

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ron Adams

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Adams, Ron
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ron Adams,
Dates:	July 13, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:47:58).
Abstract:	Printmaker and graphic designer Ron Adams (1934 -) worked as a fine art printmaker at the Gemini G.E.L. studio, where he printed the works of artists like Robert Rauschenberg. He also created his own lithographic prints and collaborated with John T. Biggers and Charles Wilbert White. Adams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 13, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_081
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Printmaker Ron Adams is a former commercial printmaker and current independent artist who has taught at several universities and collaborated with artists such as John Biggers and Judy Chicago. He was born on June 25, 1934, in Detroit, Michigan to Laura and William Adams. Adams took classes at numerous art schools throughout the late 1950s and the 1960s, including Los Angeles Trade Technical College, Manual Arts Adult Night School, Los Angeles City College, UCLA and the University of Mexico. These classes gave him a broad base of

experience in technical skills such as drafting, technical illustration, lithography, and engraving, as well as the more standard drawing and painting. He received a certificate of trade proficiency from Otis College of Art and Design in 1963.

Adams used his technical expertise to become a successful commercial printer. In 1968, while studying at the University of Mexico, Adams designed the poster, murals, and motif for the Olympic Stadium in Mexico City. Upon his return to the United States, Adams went to work at the prestigious Gemini G.E.L. printing workshop in Los Angeles, where he quickly moved from the position of assistant printer to that of master printer. In 1973, he left Gemini to work as a master printer for Editions Press in San Francisco. A year later, Adams moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico to found his own printing company, Hand Graphics Ltd. While there, he also worked as a guest instructor in the printmaking department of the University of Texas in El Paso in 1981, and chaired the Santa Fe Committee for Low-Cost Studio Space for Artists in 1985. Adams sold Hand Graphics Ltd. in 1987 and retired from commercial printing to focus on producing his own artwork. He has since served as artist-in-residence at Hampton University in Virginia in 1989 and at Tougaloo Art Colony in Mississippi in 2002.

Adams has been featured in exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe, Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville, the Vanderbilt University Fine Arts Gallery in Nashville, and the University of New Mexico Art Museum in Albuquerque, among others. His work was included in a travelling exhibition of prints and drawings sent to the USSR by the US State Department in 1966. Pieces by Adams appear in the collections of such noted museums as the California Afro-American Museum in Los Angeles, the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C., and the Bronx Museum in the Bronx, as well as in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ron Adams was conducted by Denise Gines on July 13, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Printmaker and graphic designer Ron Adams (1934 -) worked as a fine art printmaker at the Gemini G.E.L. studio, where he printed the works of artists like Robert Rauschenberg. He also created his own lithographic prints and collaborated with John T. Biggers and Charles Wilbert White.

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:

Adams, Ron

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

Adams, Ron--Interviews

African Americans--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Gemini G.E.L.

Occupations:

Printmaker

Graphic Designer

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 Ron Adams, July 13, 2010. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 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 Ron Adams, Section
A2010_081_001_001, TRT: 0:27:50 2010/07/13

Ron Adams was born on June 25, 1934 in Detroit, Michigan to Laura Wordlaw and William Adams. Adams' paternal great-grandfather, General Welch, was born to an African American woman and a white man in Evergreen, Alabama, and became one of the state's first black schoolteachers. Adams' father was also born in Evergreen to Laura Welch Adams; and, as a young man, moved to Detroit, where he found work as a department store electrician. Adams' maternal grandmother, Lina Paterson, was fair skinned, and Adams believed she was the daughter of an interracial couple, although her heritage was never discussed within the family. Adam's mother was born and raised in Detroit, where she met and married his father. His parents had a tumultuous relationship, and separated several times because of his father's womanizing and his mother's alcoholism. Due to his parents' instability, Adams and his siblings were often left in the care of various aunts and uncles in Detroit.

Video Oral History Interview with Ron Adams, Section
A2010_081_001_002, TRT: 0:29:23 2010/07/13

Ron Adams grew up in Detroit, Michigan, where he attended William T. Sampson Elementary School. With his friends, he spent the summers playing games, picking

fruit from the neighbors' trees and swimming at River Rouge Park. Adams also enjoyed copying drawings from the local newspaper. His talent attracted the attention of his art teacher, who tried to enroll him in lessons at the Detroit Institute of Arts; but, because of his unstable home life, Adams was unable to attend. Adams dropped out of school during his sophomore year at Detroit's Northwestern High School. A few years later, he returned to earn his diploma, and then moved to California, where he found work on the assembly line at the Mission Appliance Corporation. After securing a position at the U.S. Post Office Department, Adams enrolled in the technical drawing program at the Los Angeles Trade Technical College. Upon graduating, he became a technical illustrator at the Hughes Aircraft Company and Litton Industries, Inc.

Video Oral History Interview with Ron Adams, Section
A2010_081_001_003, TRT: 0:28:52 2010/07/13

Ron Adams worked as a technical illustrator in the offices of the Hughes Aircraft Company and Litton Industries, Inc. in Los Angeles, California. During this time, he enrolled at Los Angeles' Otis Art Institute, where he studied drawing, sculpture and painting under Joseph Mugnaini and Arnold Mesches. Adams also participated the student protests against the Vietnam War with his professors and classmates. After graduating in 1966, he separated from his first wife and moved to Mexico City, Mexico, where he studied drawing and printmaking at the Academy of San Carlos. He learned about printing techniques like lithography, etching and engraving, and then returned to Los Angeles, where he accepted a printmaking position at Gemini G.E.L. LLC, one of the nation's foremost printing studios. There, Adams became a master printer, and printed the works of such notable artists as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Frank Stella and Jasper Johns.

Video Oral History Interview with Ron Adams, Section
A2010_081_001_004, TRT: 0:28:47 2010/07/13

Ron Adams studied drawing and printmaking at the Academy of San Carlos during the late 1960s in Mexico City, Mexico. While there, he found work as a movie extra

and as a designer for the Mexican Olympic Committee, which hosted the 1968 Summer Olympics. In this role, Adams designed signs, logos and brochures for the Olympic events. He also witnessed the Tlatelolco massacre, during which over 300 civilian demonstrators were killed by the Mexican government in the Tlatelolco neighborhood of Mexico City. In 1969, Adams returned to Los Angeles, California to become a printmaker at the Gemini G.E.L. LLC studio, where he worked on Robert Rauschenberg's moon landing series, 'Stoned Moon.' In 1973, Adams left Gemini G.E.L. LLC to open his own studio, Hand Graphics LLC, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He partnered with his second wife, Hazel Hatameo; and, although they initially struggled to open the studio, he maintained the business for seventeen years.

Video Oral History Interview with Ron Adams, Section
A2010_081_001_005, TRT: 0:29:43 2010/07/13

Ron Adams founded the Hand Graphics LLC printing studio in Santa Fe, New Mexico. There, he printed his own works and those of other artists, including the final etchings and engravings created by Charles Wilbert White. While living in Santa Fe, Adams met his third wife, Arlene LewAllen, who owned a contemporary art gallery called the LewAllen Galleries. In addition to his studio work, Adams served as a guest lecturer at the Memphis College of Art in Tennessee and the University of Texas at El Paso. He also completed a one-year artist residency at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. In 1987, Adams sold Hand Graphics LLC to focus on his own artwork. His prints, including 'Blackburn' and 'Profile in Blue,' were housed at over thirty institutions, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In 2004, Adams left Santa Fe due to health problems. He settled in Atlanta, Georgia, where he continued printmaking.

Video Oral History Interview with Ron Adams, Section
A2010_081_001_006, TRT: 0:12:08 2010/07/13

Ron Adams continued printmaking after moving to Atlanta, Georgia. In his free time, he enjoyed travelling and fishing. Adams describes the art community in Atlanta, which included notable collectors like Paul Jones

and Brenda Thompson; and concludes this part of the interview by reflecting upon his life, legacy and advice to aspiring artists.

Video Oral History Interview with Ron Adams, Section
A2010_081_001_007, TRT: 0:11:15 2010/07/13

Ron Adams narrates his photographs.