

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reggie Wells

PERSON

Wells, Reggie

Alternative Names: Reggie Wells;

Life Dates: December 2, 1947-

Place of Birth: Baltimore, Maryland, USA

Residence: Baltimore, Maryland

Occupations: Makeup Artist

Biographical Note

Makeup artist Reggie Wells was born on December 2, 1947 in Baltimore, Maryland to John and Ada Wells. Wells graduated from City College High School in 1965, and went on to attend the Maryland Institute College of Art, where he received his B.F.A. degree in 1971 and his M.A. degree in art education in 1975.

Wells began teaching art in the Baltimore Public School system in 1968. In 1976, he moved to New York City, where he worked at department store makeup counters for several years. Wells entered the entertainment industry as a makeup artist for a Jordache jeans advertising campaign. Over the course of his career, Wells worked with Essence magazine and O Magazine as well as Glamour Magazine, Time, Life, Harper's Bazaar, and Mademoiselle. He also worked with a number of celebrities, including Whitney Houston, Beyoncé, Halle Berry, Natalie Cole, Aretha Franklin, Leontyne Price, Joan Rivers, and former first lady Michelle Obama. He often created his own makeup to accommodate the darker skin tones of his clients. In 1990, Wells became Oprah Winfrey's full-time personal makeup artist after working together during an Essence photo shoot. He traveled internationally with Winfrey to events in South Africa, Australia, and the Middle East, and hosted a segment on The Oprah Winfrey Show called "Make-Up 101." Wells also collaborated with lighting technicians on The Oprah Winfrey Show to develop techniques for highlighting darker skin on camera. In 2000, Wells published Face Painting: African American Beauty Techniques from an Emmy Award Winning Makeup Artist. In 2011, he became the international creative director for Hissyfit, an Australian cosmetics company. Wells volunteered in senior citizen communities in Baltimore, giving residents makeovers and organizing photo shoots. He also traveled to makeup shows across the country, teaching master classes and day of beauty Seminars.

Wells won a day time Emmy award for outstanding makeup for his work on The Oprah Winfrey Show in 1995, and was nominated in 2003, 2004, and 2005. Wells was a board member and trustee for the Maryland Institute College of Art from 2010 to 2016.

Reggie Wells was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on March 30, 2018.

Related Entries

Baltimore City College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Maryland Institute College of Art [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.F.A.

Maryland Institute College of Art [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

[EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Freelance Makeup Artist

Baltimore City Public Schools [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1968 to 1975]

Teacher

Maryland Institute College of Art [MEMBEROF]
[from 2010 to 2016]

Board and Trustee Member