

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Shirley Ann Woodson Reid

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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>	Woodson, Shirley
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Shirley Ann Woodson Reid,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 7, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:48:14).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Painter and arts administrator Shirley Ann Woodson Reid (1936 - ) is most know for her paintings of African American life, which are a part of twenty-two collections housed by the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Studio Museum of Harlem, among other notable institutions. Woodson-Reid has also taught at Wayne State University, and has served as art education supervisor for the Detroit Public Schools since 1974. Woodson-Reid was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 7, 2005, in Detroit, Michigan. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_100
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Painter and arts administrator Shirley Woodson Reid was born on March 3, 1936 in Pulaski, Tennessee. Her father, Claude Elwood Woodson, worked for contractor Abraham McKissack, a relative of Reid's mother, Celia Trotter Woodson. Attending Columbia Elementary School and Sherrill Elementary School, Reid captained the cheerleaders and graduated from Chadsey High School in 1954. She

earned her B.F.A. degree from Wayne State University in 1958 and her M.A. degree from the same university in 1966. While attending MacDowell Artist Colony on a fellowship, Reid met her husband, Edsel B. Reid. In 1970, Reid attended the Conference on the Functional Aspects of Black Art (CONFABA) at Northwestern University.

Reid worked as an art education specialist in the Highland Park (Michigan) School District from 1966 to 1992. An art education professor at Wayne State University from 1996 to 2000, Reid started serving as art education supervisor for the Detroit Public Schools in 1992. She also served as director of the Pyramid Art Gallery from 1979 to 1980. Sought after as an art historian, Reid has been interviewed by the Detroit media many times since 1972 and has contributed to scores of newspaper and magazine articles.

Since 1974, Reid has been a member of the national executive board of the National Conference of Artists and in 1997 she was elected president of the Michigan chapter. A board member of the Ellington White Project, Reid is also a member of the Detroit Art Teachers Association, College Art Association, National Art Education Association and the Michigan Art Education Association. Reid's paintings of African American life are a part of 22 collections housed by the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Studio Museum of Harlem, the Museum of the National Center for Afro American Artists (Boston), Detroit Edison, the Toledo Art Commission, Florida A&M University and Seagrams. She has two sons, Khari and Senghor Reid.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Shirley Ann Woodson Reid was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 7, 2005, in Detroit, Michigan, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Painter and arts administrator Shirley Ann Woodson Reid (1936 - ) is most know for her paintings of African American life, which are a part of twenty-two collections housed by the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Studio Museum of Harlem, among other notable institutions. Woodson-Reid has also taught at Wayne State University, and has served as art education supervisor for the Detroit Public Schools since 1974.

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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:**

Woodson, Shirley

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Woodson, Shirley --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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## **Occupations:**

Painter

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Arts Administrator

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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 Shirley Ann Woodson Reid, April 7, 2005. 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 Shirley Ann Woodson Reid, Section A2005\_100\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:00 2005/04/07

Shirley Ann Woodson Reid was born on March 3, 1936, in Pulaski, Tennessee to Celia Trotter and Claude Woodson. Her mother was born on February 26, 1915 in Liberty, Tennessee, where her ancestors acquired 1000 acres of land, and Reid's grandparents, Celia Westmoreland Trotter and Harry Trotter, were farmers. When their homestead burned down, they built an eight-gabled home. The youngest of ten, she was not permitted to leave home to attend college, although her brothers moved to West Virginia to work as miners. Woodson Reid's great-grandfathers, Joseph Westmoreland and Bland Brown, served in the 110th Regiment Colored Infantry during the Civil War. Her father was born on February 7, 1910 in Prospect, Tennessee. His great-great-grandfather changed his name to Woodson after buying his freedom from slavery. Woodson graduated from high school in Chattanooga, Tennessee and worked at Queen Ann Funeral Home in Pulaski, owned by the McKissack family of architects. He met Woodson Reid's mother at a picnic in Pulaski.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirley Ann Woodson Reid, Section A2005\_100\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:50 2005/04/07

Shirley Ann Woodson Reid's family moved to Detroit, Michigan in 1936, where her father, Claude Woodson, worked for the Ford Motor Company. Her mother, Celia Trotter Woodson, continued to garden and sew, interests she passed on to Woodson Reid. Her family lived on the

West Side of Detroit, where Woodson Reid recalls the streetcar on Tillman Street, the ice cream parlor that she frequented, and attending St. Stephen A.M.E. Church. At Sherrill Elementary School, her interest in art was encouraged by her teachers. She enjoyed drawing figures using pencil and crayon. Woodson Reid's school report on Harriet Tubman was her first experience in teaching African American history to a predominantly white audience. On Saturdays, she attended the Detroit Institute of Art's museum program, where she saw the Detroit Industry Murals by Diego Rivera in Rivera Court. Woodson Reid attended Chadsey High School, where she was involved in the Y-Teens youth program.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirley Ann Woodson Reid, Section A2005\_100\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:10 2005/04/07

Shirley Ann Woodson Reid attended Chadsey High School in Detroit, Michigan, where she was briefly captain of the cheerleading team and her teacher, Cyril Miles, exposed her to the African Cuban artist Wilfredo Lam. At the Detroit Institute of Art, she was exposed to artists like Henri Matisse but did not learn about African American art. Woodson Reid reflects upon her reaction to the murder of Emmett Till in 1955, which followed her enrollment at Wayne State University in 1954. She studied art and began to compose poetry, graduating in 1958 with a B.A. degree. As a graduate student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, she met African American artist HistoryMaker Richard Hunt. Woodson Reid explains how the confrontational nature of her art developed due to racial discrimination she experienced in Europe in 1963. In 1966, she was given a book that opened her eyes to African American art by future spouse Edsel B. Reid. That year, she became a fellow at MacDowell Colony in Petersborough, New Hampshire.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirley Ann Woodson Reid, Section A2005\_100\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:40 2005/04/07

Shirley Ann Woodson Reid discovered the contribution of African Americans like HistoryMaker Elizabeth Catlett to art history upon reading Cedrick Dover's book 'American Negro Art'. In the late 1960s, she worked with Dudley Randall while employed at Broadside Press and saw

saxophonists John Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders play together, sparking her interest in the influence of black music and art on one another. She incorporated the sociology of black art and music into her curriculum as a professor at Highland Park Community College. Influenced by Romare Bearden, Woodson Reid began to create collages, and, at the urging of James Donald Wilson, she highlighted African American historical figures like Otis Redding and Aretha Franklin. Woodson Reid talks about her artistic style and the exclusion of African Americans from art, citing works such as 'The Vanguard Artist' and HistoryMaker Howardena Pindell's research on the absence of black artists in New York City's art exhibitions in the 1980s.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirley Ann Woodson Reid, Section A2005\_100\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:20 2005/04/07

Shirley Ann Woodson Reid met her husband, African American art archivist Edsel Reid, in 1965, shortly before beginning an art fellowship at MacDowell Colony in 1966. In 1970, the couple attended the Conference on the Functional Aspects of Black Art, which resulted in greater dissemination of the work of African American artists. Woodson Reid worked as an art education specialist in the Highland Park School District from 1966 to 1992, as an art education professor at Wayne State University from 1996 to 2000, and as art education supervisor for the Detroit Public Schools since 1992. She participated in Faith Ringgold's exhibition "Ancestor's Known and Unknown." Her paintings are housed in numerous collections, including those of the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Studio Museum of Harlem. Her sons, Khari Reid and Senghor Reid, are also educators. Woodson Reid collects the work of painter Jacob Lawrence. She reflects upon her life, legacy and hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirley Ann Woodson Reid, Section A2005\_100\_001\_006, TRT: 0:20:14 2005/04/07

Shirley Ann Woodson Reid would like to be remembered as a painter and an artist. She considers the work of visual artists to be an important social undertaking. She also talks about some of her favorite musical artists, including

Stevie Wonder and Etta James. Woodson Reid concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.