

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Bethann Hardison

PERSON

Hardison, Bethann, 1942-

Alternative Names: Bethann Hardison;

Life Dates: September 30, 1942-

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Work: New York, NY

Occupations: Fashion Consultant

Biographical Note

Fashion activist and model Bethann Hardison was born in Brooklyn, New York. After graduating from George W. Wingate High School, Hardison attended the New York University Art School and the Fashion Institute of Technology. During the 1960s, Hardison worked in the garment district of New York City as saleswoman. In 1967, she was discovered by African American designer Willi Smith and began working for Smith as a fitting model, soon crossing over to the runway and print industries. Along with Beverly Johnson, Iman, and Pat Cleveland; Hardison broke barriers in the 1970s appearing in Allure, Harper's Bazaar, and Vogue. In 1973, she was featured in the international Versailles fashion face off, a historical moment in which France's best designers competed against the top American designers of the time. Hardison then joined Click, a startup modeling agency, in 1980, as a booking agent where she produced fashion shows, handled public relations for design houses, and became a contributing editor at several magazines. Concerned with the politics of the fashion industry, Hardison changed her focus from modeling to activism in 1981.

Formed in 1984, the Bethann Management Agency focused on diversifying the fashion industry. Also, along with former model and friend Iman, Hardison co-founded the Black Girls Coalition in 1988 to provide advocacy and support to African American models. In 1996, Hardison turned her attention towards television where she co-executive produced television sitcoms "Between Brothers" and "Livin Large." Hardison was also named Vogue Italia editor at large in 2010.

Hardison's contributions in modeling and advocacy have earned her several awards throughout her career. In April of 1999, she was honored with the First Annual Vibe Style Lifetime Achievement Award. Later that year, the Magic Johnson Foundation presented Hardison with a Distinguished Service Award. The Black Alumni of the Pratt

Institute honored Hardison with a 2003 Lifetime Achievement award. In 2012, she received a Woman of Power Legacy Award from Black Enterprise, and became a Frederick Douglass award recipient in 2013, for her work in promoting diversity in fashion.

Bethann Hardison was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 15, 2013.

Related Entries

Fashion Institute of Technology [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

New York University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

George W. Wingate High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

P.S. 35 Stephen Decatur School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

P.S. 44 Marcus Garvey Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Ruth Manchester, Ltd. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1970 to ?]

Assistant to Owner & Showroom Sales

Cabot Button, Co. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1994 to ?]

Assistant

Mary Gutmacher [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1967 to 1968]

Assistant

Stephen Burrows, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1972 to 1976]

Showroom Model/Design Studio Director

Concorde Fashions Corp. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1978 to 1980]

Head of Showroom & Swimsuit Designer

Click Model Management [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1980 to 1984]

Agent

Bethann Management Co., Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1964 to ?]

President & Owner

Gordon Parks Foundation [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Advisory Board Member

Black Alumni of Pratt [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Advisory Board Member

Housing Works [MEMBEROF]

[from 1990 to 1996]

Board of Directors

Fashion Outreach [MEMBEROF]

[from 1993 to ?]

Board of Directors

New York Film Festival [MEMBEROF]

[from 1998 to 2011]

Board of Directors

Tribeca Film Institute/TAA [MEMBEROF]

[from 2003 to ?]

Year Up [MEMBEROF]

[from 2009 to ?]

Board of Directors