

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Patti Carpenter

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Carpenter, Patti, 1955-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Patti Carpenter,
Dates:	January 10, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:45:53).
Abstract:	Housewares designer and fashion designer Patti Carpenter (1955 -) was the founder of Continuum Home Inc., and Carpenter & Company home furnishing companies. Carpenter also worked for companies and designers such as Bill Blass, Oscar De La Renta, Gloria Vanderbilt, Adrienne Vittadini, The Limited Corporation, Timberland, and Ralph Lauren. Carpenter was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 10, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_005
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Fashion and housewares designer Patti Yvonne Carpenter was born on May 2, 1955 in Washington, D.C. to Vivian and Horace Carpenter. She graduated with honors from McKinley Technical Senior High School in 1973. She then continued her education at Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, receiving her B.A. degree in fashion design and fashion illustration in 1975 and 1976, respectively.

In the fashion industry, Carpenter worked with Scott Barrie, Bill Blass, Oscar De La Renta, Gloria Vanderbilt, Adrienne Vittadini, Cynthia Rowley, Peter Max, The Limited Corporation, Timberland, and Ralph Lauren.

Carpenter became disillusioned with the garment industry after twenty-five years, and turned her interests to home furnishings. She is a principal and creative director of Continuum Home, Inc. and Carpenter & Company. As a design, color and trend consultant and merchandiser, Carpenter works with clients such as the Worth Collection, the Exploris Museum, and Agexpront of Guatemala country originals.

Carpenter's product line, the Phillips Collection, can be found in numerous retailers including Donna Karen, Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdale's, J.C. Penney, and Macy's.

Through her extensive work with Aid for Artisans, she has worked with the International Executive Service Corps and was awarded the Presidents Volunteer Service Award by President George W. Bush in 2005. Carpenter sits on the executive board of the High School of Fashion Industries and is a guest lecturer for the Fashion Institute of Technology, the Parson School of Design and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Carpenter currently lives in New York City.

Carpenter was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 10, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Patti Carpenter was conducted by Denise Gines on January 10, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Housewares designer and fashion designer Patti Carpenter (1955 -) was the founder of Continuum Home Inc., and Carpenter & Company home furnishing companies. Carpenter also worked for companies and designers such as Bill Blass, Oscar De La Renta, Gloria Vanderbilt, Adrienne Vittadini, The Limited Corporation, Timberland, and Ralph Lauren.

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:

Carpenter, Patti, 1955-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Carpenter, Patti, 1955- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Housewares Designer

Fashion Designer

HistoryMakers® Category:

StyleMakers

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 Patti Carpenter, January 10, 2007. 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 Patti Carpenter, Section A2007_005_001_001, TRT: 0:30:19 ?
Patti Carpenter was born on May 2, 1955 in Washington, D.C. to Vivian Tyler

Carpenter and Horace Carpenter. Her paternal great-grandfather, John Henry Jentons, was a blacksmith in Madison, Virginia. Her father was born there in 1934, and raised by his aunt and sister in the Northeast. Carpenter's mother was born in 1932, and raised by her grandparents. Her parents met while her mother was visiting Washington, D.C. at thirteen years old, and married a number of years later. Carpenter was influenced by her paternal great-aunt, as well as her maternal aunts, whom she visited in Suffolk, Virginia during the summers. Her mother worked in the office of the surgeon general, C. Everett Koop, and her father was a graphic artist for the National Institutes of Health in Washington, D.C., where Carpenter attended Jessie LaSalle Elementary School. Carpenter remembers her family's first apartment; playing Peter Rabbit in nursery school; and creating a model of a human tongue with her father for a science project.

Video Oral History Interview with Patti Carpenter, Section A2007_005_001_002, TRT: 0:29:27 ?

Patti Carpenter attended Jessie LaSalle Elementary School in Washington, D.C. Carpenter remembers seeing the Washington Ballet; parents calling their children home at the end of the day; riding her bicycle; exploring the creek behind her house; and visiting downtown Washington, D.C. during the riots of the 1960s. Her father was politically active, attending Pan-African conferences throughout the country, and Carpenter accompanied him to hear Dick Gregory speak. She visited the tent city that formed for the March on Washington, and describes the sense of pride she felt there. Carpenter went on to Bertie Backus Junior High School and McKinley Technical High School, where she founded an anti-drug organization, Dope Out of McKinley. In school, Carpenter studied art; was a cheerleader for the school's basketball team; and participated in the Workshops for Careers in the Arts. She remembers her teachers, including Antonin Svelah, and the impact they had on her education and career as a designer.

Video Oral History Interview with Patti Carpenter, Section A2007_005_001_003, TRT: 0:29:41 ?

Patti Carpenter wanted to study art and fashion in college, but also considered studying theater, having performed throughout Washington, D.C. with the Workshops for Careers in the Arts. While visiting a friend in New York City, Carpenter learned about the Fashion Institute of Technology and decided to apply. She was accepted, and studied fashion design and illustration. Carpenter remembers her admissions interview, and the other college campuses she visited. After graduating, Carpenter made patterns for Vogue and Butterick, then worked for Jonathan Atkins and Scott Barrie. She describes her work; their design clients; and visiting the Studio 54 nightclub with Barrie. After two years, Carpenter was hired by Bill Blass and Oscar de la Renta to create men's and women's clothing. She went on to design knitwear for Gloria Vanderbilt, working in Hong Kong for weeks at a time. She remembers her trips, and spending Thanksgiving with her fellow designers at the Sheraton Hong Kong Hotel and Towers.

Video Oral History Interview with Patti Carpenter, Section A2007_005_001_004, TRT: 0:29:33 ?

Patti Carpenter faced racial discrimination in the fashion industry, which she found to be dominated by Jewish women. As an outsider, Carpenter strived to have more working experience, travel and knowledge of trends than her competition. Carpenter left Gloria Vanderbilt in 1984 to work for Adrienne Vittadini, where she designed knitwear for the label's sports collection. Carpenter continued to travel, and worked in Hong Kong throughout the year. After Vittadini punished her for a mistake beyond Carpenter's control, she left to create her own line, Apparenza, with the Jonathan Logan company, where she used the works of Claude Monet, Paul Gauguin and other French impressionist

painters as inspiration for her designs. Carpenter also worked with pop artist Peter Max to create clothing and other licensed apparel that incorporated his artwork. Carpenter was married in 1988, and wanted to raise her family outside New York City, so she moved to Andover, Massachusetts to work for The Limited Inc.

Video Oral History Interview with Patti Carpenter, Section A2007_005_001_005, TRT: 0:31:09 ?

Patti Carpenter moved to Andover, Massachusetts to work for The Limited Inc.'s Henri Bendel store, but was assigned to Abercrombie and Fitch instead. She eventually joined Henri Bendel, but left due to issues with her husband and dissatisfaction with her supervisors. Carpenter remembers interviewing with Timberland Boot Company, where she worked for three years, first as the women's design director, and then as the vice president of women's design and merchandising. When The New York Times accused the company of racism, she wrote a letter to the editor in disagreement. However, she experienced discrimination in Andover, a small New England town with little diversity. She was often confused with the only other African American woman in town, and received comments about her hair. After her divorce, Carpenter left Timberland Boot Company to found a consulting firm, Continuum Home Incorporated, and a design company, Carpenter and Company, which worked in South America and Africa with local tradesmen.

Video Oral History Interview with Patti Carpenter, Section A2007_005_001_006, TRT: 0:15:44 ?

Patti Carpenter's fashion and home goods business, Carpenter and Company, was largely self-funded when she began organizing local women in South America to create products for sale in American outlets. She describes organizations like the South African International Business Linkages, which fund companies that support women and Africans. Carpenter remembers the attacks of September 11th, 2001, and the experiences of her friends on that day. She also shares her advice for future generations. Carpenter reflects upon her life, and the travel destinations she has yet to visit. Carpenter concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.