

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Allan Crite

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Crite, Allan Rohan, 1910-2007
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Allan Crite,
Dates:	February 12, 2001
Bulk Dates:	2001
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:33:06).
Abstract:	Painter Allan Crite (1910 - 2007) was a Works Progress Administration artist during the 1930s. Crite's works often explored religious themes that emphasized non-European aspects of the Bible and general African American experiences. Crite's works were housed in the Museum of Modern Art, Phillips Collection, Corcoran Gallery, National Cathedral, Smithsonian Institute, and the Art Institute of Chicago, among others. Crite was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 12, 2001, in Boston, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2001_018
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Artist Allan Crite was born in New Jersey on March 20, 1910. His family moved to Boston, Massachusetts, shortly thereafter. Crite's mother, poet Annamae, encouraged her young son to draw as a means of keeping him busy. Crite's work attracted the attention of his fifth-grade teacher, who suggested he enroll in Boston's Museum of Fine Arts' Children's Art School. Crite credited his mother and teacher as the strongest influences in his life.

After graduating from high school in 1929, he won a scholarship to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. Crite spent a year as a Works Projects Administration artist in the 1930s. In 1940, Crite took a job as an engineering draftsman with the Boston Naval Shipyard, where he sketched ships and illustrated machines at Boston Yard for thirty years.

Crite's work can be categorized into three basic themes: Negro spirituals, religious themes that emphasize non-European aspects of the Bible and general African American experiences. He always used his art to teach, for both religious and historical reasons. Crite contributed to the African American art scene in Boston by creating the Artist's Collective, a forum for emerging African American artists.

Crite was a prolific artist and his work can be found in the Museum of Modern Art, Phillips Collection, Corcoran Gallery, National Cathedral, Smithsonian Institute, Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists and the Museum of Fine Arts. He authored several books, received numerous honorary degrees and lectured widely.

Crite passed away on September 6, 2007 at the age of 97.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Allan Crite was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on February 12, 2001, in Boston, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Painter Allan Crite (1910 - 2007) was a Works Progress Administration artist during the 1930s. Crite's works often explored religious themes that emphasized non-European aspects of the Bible and general African American experiences. Crite's works were housed in the Museum of Modern Art, Phillips Collection, Corcoran Gallery, National Cathedral, Smithsonian Institute, and the Art Institute of Chicago, among others.

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:

Crite, Allan Rohan, 1910-2007

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Crite, Allan Rohan, 1910-2007--Interviews

African American artists--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews.

African American painters--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. School.

Christianity and art.

Spirituals (Songs).

Bible stories in art.

Voyages and travels--Mexico.

Voyages and travels--Puerto Rico.

Lawrence, Jacob, 1917-2000.

Bible. N.T. Revelation.

Art--Philosophy.

Art, Modern--20th century.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

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 Allan Crite, February 12, 2001. 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 Allan Crite, Section A2001_018_001_001, TRT: 0:31:35 ?

Despite his age and hearing difficulties, Allan Crite's spirit is irrepressable. He details, with plenty of humorous asides, his upbringing in post turn-of-the-century Boston. He talks about his parents and their quest for knowledge through education, His father was one of the first black engineers in the state. Crite shares stories of childhood precociousness and burgeoning artistic talent. His mother exposed him to art through classes and trips to the Museum of Fine Art in Boston. This exposure had a great influence on him as he eventually attended the School of the Museum of Fine Arts after graduating from high school. Much of Crite's early work was based on Negro spirituals and biblical stories, and he details his influences and works during that period.

African American artists--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews.

African American painters--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. School.

Christianity and art.

Spirituals (Songs).

Bible stories in art.

Voyages and travels--Mexico.

Voyages and travels--Puerto Rico.

Lawrence, Jacob, 1917-2000.

Bible. N.T. Revelation.

Art--Philosophy.

Art, Modern--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Allan Crite, Section A2001_018_001_002, TRT: 0:29:53 ?

Allan Crite explores the religious nature of his various commissioned works for churches across the country. He also speaks of the influence his religious beliefs have upon his work as well. Some controversy has always surrounded Crite's use

of black figures in his religious works, and he answers his critics here. Additionally, he details the influence some of his travel to Mexico and Puerto Rico had upon his artistic craftsmanship. Crite has had the advantage of long life, and discusses some of his contemporaneous black artists. The segment closes with Crite's discussion of his 1990 illustration of the Book of Revelations, a project which Jacob Lawrence also contributed to as well.

Video Oral History Interview with Allan Crite, Section A2001_018_001_003, TRT: 0:31:38 ?

As an artist in his ninth decade, Allan Crite developed a touching philosophy and world view on art and mankind. Living in Boston for his entire life has created a strong relationship among other artists and Crite, who sees himself as a patriarch of sorts. He reflects upon his art which he sees as part of a continuum, not individual pieces and time periods. In the most moving part of his interview, Crite closes with a soliloquy on the relationship between humanity and nature where he says, "All of us have taken part in the story of life together. We're never alone."