

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Thaddeus Mosley

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Mosley, Thaddeus
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Thaddeus Mosley,
Dates:	August 11, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:10:00).
Abstract:	Sculptor Thaddeus Mosley (1926 -) created pieces that were commissioned by Pittsburgh cultural institutions like the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, the Susquehanna Museum and the Cue Art Foundation Gallery. Mosley was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 11, 2008, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_102
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Sculptor Thaddeus Gilmore Mosley was born on July 23, 1926 in New Castle, Pennsylvania. After graduating from high school, he enrolled in the U.S. Navy. Mosley graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a double major in English and journalism in 1950.

Mosley began working for the U.S. Postal Service. During the 1950s, while at the Postal Service, Mosley began writing freelance for *The Pittsburgh Courier* and for several other national publications. At this time, he also began making sculptures.

In 1968, he had his first solo exhibit at the Carnegie Museum of Art. He credits sculptors Constantin Brancusi and Isamu Noguchi as his earliest influences. His commissions include, *Three Rivers* bench in 2003 for the David L. Lawrence Convention Center; *Legends* at the Susquehanna Museum; and an exhibition at the Cue Art Foundation Gallery. His most famous sculptures are the 14' cedar Phoenix located at the corner of Centre Avenue and Dinwiddie in Pittsburgh's Hill District and the "Mountaintop" Limestone at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in the Hill District at Herron and Milwaukee Streets.

Mosley wrote *Thaddeus Mosley: African-American Sculptor* with a narrative by David Lewis that was published by the Carnegie Museum of Art in 1997.

Mosley was named the Artist of the Year and was awarded the Governor's Award, the Cultural Award, and the Service in the Arts Award by the Pittsburgh Center of the Arts. Mosley has been an officer for the Pittsburgh Society of Sculptors and a board member of the August Wilson Center for African American Culture.

Mosley was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 11, 2008.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Thaddeus Mosley was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 11, 2008, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Sculptor Thaddeus Mosley (1926 -) created pieces that were commissioned by Pittsburgh cultural institutions like the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, the Susquehanna Museum and the Cue Art Foundation Gallery.

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

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:

Mosley, Thaddeus

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Mosley, Thaddeus--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Sculptor

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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 Thaddeus Mosley, August 11, 2008. 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 Thaddeus Mosley, Section
A2008_102_001_001, TRT: 0:28:30 2008/08/11

Thaddeus Mosley was born on July 23, 1926 in New Castle, Pennsylvania to Helen Fagan Mosley and Thaddeus Mosley, Sr. His paternal grandfather, Fleming Mosley, left his studies at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Hampton, Virginia to care for his younger siblings when their father died. Mosley's father was raised in a coal mining area of eastern Kentucky, and then moved to Elbon, Pennsylvania, where his father owned property. His paternal aunt, Mattie Mosley Dawson, graduated from Storer College in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, and went on to become a nurse. Mosley's maternal grandfather, Richard Fagan, was a coal miner from Virginia. Mosley's mother was born in 1903 in Thurmond, West Virginia, and later moved to her uncle's farm in Weedville, Pennsylvania, where she met Mosley's father. She worked as a seamstress, was a member of the Order of the Eastern Star and played piano while Mosley's father worked in the mines and enjoyed reading biographies and history books.

Video Oral History Interview with Thaddeus Mosley, Section
A2008_102_001_002, TRT: 0:29:10 2008/08/11

Thaddeus Mosley was raised by his divorced parents, Helen Fagan Mosley and Thaddeus Mosley, Sr., in New Castle, Pennsylvania, near the No. 5 Mine in Elbon, Pennsylvania, where his father worked. He began his education at a grade school maintained by the mine, and then he enrolled West Side School in New Castle. During this time, he showed an interest in drawing, but his schools lacked the sufficient resources to teach art. He went on to attend George Washington Junior High School in New Castle, followed by New Castle Senior High School. There, he sang in the a cappella choir, played basketball, ran track and joined the debate club. Upon graduating in January of 1945, Mosley enlisted in the U.S. Navy. At the Naval Station Great Lakes in Lake County, Illinois, Mosley met African American football players Marion Motley and Buddy Young, and alto saxophonist

Willie Smith. Mosley recalls his close relationship with his parents, which included foraging for mushrooms with his father, and helping his mother can fruit.

Video Oral History Interview with Thaddeus Mosley, Section
A2008_102_001_003, TRT: 0:29:20 2008/08/11

Thaddeus Mosley began his service with the U.S. Navy during World War II at Naval Station Great Lakes in Lake County, Illinois, where he met African American athletes Marion Motley, Paul Brown and Buddy Young. After attaining the highest score on a test proctored at Floyd Bennett Field in Jamaica, New York, he completed his aerial gunnery training on Lido Beach in New York. He was then sent to the island of Peleliu as a member of the all-black logistic support company 507. He became captain of the company's basketball team, which won multiple championships. At this point in the interview, Mosley talks about segregation in the U.S. Armed Forces, and the Japanese holdouts in the South Pacific. In 1946, he was discharged at the United States Naval Training Center, Bainbridge in Port Deposit, Maryland; and matriculated at the University of Pittsburgh that fall. Mosley describes his neighbor, Maude Gardner, who wrote Western fiction in New Castle, Pennsylvania, and his experience with segregation at a restaurant.

Video Oral History Interview with Thaddeus Mosley, Section
A2008_102_001_004, TRT: 0:30:10 2008/08/11

Thaddeus Mosley lived in the predominantly black Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania as he attended the University of Pittsburgh. He majored in English and journalism, and aspired to write for a magazine. During this time, he worked as a hospital darkroom technician for Isadore Frishman in Pittsburgh. Mosley graduated in 1950, and began his long-term career with the U.S. Post Office Department in the Postal Transportation Service branch. He also wrote a sports column for the Pittsburgh Courier. Inspired in part by Scandinavian art and the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi, whose work was influenced by African art, Mosley also began to practice sculpting. At this point in the interview, he remembers the African American photographer and Pittsburgh native Charles "Teenie" Harris. Mosley also talks about the Nunn family,

which included the Pittsburgh Courier's managing editor, Bill Nunn, Sr., and national sports editor, Bill Nunn, Jr., who also served as the scout for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Video Oral History Interview with Thaddeus Mosley, Section
A2008_102_001_005, TRT: 0:29:40 2008/08/11

Thaddeus Mosley worked for the U.S. Post Office Department and as a freelance sports writer for the Pittsburgh Courier in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania after his graduation from the University of Pittsburgh in 1950. He ultimately left the newspaper to focus on his sculpting. In the 1960s, he began exhibiting his pieces with Pittsburgh-based groups like the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh, the Society of Sculptors and Watt Lane Art Club, which was formed by African American artists. Mosley's first solo exhibit was at the Pittsburgh's Carnegie Museum of Art in 1968. At this point in the interview, he talks about the manipulation of weight and space in sculpture, his interest in African tribal art, the Black Arts Movement and the dearth of wood carving instruction. He also describes his sculptures that honor influential African American leaders, such as 'Fanfare for Fannie' and 'Subterranean Moons - for Harriet Tubman.' He recalls the theft of his sculpture of Dizzy Gillespie from a Pittsburgh music store.

Video Oral History Interview with Thaddeus Mosley, Section
A2008_102_001_006, TRT: 0:29:20 2008/08/11

Thaddeus Mosley became known for his woodwork, and was invited to exhibit at the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977. His sculptures were commissioned by major institutions, such as the 'Three Rivers Bench' for the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Mosley was married twice, and had six children, to whom he stressed the importance of education. He retired from the U.S. Postal Service in 1992, after forty years of employment. At this point in the interview, he describes the origin of the Negro League baseball team, the Pittsburgh Crawfords, founded by Gus Greenlee and William "Woogie" Harris, the older brother of photographer Charles "Teenie" Harris. Mosley remembers notable Pittsburgh figures like Negro League baseball players Satchel Paige, Vic Harris, Josh Gibson, Jr.

and Ted Page; and playwright August Wilson. Mosley reflects upon his life, his career as a sculptor and his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Thaddeus Mosley, Section
A2008_102_001_007, TRT: 0:13:50 2008/08/11

Thaddeus Mosley reflects upon his legacy and how he would like to be remembered. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.