

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Michael A. Cummings

PERSON

Cummings, Michael, 1945-

Alternative Names: Michael A. Cummings;

Life Dates: November 28, 1945-

Place of Birth: Los Angeles, California, USA

Residence: New York, NY

Occupations: Quilter

Biographical Note

Visual artist Michael A. Cummings was born on November 28, 1945 in Los Angeles, California to Arthur Cummings and Dorothy Dent. Cummings graduated from John C. Fremont Senior High School in Los Angeles in 1963. While Cummings attended Los Angeles City College for business administration from 1963 to 1966, and Woodbury College for design from 1968 to 1969, he earned his B.A. degree in art history from SUNY-Empire State College in 1979. Before graduating, Cummings enrolled in the New School for Social Research in 1973, completing the Workshop in African Arts and Crafts program at The American Museum of Natural History in 1976.

Cummings began his career in 1972 as a technical director for the New York Department of Cultural Affairs. In his spare time, he worked as a collage artist and painter. He discovered his passion for quilting after creating a cloth banner for an exhibition in 1973. He taught himself to quilt by studying the works of local quilters and how-to quilt books. In 1974, Cummings became the purchasing manager assistant for The American Museum of Natural History. He served as an arts administration assistant for The Children's Art Carnival in 1976; and that same year, held his first solo exhibition at the Studio Museum of Harlem. Cummings was the artist-in-residence for the New York Foundation for the Arts from 1977 to 1979, and joined the New York State Council on the Arts as an arts program analyst in 1980, working in contract administration. Cummings' solo exhibitions showed at the Francine Seders Gallery (1992), the Akron Art Museum (1993), Bates College (1998), Nobis Gallery (2007), the International Quilt Festival in Japan (2011), and the Artquilt Gallery (2014).

Cummings quilt work, which adheres to the narrative, story-telling tradition, has been commissioned by the American Embassy Art program, the City of Knoxville, Tennessee, the New York Department of Cultural Affairs, Home Box Office (HBO),

The White House, and the House of Seagram, among others. His work was also included in the public collections at the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Art and Design, the California African American Museum, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C., and in the private collections of stars like George C. Wolfe, Whoopi Goldberg, and Alonzo and Tracy Mourning.

Cummings received the 2001 Louis Comfort Tiffany Biennial Award, the 2001 Excellence in Design Award from the City of New York City Art Commission, and the 2001 Children's Book of Distinction award from the Riverbank Review. He was interviewed for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art in 2012, and by the ART CART: SAVING THE LEGACY project at The Research Center for Arts and Culture, an affiliate of The Actor's Fund, in 2013.

Michael A. Cummings was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 9, 2016.

Related Entries

Hooper Avenue Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Samuel Gompers Middle School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

John C. Fremont High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Los Angeles City College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

2 years of credits

Art Students League of New York [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

State University of New York at Albany [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Thomas Jefferson High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

99th Street Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Children's Art Carnival [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1973 to 1976]

Art Instructor

The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, produced by Miriam Colon [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1974 to 1974]

Technical Director

NYC Dept. of Cultural Affairs [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1977 to 1980]

Technical Director

NYS Concil on the Arts [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1980 to ?]

Arts Program Analyst

NYS Council on the Arts [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1982 to 2011]

Arts Administrator

Department of Cultural Affairs of Parks [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 197201 to 197312]

Technical Director

Malcolm-King Community College [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 198001 to 198005]

Art Instructor

The Children's Art Carnival [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 197606 to 197708]

Arts Administration Assistant

Cultural Council Foundation/CETA Artists Project [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 197911 to 198010]

Arts in Education Coordinator

The American Museum of Natural History [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 197410 to 197512]

Purchasing Manager Assistant

New York Foundation for the Arts [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 197709 to 197906]

Artist-in-Residence

Women of Color Quilting Network [MEMBEROf]
[from 1980 to ?]

Member

City Quilters NYC [MEMBEROf]
[from 1980 to 1983]

Member

Fiber Artist Studio Quilters [MEMBEROf]
[from 2006 to ?]

Member

