises young artists to immerse themselves in the art world and take as many classes possible to further their education. Artists who inspire her are Sam Gilliam, Richard Mayhew, Sargent Claude Johnson, and Henry Moore. Montgomery hopes her art has benefitted the African American community. She would love to curate a large national exhibit of African American artists that would include book art and book art installations. She believes her art is her legacy, and she hopes it lasts forever.
African American artist--Digital art.
Moore, Henry, 1898-1986.
Gilliam, Sam, 1933-.
Mayhew, Richard, 1934-.
Prints--technique.
African American artists--Lithography.
African Americans--Conduct of life.