

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Nathan Jones

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jones, Nathan, 1942-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Nathan Jones,
Dates:	August 14, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:49:13).
Abstract:	Painter, architect, and inventor Nathan Jones (1942 -) had a lucrative art career nationally and internationally. Jones held seven patents, including one for the Multicaddie, a device that cleans most golf equipment. Jones was also a successful architect; he was the founder of N.J.K. Properties, Inc., an architectural firm that designed a number of buildings in Texas. Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 14, 2007, in Dallas, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_237
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Artist and inventor Nathan Jones was born on June 27, 1942, in Shreveport, Louisiana, to Bertha Lee Jones and Eunice Jones. When Jones was young, his family moved to West Dallas, Texas, where he lived with his cousin, Helen. With the encouragement of his mother, he began painting at the age of seven. Jones attended George Washington Carver grade school, then CF Carr, and Fanny C. Harris schools. Jones went to James Madison High School, where he met his

future wife. After his high school graduation, Jones attended Texas Southern University, where he first became aware of another black artist, Dr. John Biggers.

After attending Texas Southern University, Jones moved to Columbus College of Art and Design, where he learned about art history and theory. He entered the University of Texas at Arlington, where he studied two years of architecture, earning a two-year certification in architecture; he also earned his B.F.A. degree while attending the University of Texas at Arlington. Jones also attended El Centro College, the University of Dallas for special training in lithography, Eastfield College in order to study printing and also Richland College. He spent a total of ten years in school studying. In 1975, Jones's first museum show was held at the Midland Museum of Fine Arts; he was an instant success, selling around twenty-five paintings for \$30,000. Jones continued to have shows in Houston throughout the 1970s and became financially successful.

In 1981, Jones designed a commemorative U.S. postage stamp for Dr. Charles Drew; that same year, Jones became the creator of the cover for the *1981-82 Southwestern Bell Telephone Directory*. Jones had been interested in inventions since childhood, and as an adult began to strive towards patenting some of his own. Jones invented a simple device called the Multi Caddy, which cleans most golf equipment; he then founded MultiGolf Systems International of Texas, LP, a company devoted to selling his invention. Subsequently Jones has patented a total of five inventions which have gone into production for commercial retail. In 1992, Jones founded N.J.K. Properties, Inc., beginning his own architectural business and designing a number of buildings in Texas, which include the Fitzhugh Apartment Complex. Jones has also developed an authentic historical art series, the Buffalo Soldier Series, based on nine years of research into the history of African American soldiers.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Nathan Jones was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 14, 2007, in Dallas, Texas, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Painter, architect, and inventor Nathan Jones (1942 -) had a lucrative art career nationally and internationally. Jones held seven patents, including one for the Multicaddie, a device that cleans most golf equipment. Jones was also a successful architect; he was the founder of N.J.K. Properties, Inc., an architectural firm that designed a number of buildings in Texas.

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:

Jones, Nathan, 1942-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jones, Nathan, 1942---Interviews

African American artists--Texas--Interviews

African American businesspeople--Interviews

African American painters--Interviews

African American inventors--Interviews

African American architects--Texas--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Painter

Architect

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers|BusinessMakers

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 Nathan Jones, August 14, 2007. 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 Nathan Jones, Section
A2007_237_001_001, TRT: 0:29:10 2007/08/14

Nathan Jones was born on June 27, 1942 in Shreveport, Louisiana to Bertha Penton Jones and Eunice Jones. His paternal grandfather, Nelson Jones, was born a slave in Louisiana during the 1850s. Jones knew his maternal grandfather as a child, and delivered tobacco to him until his grandfather's death at the age of 102 years old. Jones' paternal grandmother, Emaline Jones, knit quilts for her family, many of which Jones later inherited. His mother was born in the 1910s in Shreveport, where she grew up on her family's farm. Jones' mother and her siblings worked hard to earn a living off the land, and often

bartered with neighboring African American families. They did not attend school until moving to Texas as adults. His father also was born in Shreveport, several years before his mother. Jones was closer to his mother, a cosmetologist and prolific painter, than his father, who was strict and often distant. After his family moved to Dallas, Texas, Jones worked as a shoeshine boy, and at a drive-in restaurant.

African American artists--Texas--Interviews.

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

African American painters--Interviews.

African American inventors--Interviews.

African American architects--Texas--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Nathan Jones, Section
A2007_237_001_003, TRT: 0:29:50 2007/08/14

Nathan Jones attended James Madison High School in Dallas, Texas, where he gained recognition as a talented artist. He painted portraits of his classmates during their lunch hours, and was tutored by his art teacher, Gladys I. Collins. Jones' history teacher encouraged him to speak during class; and, as Jones' confidence grew, he aspired to attend college. He submitted a painting to the Columbus College of Art and Design, and was awarded a two-year scholarship. When Jones graduated from high school in 1962, he studied for a semester at Texas Southern University in Houston, where he was mentored by art department chairman John Biggers. Then, Jones moved to Columbus, Ohio to attend the Columbus College of Art and Design, where he received financial support from a wealthy patron of the college. In his courses, Jones learned about art history and theory, and improved his communication skills. During the 1960s, Jones was exempt from U.S. military service due to a back injury.

Video Oral History Interview with Nathan Jones, Section
A2007_237_001_004, TRT: 0:29:20 2007/08/14

Nathan Jones graduated from the Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio in 1965, and continued his education at the University of Texas in Arlington, where he studied art and architecture. Jones began his

professional career as an engineer's aide for the City of Dallas, Texas, but had difficulty finding work in the white-dominated architecture industry. Shortly after graduating from the University of Texas, he exhibited his paintings in an art show held at Dallas' Reverchon Park. He made over thirty thousand dollars in sales, and became acquainted with collectors who continued to purchase his work. Jones experimented with many artistic styles like Surrealism, Dadaism and Impressionism, but was primarily a realist painter. His mixed media paintings combined oil, tempera and watercolor paints, and he shares his difficulties with the turpentine fumes created by oil paint. In the 1980s, Jones obtained work as a homebuilder in the Dallas region, and received awards for his architectural designs.

Video Oral History Interview with Nathan Jones, Section
A2007_237_001_005, TRT: 0:29:03 2007/08/14

Nathan Jones often painted character studies, and came to focus on African American historical figures like the Buffalo Soldiers. He researched any objects or clothes that he depicted to avoid anachronisms in his paintings, since many of their subjects lived during the 19th century and earlier. In 1974, Jones was commissioned by Mrs. Paul's Kitchen to paint 'Now What Did I Do With That Nutmeg,' which appeared beside the work of Norman Rockwell. In 1981, the U.S. Postal Service hired Jones to design a commemorative stamp in honor of Dr. Charles R. Drew, who created the first large-scale blood bank programs during World War II. Jones also designed stamps for the Franklin Mint in Pennsylvania. In the 1990s, Jones invented the Multicaddie, a product designed to clean golf clubs and equipment. He founded Multigolf Systems International, and secured over \$1 million from investors in his community. Jones describes his distribution plans for the product, and his intention to patent two more inventions.

Video Oral History Interview with Nathan Jones, Section
B2007_237_001_002, TRT: 0:30:00 2007/08/14

Nathan Jones moved from Shreveport, Louisiana to Dallas, Texas when he was around five years old. His family settled in West Dallas, a poor community with many black, white and Asian residents. At first, Jones had

difficulty adjusting to the city's electric lights and dense neighborhoods. He attended several elementary schools in Dallas, including George Washington Carver Elementary School, C.F. Carr Elementary School and Fannie C. Harris Elementary School. Jones' mother, Bertha Penton Jones, taught him to paint with watercolors when he was seven years old. He also recalls the segregation of West Dallas, including police crackdowns that disproportionately impacted African Americans, and housing restrictions that targeted black families. Jones' family belonged to the local Church of Christ, and were not active in the Civil Rights Movement, as they feared retaliation from Dallas' white police force. Jones talks about the mass incarceration of African Americans in Texas, and throughout the United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Nathan Jones, Section B2007_237_001_002E, TRT:

Video Oral History Interview with Nathan Jones, Section B2007_237_001_006, TRT: 0:21:50 2007/08/14

Nathan Jones describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, as well as how he would like to be remembered. He reflects upon his life, legacy and family, and concludes the interview by narrating his photographs and paintings.

Video Oral History Interview with Nathan Jones, Section B2007_237_001_006E, TRT: