Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Steven Cutting

Overview of the Collection

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

Creator: Steven Cutting

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Steven Cutting,

Dates: August 30, 2007

Bulk Dates: 2007

Physical Description: 5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:26:27).

Abstract: Fashion designer Steven Cutting (1961 - ) was the head designer for Philippe Monet. He was a designer for Reebok, Kenneth Cole, Collage, and Pony and is also the president of the Fashion and Arts Xchange. Cutting was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 30, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2007_242

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Fashion designer Steven Alan Cutting was born in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, New York on June 8, 1961 to Russaloin and Clement Cutting. Cutting learned to sketch at six years old, and by the time he graduated from Queens’ Christ the King Regional High School, he was determined to pursue a career in fashion. Cutting earned his B.F.A. degree from the Fashion Institute of Technology in 1983.

After college, Cutting worked on Seventh Avenue with the design firm Enrico Masei. Then he moved to Italy and worked at a freelance studio owned by Anna Schpioni. Cutting worked in Italy and Germany where he was a designer for Krizia and Chiwitt from 1983 to 1985. In late 1985, Cutting returned to the United States and became the head designer for Philippe Monet. While at Philippe Monet, Cutting traveled extensively and began to specialize in leather and cloth outerwear. In 1990, he established his own freelance company, Steven A. Cutting, Inc. The company’s clients included Kenneth Cole, Reebok, Collage, and Pony. Cutting worked for himself until 1996, when he became head designer for Perry Ellis America. In 1999, he joined First Manufacturing Company, where he was the design director for Jimmy and Marylou and the Whet Blue Collections. In 2000, Cutting was hired by the Larry Levine and Boston Outfitters labels. Cutting has worked with the House of Dereon owned by Beyoncé and Tina Knowles and has also established his own label, Katalyst.

Cutting joined the faculty of the Fashion Art Department of the Fashion Institute of Technology in 2001, where he teaches design techniques with leather. From 2003 to 2005, he was the president of the Fashion & Arts Xchange, a networking organization for people of color in fashion and the arts. In 2006, Cutting joined the board of the Gay Men’s Health Crisis, working to fight AIDS. Cutting lives in New York with his wife, Asha Shetty, and has three children.
Steven Cutting was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 30, 2007.

**Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Steven Cutting was conducted by Adrienne Jones on August 30, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Fashion designer Steven Cutting (1961 - ) was the head designer for Philippe Monet. He was a designer for Reebok, Kenneth Cole, Collage, and Pony and is also the president of the Fashion and Arts Xchange.

**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:**

- Cutting, Steven
- Jones, Adrienne (Interviewer)
- Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

**Subjects:**

- African Americans--Interviews
- Steven Cutting--Interviews
- African American fashion designers--Interviews
**Organizations:**

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Katalyst

**HistoryMakers® Category:**

ArtMakers

StyleMakers

**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 Steven Cutting, August 30, 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 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, August 30, 2007**

Video Oral History Interview with Steven Cutting, Section A2007_242_001_001, TRT: 0:29:07 2007/08/30
Steven Cutting details his interest in fashion magazines and sketching. He recalls questioning why his mom was not fashionable like the women in magazines. Cutting currently lives in the brownstone he once lived in as a child. Cutting describes his first visit outside of the United States to Italy. Cutting talks about holidays with his family, including his love of Christmas and soul food. Cutting emphasizes holidays are a time for family bonding. Cutting also remembers Easter being among those special times of year.

African American families--New York (State)--New York
Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)
African American families--Social life and customs

Video Oral History Interview with Steven Cutting, Section A2007_242_001_002, TRT: 0:29:54
2007/08/30

Steven Cutting discusses his school experiences. He recalls a teacher from St. Theresa Elementary who saw his potential and pushed him to attend middle school at the Robert F. Kennedy School for Gifted Boys. Cutting discusses becoming involved in the National Honor Society through his Spanish teacher, who was the advisor. The Society traveled to many different countries in Europe and Spain. Cutting also became involved in student politics. He ran for class president his last three years of high school. In his senior year of high school, Cutting took his first art class. When he expressed to his art teacher that he wanted to be a designer, she dismissed him, saying he could only become an illustrator. From then on, Cutting was determined to become a designer.

African American students--Education (primary)
African American fashion designers
African American students--Education (secondary)

Video Oral History Interview with Steven Cutting, Section A2007_242_001_003, TRT: 0:29:10
2007/08/30

Steven Cutting discusses his experiences at the Fashion Institute of Technology, explaining his instructor Eva Nambath taught him to observe people from fifty feet away. He remembers learning to describe what someone was wearing from head to toe and to think outside of the box. He explained fashion as “more than just matching hat and shoes, a nice suit. Fashion is style, culture, spice, and passion rolled in one.” Cutting also discusses receiving the award for the most promising student of the year at the Fourth Annual Harvey Bristol Cream Tribute and being one of five finalists selected to design one outfit for a famous model to wear at the tribute.

Fashion Institute of Technology (New York, N.Y.)
Fashion design--Study and Teaching

Video Oral History Interview with Steven Cutting, Section A2007_242_001_004, TRT: 0:29:09
2007/08/30

Steven Cutting discusses his travels outside the United States, including his move to Italy where he worked for a freelance studio. While there, he designed shoes, handbags, accessories, and clothes for men, women, and children. Cutting also talks about his move to Germany. In order to expand his horizons, he became a designer of high fashion in Germany. A couple of years later, Cutting became an entrepreneur and established Steven A. Cutting, Inc. In 1996, after his business went bankrupt, he worked for Europe Craft Imports as the Head Designer for Perry Ellis America and began teaching at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Fashion designers--Germany
Steven Cutting discusses his career path in more detail. Cutting joined the faculty full time at the Fashion Institute of Technology in 2001. Cutting also joined the board of the Fashion & Arts Xchange an organization committed to networking people of color in fashion and the arts. Cutting talks about being elected President of Fashion & Arts Xchange in 2003, and joining the board of Gay Men’s Health Crisis in 2006. He emphasizes it was his duty to help them, because it helps him understand the value and importance of giving back.

Fashion design--Study and teaching
Fashion designers--Professional associations
African American fashion designers