

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with George Beach

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Beach, George, 1936-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with George Beach,
Dates:	February 11, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:59:49).
Abstract:	Graphic artist and advertising chief executive George Beach (1936 -) started Beach Advertising in 1974. He was the first African American president of the Artist Guild of Delaware Valley and has served on numerous other boards. Beach was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 11, 2005, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_047
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Artist and businessman George Albert Beach was born August 14, 1936 in New York City. His mother, Ethel McKinnon, came from Kingston, New York and his father, James H. Beach, was from Montserrat. The family moved to Philadelphia in 1946 where Beach attended William Pierce Elementary School, Gillespie Junior High School and studied art at Fleisher Art Memorial. Beach graduated from Simon Gratz High School in 1954 and earned his B.F.A. degree in advertising design from the University of the Arts in 1958. Beach also studied at L'Academie de la Grande Chaumiere and at L'Alliance Franciase, both in Paris.

He started Beach Advertising in 1974 and his clients have included Pfizer, John F. Rich and Company, Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, McDonalds and the Pennsylvania Department of Aging. In 1964, Beach was elected as the first African American president of the Artist Guild of Delaware Valley and he served in that capacity until 1967. Beach also joined the American Numismatic Association and founded the African American Commemorative Society (AACS). In 1970, he paired up with Calvin Massey and Robert L. Jefferson to start the fully illustrated African American Historical Calendar, which has been produced annually since.

A recipient of numerous awards including the Addy, Neographic, and Art Directors Club awards and a best of category award from Printing Industries of America, Beach participated in the White House Conferences on Small Businesses and is active with the Small Business Administration. He serves on the boards of the Alliance for Aging Research, the Philadelphia African American Museum, Historic Philadelphia, Inc., the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau, the National Arthritis Foundation, the West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, and the University for the Arts. Beach, who has two adult sons, lives in Philadelphia with his wife, Mary.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with George Beach was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 11, 2005, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Graphic artist and advertising chief executive George Beach (1936 -) started Beach Advertising in 1974. He was the first African American president of the Artist Guild of Delaware Valley and has served on numerous other boards.

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:

Beach, George, 1936-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Beach, George, 1936---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Graphic Artist

Advertising Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers|MediaMakers

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 George Beach, February 11, 2005. 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 George Beach, Section A2005_047_001_001, TRT: 0:29:48 ?

George Beach was born on August 14, 1936 in New York, New York. His mother, Ethel McKinnon, was born in Kingston, New York, and moved to New York City to attend business school and teach in public schools. Beach's maternal grandfather moved the family from North Carolina to Kingston, where he worked as a caterer. His father, James Beach, was born in Montserrat, where his family had lived for generations. He moved to New York City in the 1920s to find work as a tailor, but his early career was slowed by the Great Depression. Beach was influenced by his father's precision and his mother's penchant for

taking risks. He was raised in Harlem where he frequented nearby playgrounds, spent Sundays attending church and visiting family, and traveled to his maternal grandparents in Kingston regularly. Beach's father and uncles were part of a band that played the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, and they saw Chick Webb and Teddy Wilson perform; Beach took up the violin and played in the Philadelphia Concert Orchestra.

Video Oral History Interview with George Beach, Section A2005_047_001_002, TRT: 0:29:57 ?

George Beach attended Public School 40 in New York, New York, where his favorite subject was drawing. When Beach was ten, the family moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he attended the William S. Peirce School and played violin with the all-black Philadelphia Concert Orchestra. He matriculated at Gillespie Junior High School, then Simon Gratz High School, where he and his older sister were accomplished students and musicians. Beach was a varsity football player and vice president of his class, and he continued studying the arts. Beach traveled with his father to Trinidad to visit family in the early 1950s, and was struck by its multicultural community. He received a full scholarship to the Museum School of Art in Philadelphia, where he worked under his mentor Paul F. Keene, Jr., the school's first black professor, and graduated in 1958. In his senior year, Beach gained professional experience through an internship at Freed Studios, Inc. and won a contest to design the Academy of Music's annual ball.

Video Oral History Interview with George Beach, Section A2005_047_001_003, TRT: 0:29:41 ?

George Beach was particularly struck by cigarettes and soap ads as a child. Beach began his career in advertising as an apprentice at Freed Studios, Inc. in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he made more per hour than his father. In 1958, he became an independent designer. He rented his own studio in the Middle City Building, where one of his early clients, the John F. Rich Company, commissioned his first print ad. Beach's excellent memory and a willingness to learn unfamiliar tasks on the job, like media buying, accelerated his career. In 1963, he was elected as the first African American president of the Artists Guild of Delaware Valley and served for four years. Beach founded the African-American Commemorative Society, which produced medals for major black history figures, and created black history ads for the Campbell Soup Company. Throughout the 1960s, he was increasingly solicited for advertising directed to the African American community, though Beach did not bill himself as a black advertiser.

Video Oral History Interview with George Beach, Section A2005_047_001_004, TRT: 0:29:55 ?

George Beach founded the African-American Commemorative Society in 1968 after the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He signed up 1,376 members for the society, most of whom were white, by advertising in African American publications, such as Tuesday and Ebony, and by reaching out to trade associations. Beach consulted with experts, including HistoryMaker Charles Blockson, in generating historical materials. The African-American Commemorative Society created seventy-six commemorative medals with the likenesses of figures from black history for its members, using artists Gilroy Roberts, Cal Massey and Paul F. Keene, Jr. When the price of silver increased, Beach shifted the society's focus to producing calendars about black history, for which he worked with educators and artists. He then distributed the calendars to public schools in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Through this work, he has befriended Lucille Wilson Armstrong, Rachel Robinson, and Charles Handy, W.C. Handy's brother.

Video Oral History Interview with George Beach, Section A2005_047_001_005, TRT: 0:30:31 ?

George Beach did design and advertising work for Campbell Soup Company, The Hershey Company and Scott Paper Company, among others. When he tried to expand his services, he found that clients were uninterested. This often led to losing accounts as Beach tried to develop his business. During the early 1970s, he was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. He treated the condition with aspirin, cortisone shots, physical therapy, and joint replacement surgeries. When slated to receive an electronic wheelchair, he was determined to fight his prognosis. With the help of a hand surgeon and Enbrel, his condition improved. Beach became chairperson of the eastern Pennsylvania chapter of the Arthritis Foundation. He had quit painting due to joint pain, but using specialized paintbrushes, took it up again after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, creating a work, 'Indivisible,' that has been shown in several museums. Beach describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community and reflects on his life.

Video Oral History Interview with George Beach, Section A2005_047_001_006, TRT: 0:29:57 ?

George Beach studied art at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere in Paris, France during the summer of 1960. The experience helped him maintain a lifelong bond with France. He reflects on his parents' pride about his career accomplishments and his own legacy. Beach describes how he would like to be remembered. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.