

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Evangeline Montgomery

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Montgomery, Evangeline J.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Evangeline Montgomery,
Dates:	December 13, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:00:59).
Abstract:	Printmaker and curator Evangeline Montgomery (1930 -) began her career as an arts administrator in San Francisco, California and since then, has worked tirelessly to create opportunities to showcase African American artists. Montgomery was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 13, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_258
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Curator and printmaker Evangeline "EJ" Montgomery was born on May 2, 1930, in New York. Her mother, Carmelite Thompson, was a homemaker and her father, Oliver Thompson was a Baptist minister. She discovered her artistic talents when she received her first oil painting set at the age of fourteen. After her parents separated, Montgomery and her mother moved to Harlem in New York, New York. In 1951, Montgomery earned her high school diploma from Seward Park High School in lower Manhattan, where she was a cheerleader, a member of the swim and basketball teams and a member of student government.

From 1951 until 1954, she worked at statuary, painting the faces on dolls and religious statues. In 1955, Montgomery moved to Los Angeles with her husband and worked for Thomas Usher, an African American jewelry designer. She received her B.F.A. degree from the California College of Arts and Crafts (now California College of the Arts) in 1969 and she worked as an independent curator to museums, university galleries and art centers where she organized exhibits. In 1971, she served as the curator for the Rainbow Sign Gallery in Berkeley, California before becoming an exhibition specialist for the American Association for State and Local History in Nashville, Tennessee and coordinating eight national workshops on "Interpreting the Humanities through Museum Exhibits." She also organized national exhibit workshops for the Association of African American Museums. In 1983, Montgomery began her career with the United States State Department as a program development officer for the Arts America Program, specializing in American exhibitions touring abroad. In this capacity, she developed and implemented successful American fine art programs in the United States and throughout the world. In her own art career, Montgomery is noted for her metal work, especially her metal ancestral boxes which were inspired by the Chinese incense boxes her mother used for praying. Her colorful lithographs have also garnered her attention, being prominently displayed in exhibitions funded by the United States government.

In 1997, she was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease which has made it difficult for Montgomery to work with metal. However, she has not let the diagnosis limit her artistic vision, instead shifting her focus to printmaking,

lithographs, and the digital arts. In 2005, Blacks In Government (BIG) began the Evangeline J. Montgomery Scholarship Program, to encourage and fund artists who are interested in working in government to spread the influence of the arts.

Evangeline "EJ" Montgomery was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 13, 2004.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Evangeline Montgomery was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on December 13, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Printmaker and curator Evangeline Montgomery (1930 -) began her career as an arts administrator in San Francisco, California and since then, has worked tirelessly to create opportunities to showcase African American artists.

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®.

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:

Montgomery, Evangeline J.

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Montgomery, Evangeline J.--Interviews

African American artists--Interviews.

African American arts administrators--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Printmaker

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 Evangeline Montgomery, December 13, 2004. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 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 Evangeline Montgomery, Section A2004_258_001_001, TRT: 0:30:26 ?

Evangeline Montgomery was born on May 2, 1933 in New York, New York and was adopted by her parents in Boston, Massachusetts when she was one year old. Her adoptive mother, Carmelite Thompson, was born in Washington, D.C. where she experienced segregated schooling before moving to Newark, New Jersey. Kind and religious, she was a housewife until she divorced and began working in an organizational home. Montgomery's adoptive father, Oliver Thompson, was a Baptist minister and was born in Canada. Due to his ministerial work the family moved between churches in Massachusetts, Ohio and Rhode Island, often in towns where few African Americans lived. Montgomery once met Mary McLeod Bethune when Ms. Bethune stayed at their home in Newton, Massachusetts. When Carmelite and Oliver Thompson divorced, Montgomery and her mother moved to Harlem where they lived with her mother's older daughter. Montgomery developed an interest in art in junior high school; her mother bought her an oil set with which she painted landscapes.

African American families.

African American children.

African American Baptists.

African American children.

Bethune, Mary McLeod, 1875-1955.

Harlem (New York, N.Y.).

Video Oral History Interview with Evangeline Montgomery, Section A2004_258_001_002, TRT: 0:31:12 ?

Evangeline Montgomery attended Seward Park High School in New York, New York where she was active in politics, cheerleading and basketball. She also studied drawing, painting and textile printing. After graduating in 1951, she painted dolls' faces to earn money before she and her mother moved to Massachusetts where she painted religious statuary. She married in Boston in 1952 then relocated to Los Angeles, California where she began enameling and entered Los Angeles City College before transferring to California State University at Los Angeles. There, she honed her skills in metal work; she also made jewelry and enamel plaques, although she was dissuaded from art instruction. She traveled to Nigeria with her husband where she encountered traditional art forms. She completed her B.F.A. at California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland in 1969 and, during the black studies movement, organized art and historical exhibitions, including one featuring Sargent Claude Johnson's life and art.

High school student activities.

African American artists--California--Los Angeles.

African Americans--Art--Study and teaching.

Seward Park High School.

Arts, Nigerian.

Video Oral History Interview with Evangeline Montgomery, Section A2004_258_001_003, TRT: 0:30:29 ?

Evangeline Montgomery worked as an ethnic art consultant for the Oakland

Museum of California in Oakland, California in the late 1960s. In 1970, she began curating exhibits for the Rainbow Sign Gallery, a private African American cultural center in Berkeley. After seven years, she moved to Nashville, Tennessee where she worked for the American Association for State and Local History teaching workshops on curating humanities-oriented exhibitions to museum administrators. Inspired by her mother, Montgomery made ancestral boxes, which she constructed from wax then cast in metal using traditional methods. In 1980, she moved to Washington, D.C. where she worked on a Howard University television station for a year before transitioning to the United States Information Agency as a program development officer. She organized multiple international exhibitions featuring artists such as HistoryMaker Sam Gilliam. She developed skills in lithography and employs mixed mediums in her artwork, which is primarily abstract.

African American art museum curators.

African American art--California--San Francisco.

American Association for State and Local History.

African American art--Metal-work.

Saar, Betye.

Gilliam, Sam, 1933-.

DeCarava, Roy.

Howard University Television.

Video Oral History Interview with Evangeline Montgomery, Section A2004_258_001_004, TRT: 0:28:52 ?

Evangeline Montgomery was art commissioner in San Francisco, California in 1976 whereby she led an advisory art committee. She describes challenges she encounters as an artist with Parkinson's disease, including difficulties in working with metal. She belongs to Blacks in Government (BIG), a national organization, in addition to her work for the U.S. State Department. In collaboration with BIG, she created a scholarship fund, the Evangeline J. Montgomery Scholarship Fund, for visual artists going into the government field; the scholarship is funded by art sales. Montgomery talks about opportunities for African American artists and lists inspirational artists including HistoryMaker Sam Gilliam, Richard Mayhew, Sargent Claude Johnson and Henry Moore. She reflects upon her experiences as an artist and art administrator, describes her hopes for the African American community and for a book art installation. She reflects upon her life and legacy and considers important attributes needed to succeed as an artist.

African American printmakers--Washington (D.C.).

Blacks in Government (U.S.).

African American artists--Vocational guidance.

African American artists--Digital art.

Johnson, Sargent, 1888-1967.

Moore, Henry, 1898-1986.

Gilliam, Sam, 1933-.

Mayhew, Richard, 1934-.

Prints--Technique.

African American artists--Lithography.

African Americans--Conduct of life.