

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jon Onye Lockard

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Lockard, Jon
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jon Onye Lockard,
Dates:	January 19, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:19:03).
Abstract:	Muralist, art professor, and painter Jon Onye Lockard (1932 - 2015) taught life drawing, portrait painting, and the art and culture of African Americans for over forty years at the University of Michigan and at Washtenaw Community College. Lockard's creative works include illustrations and murals. Lockard was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 19, 2005, in Detroit, Michigan. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_021
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Painter, educator, and historian, Jon Onye Lockard, was born January 25, 1932, on Detroit's east side; his mother, Lillian Jones, came from Port Arthur, Mississippi, and his father, Cecil E. Lockard, from Marianna, Arkansas. Lockard grew up around Franklin's Settlement House with Milt Jackson, Kenny Burrell, and Oscar Graves; he attended Norville and Smith Elementary Schools and Barbour Intermediate School. At age twelve, Lockard worked for the Overton Sign Company; he later won a job with Walker and Company, but was later rejected because of his race. Lockard graduated from Eastern High School in 1948; he then took classes at Meinzingers School of Art and worked for the Palmer Paint Company. Lockard graduated from Wayne State University in 1955 and pursued further study at the University of Toronto.

Working as a traveling portraitist in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Lockard painted portraits at the Seattle World's Fair in 1962. In Houston, Lockard met Texas Southern University's John Biggers. In 1967, Lockard attended Jeff Donaldson's CONFABA at Northwestern University and witnessed the founding of the AFRICOBRA group. During this period, Lockard added the name, "Onye" which is from "Onye Eje" or Ibo language for "artistic traveler." In 1969, Lockard attended the National Conference of Artists (NCA) meeting in Chicago. As an illustrator, Lockard contributed to independent black publishing efforts. Lockard's drawing of angry youth, entitled *What are we going to tell them?* (1967) appeared on the cover of I.P.E.'s Black Books Bulletin. Known for his rich use of color and powerful use of form, Lockard's murals find a natural home on college campuses; his piece, *Continuum*, spans Wayne State University's Manoogian Center, and his other murals are located at Central State University, the University of Michigan, and Detroit's Dr. Charles Wright Museum of African American History. Lockard's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally for several decades. Robin Dunitz featured Lockard's mural work in *Walls of Pride*.

Lockard taught life drawing, portrait painting, and the art and culture of African Americans for over forty years,

gaining popularity as an instructor at the University of Michigan and at Washtenaw Community College. Lockard also served as president of the NCA, and associate director of The Society for the Study of African Culture and Aesthetics. Lockard co-produced and hosted Barden Cable's *Sankofa* television program. Lockard and his wife, Leslie, raised three children.

Lockard passed away on March 25, 2015.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jon Onye Lockard was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 19, 2005, in Detroit, Michigan, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Muralist, art professor, and painter Jon Onye Lockard (1932 - 2015) taught life drawing, portrait painting, and the art and culture of African Americans for over forty years at the University of Michigan and at Washtenaw Community College. Lockard's creative works include illustrations and murals.

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:

Lockard, Jon

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lockard, Jon--Interviews

African American artists as teachers--Michigan--Ann Arbor--Interviews

African American artists--Michigan--Interviews

University of Michigan--Faculty--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Muralist

Painter

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 Jon Onye Lockard, January 19, 2005. 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 Jon Onye Lockard, Section A2005_021_001_001, TRT: 0:29:44
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Jon Onye Lockard was born on January 25, 1932 in Detroit, Michigan. The name Onye was given to him by the Mbanefo family in Nigeria; it means artistic traveler. His mother, Lillian Jones, was born in Port Arthur, Mississippi and raised in Dermott, Arkansas until she relocated to Detroit as a teenager. Lockard's mother was one of twelve children. Many of his maternal aunts and uncles went to college and had their own businesses, including a travel agency, car repair shop and construction company. His mother attended, but did not graduate from, Hampton Institute in Virginia. She worked at Winkleman's clothing store in Detroit. His father, Cecil E. Lockard, was born in Marianna, Arkansas. His family moved to Detroit, and he worked at Ford Motor Company and for the Detroit Department of Street Railways driving street cars and buses. Lockard's father was also an amateur photographer. While growing up in Detroit, Lockard would regularly visit his mother's brother who owned a car shop and would give him a quarter.

African American artists as teachers--Michigan--Ann Arbor--Interviews.

African American artists--Michigan--Interviews.

University of Michigan--Faculty--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Jon Onye Lockard, Section A2005_021_001_002, TRT: 0:29:39
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Jon Onye Lockard grew up in a neighborhood called "Black Bottom" in Detroit, Michigan, which was comprised of African Americans, recent European immigrants, Syrians and southern whites. It was an impoverished neighborhood, but it had a strong sense of community. Lockard often saw Italian families hunting and grilling sparrows and overheard family arguments, but there was little violence. He frequented The Franklin-Wright Settlement, a community center in Detroit that was formative for many future local artists, including Kenny Burrell. After attending Norvell Elementary and Barbour Intermediate School, Lockard entered Eastern High School. As a teenager, he began an apprenticeship at a local sign company where he learned about sign painting and how to handle the risks the job entailed for African Americans who were kept out of segregated sign painters' unions and often attacked by their members. He also won an advertising contest and the opportunity to intern with the advertising agency Walker & Company.

Video Oral History Interview with Jon Onye Lockard, Section A2005_021_001_003, TRT: 0:29:10
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Jon Onye Lockard was on the basketball team, the jazz band and glee club at Eastern High School in Detroit, Michigan. Although he won a contest to intern at Walker & Company, when he appeared at the advertising agency for his interview, he was turned away. He was told by a high school counselor that he was not college material and should work at a factory instead. Lockard used this discouragement as motivation to pursue college, and later sent copies of his

diplomas to the counselor. Lockard entered Wayne University in Detroit. While there, he married and his first child was born, so he left school to provide for his family by working in a factory. When he smashed his finger in a machine, he returned and completed his degree at Wayne, then graduated from Meinzinger Foundation Art School. He worked at Palmer Paint Company and travelled around the country as a working artist, becoming close friends with HistoryMaker Bing Davis and joining the National Conference of Artists.

Video Oral History Interview with Jon Onye Lockard, Section A2005_021_001_004, TRT: 0:29:37
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Jon Onye Lockard's first print was 'Black Messiah,' inspired by Shrine of the Black Madonna in Detroit, Michigan. The print appeared in Black World, Ebony and was reproduced by Judson Press. One of his best-known pieces, 'What Are You Going to Tell Them,' was inspired by a group of youths he spoke with in the aftermath of the Detroit riots in 1967. Lockard attended the National Conference of Artists in Chicago Illinois in 1969. He joined the organization, which was organized by his friend HistoryMaker Margaret Burroughs, and eventually served as president. With the National Conference of Artists, he travelled to South America and Senegal. His travels taught him how color is influenced by geography and how societies develop different aesthetics based partly on cultural perceptions of color. Lockard also taught African American studies at Washtenaw Community College and University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He shares the message he aimed to convey in his piece, 'Ahm Gonna Raise This One Myself.'

Video Oral History Interview with Jon Onye Lockard, Section A2005_021_001_005, TRT: 0:20:53
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Jon Onye Lockard protested stereotypical portrayals of African Americans in the 1960s with his piece 'No More.' The image featured an angry and proud Aunt Jemima with a bandana representing the Pan-African flag to undermine the dehumanizing image of her that had prevailed in commercial images. The piece was featured in multiple books, including Michael D. Harris's 'Colored Pictures: Race and Visual Representation.' Lockard attended FESTAC '77, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, in Lagos, Nigeria. He was deeply affected by the attendees' pride in their countries. Lockard lists murals he has created that he considers his favorites, including 'Take Back Your Mind' at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Lockard talks about his family. He describes his hopes for the African American community and how he would like to be remembered, and reflects upon his legacy and life.