

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Naomi Beckwith

PERSON

Beckwith, Naomi

Alternative Names: Naomi Beckwith;

Life Dates: March 9, 1976-

Place of Birth: Chicago, Illinois, USA

Work: New York, NY

Occupations: Art Curator;

Biographical Note

Art curator Naomi Beckwith was born on March 9, 1976 in Chicago, Illinois where she grew up in the Hyde Park neighborhood. She graduated from Lincoln Park High School in 1994. She attended Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois and graduated from there in 1998 with her B.A. degree in history and African American studies. Beckwith then graduated with distinction from the Courtauld Institute of Art in London with her M.A. degree in 1999.

From 1999 to 2000, Beckwith was awarded one of the six critical studies fellowship positions at the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in New York. She then worked at the Brooklyn Academy of Music as an art project coordinator from 2000 to 2005. Beckwith was selected as the 2005-2006 Whitney Lauder curatorial fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Institute of Contemporary Art. In 2007, Beckwith joined the Studio Museum in Harlem as an associate curator, where she curated one of her first major exhibits, "30 Seconds Off an Inch," under the leadership of museum director and chief curator, Thelma Golden. In 2011, she returned to Chicago, Illinois when she was hired as an associate curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art. In 2017, she was awarded both the Visionary Initiatives in Art Fund Curatorial Fellowship and the Center for Curatorial Leadership Fellowship. Beckwith was promoted to Manilow Senior Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in 2018. She has worked with artists from all over the world to produce both solo and collaborative works at the museum. She also served as the curatorial advisor of a staff of three, for the featured exhibition at the biennial celebration of a nonprofit contemporary arts organization called SITElines, in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 2018. The event featured twenty-three artists and the highest number of commissioned works presented in SITE's history.

Beckwith resides in Chicago, and serves on the boards of the Andy Warhol Foundation

for the Visual Arts, Art Table, and the Laundromat Project in New York, an organization that supports artists and their neighbors to serve as agents of change in their communities. Her exhibitions and writings have been featured in the New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, and Ebony magazine, where she also was listed as a Top 100 Leader in Arts and Letters.

Naomi Beckwith was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 8, 2019.

Related Entries

University of London [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.A.

Northwestern University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Lincoln Park High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Diploma; Baccalaureate

Ogden Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

William H. Ray Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Beasley Academic Center [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Internet Cool Music Guide [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 200003 to 200106]

Editor

Brooklyn Academy of Music [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 200210 to 200506]

BAM Art Coordinator

Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 200509 to 200704]

Whitney Lauder Fellow

Studio Museum of Harlem [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 200704 to 201104]

Associate Curator

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 201105 to ?]

Senior Curator

Warhol Foundation [MEMBEROF]

[from 2018 to ?]

Trustee

Laundromat Project [MEMBEROF]

[from 2009 to ?]

Trustee

Smithsonian Archives of American Art [MEMBEROF]

[from 2019 to ?]

Advisor

Chicago Park District [MEMBEROF]

[from 2012 to ?]

Advisor