

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Etu Evans

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Evans, Etu, 1969-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Etu Evans,
Dates:	August 30, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:08:48).
Abstract:	Fashion designer Etu Evans (1969 -) designed shoes for celebrities including Erykah Badu, Halle Berry and Beyonce Knowles. He was also the founder of Solesville: Etu Evans Foundation. Evans 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_243
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Fashion designer and entrepreneur Etu Evans was born on February 2, 1969 in Orangeburg, South Carolina though he spent much of his youth with his family in Harlem and Queens, New York. His mother Rosa was an educator, who helped Evans overcome a learning disability and eventually excel in school. Evans started his first business, in flower arranging, at the age of six. By the time he was thirteen, he began showing interest in fashion and interior design. Evans attended South Carolina State University, where he graduated cum laude with a degree in social work in 1992.

Evans established the design company Etu Evans, LLC in 1993, focusing on jewelry and hats. However, he continued a career outside of fashion and in 1996, earned his M.S. degree in applied behavioral science from Columbia University, graduating with a 4.0 GPA. Evans moved to Europe, where he worked in Italy and France as a behavioral therapist. In a chance meeting on the streets of Paris, Evans met the publicist for Gucci, and decided to leave his job in order to focus on design.

The scope of Etu Evans, LLC has broadened to include accessories and, especially, shoes. Evans became known for his fashion forward footwear designs, which have been worn by celebrities including Tyra Banks, Halle Berry, Erykah Badu, Queen Latifah, Beyoncé Knowles, Danny Glover and Chris Tucker. His work has been featured at New York's Fashion Week and covered in a broad range of international fashion magazines.

In 1998, Evans founded the Solesville Foundation. This organization collects, repairs, and redistributes new and used shoes and is frequently cited for the effectiveness it had during the Hurricane Katrina disaster in New Orleans, Louisiana. Solesville also coordinated a youth AIDS walk and a shoe repair apprenticeship program for underprivileged youth. Evans's philanthropic efforts have earned him the Burger King Everyday Heroes National Campaign Honor and the "Citizen of the Year" award from his fraternity, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and the National Association of Social Workers. Etu was also chosen by *Ebony* magazine as one of its "30 Leaders of the Future."

Etu Evans was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 30, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Etu Evans was conducted by Adrienne Jones on August 30, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Fashion designer Etu Evans (1969 -) designed shoes for celebrities including Erykah Badu, Halle Berry and Beyonce Knowles. He was also the founder of Solesville: Etu Evans Foundation.

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:

Evans, Etu, 1969-

Jones, Adrienne (Interviewer)

Burghilea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Evans, Etu, 1969---Interviews

African American fashion designers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Fashion Designer

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Etu Evans, 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 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 Etu Evans, Section
A2007_243_001_001, TRT: 0:30:22 2007/08/30

Etu Evans was born on February 2, 1969 in Orangeburg, South Carolina to Rosa Johnson Evans and Frederick Evans, Jr. His paternal grandfather, Frederick Evans, Sr., worked at the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation; while his paternal grandmother, Queen Esther Evans, taught elocution to white children. His maternal grandfather suffered from seizures, and Evans' mother often worried about him as a child. She went on to become a teacher, while Evans' father worked as a printer. Evans' early interest in fashion was influenced by his parents' stylish dress, and his paternal grandmother's extensive wardrobe. He often helped her choose shoes to wear to church, which sparked his interest in footwear. He talks about the significance of footwear to the African American community, and the dangers of improper foot protection. Evans grew up in Orangeburg with his siblings, Ami Evans Gibson and Gregory Evans. He was entrepreneurial from an early age, selling flower bulbs and arrangements, as well as his grandmother's cakes.

African American children--South Carolina.

African American families--South Carolina.

African American students--Education (Elementary).

Shoes--Design.

African American grandmothers--South Carolina.

Grandparent and child--South Carolina.

Video Oral History Interview with Etu Evans, Section

A2007_243_001_002, TRT: 0:29:42 2007/08/30

Etu Evans struggled with a learning disability at Marshall Elementary School in Orangeburg, South Carolina. At Brookdale Middle School, he was ridiculed by a teacher, but was defended by his paternal grandmother, Queen Esther Evans. She helped him learn by reading the Bible together before Sunday school at Bull Swamp Baptist Church. As a child, Evans started several small businesses, the first of which sold flower bulbs and his grandmother's cake. In the eighth grade, he made a bouquet for his mother, who was recently divorced; and then expanded his business to sell floral arrangements. With the new income, he bought a pair of Pierre Cardin shoes. Evans often visited his family in New York City, and became interested in interior design while working at a relative's upholstery shop. Upon graduating from Orangeburg-Wilkinson High School, he studied social work and marketing at South Carolina State College. He talks about mental health in the African American community, and describes the process of making shoes. African American high school students--South Carolina. African American children--Elementary (Secondary). Learning disabilities. South Carolina State University--Students.

Video Oral History Interview with Etu Evans, Section
A2007_243_001_003, TRT: 0:29:30 2007/08/30

Etu Evans designed shirts and hats while a student at South Carolina State College in Orangeburg, South Carolina. After graduation, he moved to New York City, and founded Etu Evans, LLC. He promoted the clothing company through the EPR public relations firm, and invited magazine editors to his store's events. In 1993, Evans enrolled at the Parsons School of Design, where he was mentored by footwear professor Howard Davis. He transferred in 1999 to the Fashion Institute of Technology, where he completed a bachelor's degree. Then, Evans earned a master's degree in behavioral studies at Columbia University, and began working as a private behavioral therapist for affluent families in New York City and Europe. While in Paris, France, he was encouraged by

a Gucci publicist to start a luxury shoe line. Upon returning to New York City, he met with an executive from Nordstrom, who helped finance the line. Evans soon opened the Sole Kitchen, a high end shoe boutique with celebrity clients like Halle Barry and Iman.

African Americans--Social work and counselling.

Columbia University--Students.

African American fashion designers--New York (State)--New York.

Orangeburg County (S.C.).

Fashion Institute of Technology (New York, N.Y.).

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

Video Oral History Interview with Etu Evans, Section
A2007_243_001_004, TRT: 0:30:45 2007/08/30

Etu Evans graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, where he impressed representatives from Essence magazine with the snakeskin accessories he designed for his senior project. Later in his career, Evans established the Solesville: Etu Evans Foundation to provide young people and former inmates with the proper footwear for job interviews. The foundation also distributed shoes to poor children in Africa and the Caribbean, as well as victims of natural disasters; and conducted shoe repair training. In addition, Evans taught at New York City's Institute for Youth Entrepreneurship, and Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, New York; and worked as a motivational speaker in collaboration with Les Brown. He describes his plans for the future, which included founding a pediatric AIDS and podiatry hospital, and opening shoe stores abroad. Evans shares two of his shoe designs, as well as the history of the shoe lasting machine; and then concludes the interview by reflecting upon his legacy.

African American fashion designers--New York (State)--New York.

African American families.

African Americans--Behavioral therapy--Europe.

Parsons the New School for Design.

Bergdorf Goodman.

Neiman-Marcus.

Saks Incorporated.

Video Oral History Interview with Etu Evans, Section
A2007_243_001_005, TRT: 0:08:29 2007/08/30

Social values--United States.