



# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Georgette Seabrooke Powell

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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>	Powell, Georgette Seabrooke
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Georgette Seabrooke Powell,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 8, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:26:00).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Art therapist, nonprofit chief executive, and painter Georgette Seabrooke Powell (1916 - ) is the last of the Black Renaissance painters of the 1930's Works Progress Administration. Her paintings have appeared in over seventy-two major art exhibits. Powell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 8, 2006 in Capitol Heights, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_135
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Art therapist, non-profit chief executive, and painter Georgette Ernestine Seabrooke Powell was born on August 2, 1916 in Charleston, South Carolina to Anna and George Seabrooke. Powell grew up in the Yorkville neighborhood of New York City. In the 1930s, she graduated from Washington Irving High School in New York City. She also studied art at the Harlem Art Workshop and the Harlem Community Art Center. In 1933, Powell began majoring in art at Cooper Union Art School in New York, and during this time she was selected to be a part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Federal Arts Project.

As an artist through the WPA from 1936-1939 she created murals at Queens General Hospital and Harlem Hospital as well as and did some public art. In 1959, Powell's family moved to Washington, D.C., where she became immersed in Washington's arts society. Studying art therapy in the early 1960s, at the Metropolitan Mental Health Skills Center and the Washington School of Psychiatry, Powell became a registered arts therapist through the American Art Therapy Association. She taught art to promote skill building and self-esteem with mentally ill patients at D.C. General Hospital's Department of Psychiatry. In 1973, Powell earned her B.F.A. degree from Howard University. In 1975, she founded and directed the Tomorrow's Art World Center, Inc. to assist young aspiring artists. Powell was a member and President of the District of Columbia Art Association between 1974 and 1998.

Powell's artistry appeared in seventy-two major art exhibits between 1933 and 2003. She exhibited throughout the United States and in Venezuela, Nigeria and Senegal. Her exhibits have included: a one woman show, "Radiance and Reality," which she showcased at the Children's National Medical Center in Washington; and a 1995 show, "Art Changes Things" which was sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute. Her works hang in distinguished

permanent collections across the country. An example is "Grandmother's Birthday," which was acquired by and hangs at the Johnson Publishing Company in Chicago, Illinois.

Georgette Ernestine Seabrooke Powell resides in Palm Coast, Florida and enjoys the company of her three children, grand-children and great-grandchildren.

Georgette Ernestine Seabrooke Powell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 8, 2006.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Georgette Seabrooke Powell was conducted by Robert Hayden on November 8, 2006, in Capitol Heights, Maryland, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Art therapist, nonprofit chief executive, and painter Georgette Seabrooke Powell (1916 - ) is the last of the Black Renaissance painters of the 1930's Works Progress Administration. Her paintings have appeared in over seventy-two major art exhibits.

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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:

Powell, Georgette Seabrooke, 1916-.

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer).

Stearns, Scott (Videographer).

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews.  
Powell, Georgette Seabrooke, 1916---Interviews.

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African American women artists--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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Tomorrow's Art World Center, Inc.

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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CivicMakers

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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 Georgette Seabrooke Powell, November 8, 2006.  
The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/25/2011 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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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, November 8, 2006

Video Oral History Interview with Georgette Seabrooke Powell, Section A2006\_135\_001\_001,  
TRT: 0:28:50 2006/11/08

Georgette Seabrooke Powell slates the interview and lists her favorites. She provides information about the backgrounds of her mother, Anna Simmons, and father, George Edward Seabrooke. In the early 1920s, Powell's family moved from Charleston, South Carolina to Yorkville, New York; there, her father became a porter for a theater and her mother, a domestic. Powell notes that the differences in employment from the South to the North surprised her parents. She reflects on the fact that her parents were progressive about her education and wanted her to start reading and writing at an early age. Powell's artistic talents were encouraged by both her parents and her teachers. She details her elementary school experiences at Public School Six and discusses why she wanted to attend Washington Irving High School.

African American families--South Carolina--Charleston.

African American families--New York (State)--New York.

Migration, Internal--Southern States.

African Americans--Education (Elementary).

African Americans--Education (Secondary).

Video Oral History Interview with Georgette Seabrooke Powell, Section A2006\_135\_001\_002,  
TRT: 0:31:10 2006/11/08

Georgette Seabrooke Powell talks about her parents' personalities and how much they encouraged her to pursue her goals. She discusses her educational experiences at Washington Irving High School in New York, which was the only school in the area where she could major in art. Powell was the only African American student in most of her classes. There was another African American girl, who she became friends with, but they were in different grades. Powell graduated from Washington in January/February in the early 1930s and that summer she began engaging with artists and people from Harlem, including Jacob Lawrence, Gwendolyn Bennett and Augusta Savage. Savage introduced her to the Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project in Harlem. In 1933, Powell began studying at Cooper Union Art School and received a silver medal for her painting of an African American church scene. Washington Irving High School (New York, N.Y.).

Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art. Art School.

Art--Studying and teaching--New York (State)--New York.

Federal Art Project (New York, N.Y.).

Video Oral History Interview with Georgette Seabrooke Powell, Section A2006\_135\_001\_003,  
TRT: 0:28:50 2006/11/08

Georgette Seabrooke Powell talks about her experience as an artist for the Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project. There, she did murals for hospitals and public art. In particular, Powell details the controversy and protest about the artists' designs at Harlem Hospital in New York. Her mural was called "Recreation in Harlem," and it depicted African American and Caucasian figures doing normal activities in a neighborhood, such as going to church, being at home and swimming in the pool. Due to the controversy and protest, the murals were one year behind schedule and Cooper Union Art School would not allow Powell to graduate. Powell discusses the circumstances that led to her

meeting and marrying her husband of forty-six years, George Powell, who was a podiatrist and a New York City firefighter. She speaks briefly about the lives of their three children, George, Phyllis, and Richard.

United States. Works Progress Administration (N.Y.).

Harlem Hospital (New York, N.Y.).

African American artists--New York (State)--New York.

African American families--New York (State)--New York.

African American mural painting and decoration--New York (State)--New York.

Federal Art Project (New York, N.Y.).

Video Oral History Interview with Georgette Seabrooke Powell, Section A2006\_135\_001\_004,  
TRT: 0:28:40 2006/11/08

Georgette Seabrooke Powell talks about returning to Washington, D.C. from New York with her husband so he could return to practicing podiatry. She returned to her passion of painting during this time after putting her career on hold to raise her children. Thus, she opened Powell Lodge Art Studio, which taught classes and had a gallery. A year later, Powell began her career as an art therapist at D.C. General Hospital. After taking a couple of art therapy classes at Turtle Bay Music School in New York she became interested in the field. Powell details her experience at D.C. General Hospital doing art therapy as well as the impact she had. In 1969, she closed her previous studio to open Tomorrow's World Art Center. She details how the center was created, why the name changed as well as why she decided to open Tomorrow's World.

Art therapy.

Art therapists--Training of.

African American artists--Washington (D.C.).

District of Columbia General Hospital.

Video Oral History Interview with Georgette Seabrooke Powell, Section A2006\_135\_001\_005,  
TRT: 0:28:30 2006/11/08

Georgette Seabrooke Powell reads the 1979 letter she received from former President Ronald Reagan after she was recognized for her service and dedication. Powell has been involved in various community art projects throughout the Washington, D.C. area. She and other artists started an art center in the downtown area, which served senior citizens and children groups. Powell notes two moments that stand out to her as an artist. She talks about exhibits she did in Washington, D.C., New York and Charleston, South Carolina. In her later years, she has been doing more collage, mixed media artwork and sketching. Powell shares that she has revived her passion for the creative arts after being away from it for a longtime and wants to be remembered as a person who can talk to all ages. She narrates personal and professional photos.

African American artists--Washington (D.C.).

Women artists--Washington (D.C.).

African American art.

Art centers--Washington (D.C.).