

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Walter C Jackson

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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>	Jackson, Walter C., 1940-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Walter C Jackson,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 16, 2016
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2016
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:48:56).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Sculptor Walter C Jackson (1940- ) served as an assistant professor of art and an artist in residence at several universities and museums, and his work is included in public collections at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Studio Museum in Harlem and the National Civil Rights Museum. Jackson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 16, 2016, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2016_058
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Sculptor Walter C Jackson was born on January 21, 1940 on his grandparents' farm near Durant, Mississippi. He moved with his parents and brother to Jackson, Mississippi at the age of six, where he attended Smith Robertson Elementary School and Lanier High School. Jackson earned his B.S. degree in art education from Jackson State University in 1963, and went on to earn his M.F.A. degree from the University of Tennessee in 1971.

From 1963 to 1968, Jackson headed the art department at Douglass High School in Memphis, Tennessee. He joined the faculty of the University of Tennessee in 1971, serving as an assistant professor of sculpture until 1980. Jackson then became an adjunct assistant professor at York College of The City University of New York for two years, beginning in 1984. After two years, Jackson left to join the Bronx Museum of Arts. In 1989, Jackson was named as an artist in residence at the Bronx River Art Center. He worked at the Convent of the Sacred Heart before returning to the Bronx River Art Center as its executive director from 1995 to 1998. He has presented exhibitions of his works at galleries and museums throughout the United States including: The Sculpture Center in New York City; P. S. 1 in New York City; Pittsfield Museum in Pittsfield, Massachusetts; Roswell Museum in Roswell, New Mexico, The African-American Museum in the Hempstead area of Long Island, New York and the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson, Mississippi. Jackson's works are included in the collections of the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Tennessee Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Anderson Museum of Contemporary Art, Roswell in New Mexico. Jackson's work reflects the melding of the folklore that was a major part of his experiences growing up in the rural south with the industrial and technological promise of the urban.

Jackson is the recipient of many grants and awards including: NEA Artist In Resident Grant, New York Foundation for the Arts, and a NY State Council for the Arts (CAPS) Grant. Jackson was selected for an artist-in-residence fellowship at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1982, and the artist-in-residence fellowship at the Roswell Museum in 1994. He also completed the workshop residency at the Museum of Holography in 1987.

Jackson lives and works in rural, central New York State.

Walter C Jackson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 16, 2016.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Walter C Jackson was conducted by Harriette Cole on December 16, 2016, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Sculptor Walter C Jackson (1940- ) served as an assistant professor of art and an artist in residence at several universities and museums, and his work is included in public collections at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Studio Museum in Harlem and the National

## 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:

Jackson, Walter C., 1940-

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
Jackson, Walter C., 1940---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:**

Sculptor

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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 Walter C Jackson, December 16, 2016. 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).

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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 Walter C Jackson, Section  
A2016\_058\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:41 2016/12/16

Walter C. Jackson was born on January 21, 1940 in Durant, Mississippi to Ruby Meeks Jackson and Willie Jackson. His paternal great-grandmother was born into slavery in Savannah, Georgia, and sold to a family in Pickens, Mississippi. Jackson's father was born in Durant, where he worked as a farmer, and later joined the U.S. military. Jackson's mother was born in Kosciusko, Mississippi, and raised by her grandparents, Emma Roberts and Mose Roberts. She met Jackson's father sometime in the early 1940s, and the two married and started their family before his father left for World War II in 1942. While his father was overseas, Jackson lived with his mother and maternal great-grandparents on their farm in Kosciusko. In 1945, his father returned from the war, and the family settled in Jackson, Mississippi. Jackson attended Smith Robertson School, which was the first public school building for African American children in Jackson. He recalls his family's ritual of killing hogs in the fall.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter C Jackson, Section  
A2016\_058\_001\_002, TRT: 2:30:24 2016/12/16

Walter C. Jackson spent his early years on the family farm

in Kosciusko, Mississippi. There, he became enchanted by his uncle's African-inspired folktales, and helped him with creative projects. In 1945, his family moved to Jackson, Mississippi, where he attended Smith Robertson School. Jackson continued to hone his artistic talents by sketching and painting in his free time. At Lanier Junior Senior High School in Jackson, he played the trombone, but was forced to stop as he recovered from a serious case of pneumonia. He then turned his focus to art, and began painting landscapes using watercolors and oils. Jackson's father, Willie Jackson, helped him sell his paintings to his coworkers for ten dollars apiece. After graduating, he was awarded a full scholarship to attend Jackson State College in Jackson, Mississippi, where he majored in art education. He also took a sculpting design class, and he created his first wood sculpture. Jackson also remembers the death of Medgar Evers who lived nearby.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter C Jackson, Section  
A2016\_058\_001\_003, TRT: 3:30:06 2016/12/16

Walter C. Jackson attended Jackson State College in Jackson, Mississippi, where he became active in the Civil Rights Movement. He worked with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and canvassed the African American communities to register voters. Jackson graduated in 1963, and moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where he was hired as the head of the art department at the segregated Douglass High School. In 1966, the school was desegregated, and many of the top performing students and teachers were bussed to other schools. After the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, Jackson facilitated discussions on important social issues during his student art club meetings. Then, Jackson decided to take a leave of absence to apply to graduate school at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee. He was conditionally admitted into the Master's of Fine Arts program, where he spent the year building his sculpture portfolio and taking introductory courses.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter C Jackson, Section  
A2016\_058\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:31 2016/12/16

Walter C. Jackson joined the sculpture department as a

graduate student at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee. He was also awarded a teaching assistantship, and began designing his own sculpture classes that incorporated two and three dimensional elements. During this period, Jackson developed his technique and style as a sculptor, using totemic and abstract motifs. He drew inspiration from African sculptures, particularly the work of the Dogon people from central Mali. After graduating with a Master's of Fine Arts degree, he accepted an artist in residence position at the Studio Museum in Harlem in New York City, where he primarily worked on drawings and conceptual ideas of sculptures. In 1984, he became an adjunct professor at York College in Jamaica, New York, while also teaching at Convent of the Sacred Heart. He was later hired to instruct workshops at the Bronx Museum of the Arts in New York City. Additionally, Jackson's work was featured at the Museum of Holography.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter C Jackson, Section  
A2016\_058\_001\_005, TRT: 5:25:44 2016/12/16

Walter C. Jackson was commissioned by the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee for an outdoor installation in 1986. To create the piece, Jackson used aluminum that was donated from the local Alcoa Corporation factory in Maryville, Tennessee. In 1988, his work was exhibited at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City. After leaving his residency at the Studio Museum in Harlem, he visited southern Spain in 1988 to explore the Moorish influence in the architecture there. When he returned to New York City, he rented studio space in several locations from Soho to the Bronx. In the mid-1990s, he developed more political pieces like the series 'Illusion of Containment: Linked,' which criticized the criminal justice system in New York City. Jackson also became active in protests against the U.S. involvement in Cuba, and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Jackson recalls working with fellow artist Elizabeth Catlett, and talks about the evolution of his work.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter C Jackson, Section  
A2016\_058\_001\_006, TRT: 6:17:33 2016/12/16

Walter C. Jackson worked on his 'Red, White, Black and Blue' series from 2000 to 2005 during the presidency of George Walker Bush and the Iraq War. The series was a critique on the country's political turmoil and the resurgence of nationalism and patriotism following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The installations included videos of images throughout American history, from slavery and the Reconstruction era through the bombings in Iraq. Jackson also participated in the exhibition 'The Politics of Racism,' which showcased some of his 'Red, White, Black and Blue' works. His Dogon tapestry series featured more colors than his traditional artwork, and served as a reflection of his connection with the Dogon culture. Jackson talks about his focus on enjoying the creative process as opposed to actively selling his work. He concludes this part of the interview by sharing his advice to young artists, and reflecting upon the legacy of his work.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter C Jackson, Section  
A2016\_058\_001\_007, TRT: 7:07:57 2016/12/16

Walter C. Jackson narrates his photographs.