

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Queen Brooks

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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>	Brooks, Queen, 1943-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Queen Brooks,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 3, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:47:23).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Visual artist Queen Brooks (1943 - ) received numerous awards for her artwork, including the Ohioana Career Award, the highest recognition bestowed on an artist in the State of Ohio. Brooks was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 3, 2012, in Columbus, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_082
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Artist Queen Brooks was born in Columbus, Ohio on April 23, 1943 to Hattie Owens and Pomp Brooks. She graduated from East High School in 1971. After working for Central Ohio Transit Authority, Brooks apprenticed under Columbus photographer Kojo Kamau and began working at the J. Ashburn Jr. Youth Center as an arts and crafts instructor in 1980. While at the Ashburn Youth Center, Brooks discovered the art of pyrography or wood burning. Brooks then went back to school and graduated from Ohio State University with her B.F.A. and M.F.A. degrees in art in 1990 and 1992, respectively. In 1993, Brooks won the Lila Wallace, Reader's Digest International Artist Award, which granted her a residency in the French port city of Abidjan in the Republic of the Ivory Coast, West Africa. Brooks then served as an adjunct professor in art instruction at Otterbein University from 1995 to 2002 and then at Ohio Dominican University from 2002 to 2006. In 2008, Brooks was hired as the lead artist for the Greater Columbus Arts Council's *Art in the House* program.

Her work has been featured in *Essence* magazine and twice in the *International Review of African American Art*, and other publications. Brooks also created the portal entrance for the Kwanzaa Playground, Ohio's first African-centered playground in Columbus, Ohio. Through a project grant from the Columbus Cultural Arts Center, Brooks, working with middle and high school students, designed and painted a mural at Columbus' Krumm park area.

Brooks' art has been exhibited at numerous sites throughout Ohio, and her works are in collections across the United States and in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire, West Africa.

Her work is among collections held in the collections of the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio Dominican and Otterbein universities as well as the King Art Complex, Columbus, Ohio.

Brooks has also won numerous awards for her artwork, including the Ohioana Career Award in 2008, the highest recognition bestowed on an artist in the state of Ohio. She has earned distinction the Arts Freedom Award designee and an Arts Midwest *National Endowment of the Arts Award* in 2004 and 1994, respectively. Brooks also won the

Excellence in the Arts Award from Ohio State University.

Queen Brooks was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 3, 2012.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Queen Brooks was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 3, 2012, in Columbus, Ohio, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Visual artist Queen Brooks (1943 - ) received numerous awards for her artwork, including the Ohioana Career Award, the highest recognition bestowed on an artist in the State of Ohio.

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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:

Brooks, Queen, 1943-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brooks, Queen, 1943- --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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## Occupations:

Visual Artist

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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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 Queen Brooks, April 3, 2012. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 6/7/2022 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

Video Oral History Interview with Queen Brooks, Section A2012\_082\_001\_001, TRT: 1:30:00  
2012/04/03

Queen Brooks was born on April 23, 1943 in Columbus, Ohio to Hattie Steele Owens and Pomp Brooks. Her mother was born in 1910 in Norfolk, Virginia to Ollie Steele and Maude Scales Steele. After Brooks' maternal grandmother was

fatally poisoned, her maternal grandfather and mother moved to the Blackberry Patch section of Columbus. There, her mother left East High School during the tenth grade, when a teacher called her a racial slur. Brooks' father was born in Birmingham, Alabama, and was educated through the third grade. He joined the U.S. Army, and lost his leg while serving in World War I. After his discharge, he was found responsible for a police officer's death and imprisoned in the Ohio Penitentiary. He was later pardoned by the governor, who determined that police misconduct had occurred. Brooks' parents met and married in Columbus, where her mother worked as a bartender at the Pythian Grill. Later, their household was joined by Brooks' paternal grandmother, who suffered from Alzheimer's disease.

Video Oral History Interview with Queen Brooks, Section A2012\_082\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:02  
2012/04/03

Queen Brooks grew up in the King-Lincoln district of Columbus, Ohio. She enjoyed coloring as a child, and began her education at Garfield Elementary School. Every weekend while her mother worked, she attended the Saturday matinees at Columbus' Pythian Theater. There, she was molested by a theater usher at eight years old. She told her mother, and the man was imprisoned. Brooks began the third grade at St. Dominic's School, where she enjoyed her art and catechism classes, and was influenced by her teacher, Sister Mary Roberts. Brooks went on to attend the integrated East High School in Columbus, where she received encouragement from her art teacher, Betty White Buckner. Around this time, Brooks sold her first art piece to the C.D. White and Son Funeral Home, Inc. Brooks' mother discouraged her from pursuing a career in art; and, after enrolling at Central State College in 1961, she decided to major in elementary education. During her freshman year, Brooks became pregnant with her son, Leslie Brooks.

Video Oral History Interview with Queen Brooks, Section A2012\_082\_001\_003, TRT: 3:30:10  
2012/04/03

Queen Brooks left Central State College in Wilberforce, Ohio after one year, when she became pregnant with her son, Leslie Brooks. Her pregnancy was the result of sexual molestation by a family friend, which began when she was five years old. After her son's birth, Brooks served as a nurse's aide at the Columbus Children's Hospital, and later worked for the Western Electric Company and the Central Ohio Transit Authority in Columbus, Ohio. In 1970, she met photographer Kojo Kamau, who recruited her as a photography assistant at the Kojo Photo Art Studio, which was a hub for black artists in Columbus. There, Brooks was introduced to the Black Arts Movement, and was mentored by mixed media artist Barbara Chavous. She became a children's art instructor at the J. Ashburn Jr. Youth Center; and, in 1987, secured a Walter and Marian English Award grant, which she used to study fine art at The Ohio State University.

Video Oral History Interview with Queen Brooks, Section A2012\_082\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:43  
2012/04/03

Queen Brooks attended The Ohio State University from 1987, and earned a bachelor's degree in fine art in 1990. During this time, she taught art classes at the J. Ashburn Jr. Youth Center in Columbus, where she began using wood burning tools to create mixed media assemblages. In 1992, Brooks completed a master's degree in fine art at The Ohio State University. In 1993, she won an international art competition through the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, and was awarded a grant to study art in Cote d'Ivoire. In 1994, Brooks opened the Art Genesis gallery in Columbus. During this time, she also taught art at

Otterbein University. In 2007, Brooks was commissioned by Columbus City Council member Priscilla R. Tyson, who created the Star Arts Limited gallery to exhibit her work. Brooks' artistic influences included Aboriginal art as well as African American folk artists like Elijah Pierce, William L. Hawkins and Smoky Brown. She reflects upon her philosophy of art, the black aesthetic and the themes of her work.

Video Oral History Interview with Queen Brooks, Section A2012\_082\_001\_005, TRT: 5:31:27  
2012/04/03

Queen Brooks' submission to the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund art competition was sponsored by the Friends of Art for Community Enrichment, a nonprofit group in Gahanna, Ohio. Brooks won the contest, and received a grant to visit Cote d'Ivoire in 1993. There, she conducted research on weaving, woodcarving and pottery techniques in the local villages. She also visited an art school, where she was mocked by the professors for her inability to speak French. After three months, Brooks returned to Columbus, Ohio, where she taught art at Otterbein University, Ohio Dominican University and the University of Rio Grande. In 1996, her work was featured in the 'Four Women/Four Voices' exhibit at the Evansville Museum of Arts, History and Science in Indiana. Brooks describes her upcoming projects, as well as her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She reflects upon her legacy, and remembers her son, minister Leslie Brooks, who was killed by a stray bullet at the age of thirty-nine years old.

Video Oral History Interview with Queen Brooks, Section A2012\_082\_001\_006, TRT: 6:18:01  
2012/04/03

Queen Brooks talks about her parents, Pomp Brooks and Hattie Steele Owens. She remembers her father's death from diabetes complications, and describes her mother's view of her success as an artist. Brooks describes how she would like to be remembered, and concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.