

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Kenneth G. Rodgers

PERSON

Rodgers, Kenneth G.

Alternative Names: Kenneth G. Rodgers;

Life Dates: October 22, 1949-

Place of Birth: Siler City, North Carolina, USA

Residence: Durham, NC

Occupations: Fine Artist; Curator; Museum Director; Art History Professor

Biographical Note

Artist and art historian Kenneth Gerald Rodgers was born on October 22, 1949 in Siler City, North Carolina to Cornelia and Johnnie Rodgers, a data entry operator and laborer, respectively. Rodgers' uncle inspired him to begin drawing at the age of seven, and Rodgers became a young caricaturist. He graduated from Chatham High School in 1967 and received a scholarship to attend North Carolina A&T State University where he majored in art design. At North Carolina A&T State University, Rodgers learned the technical aspects of drawing, painting, design and color, and he mastered skills in still life and portraiture. Rodgers graduated from North Carolina A&T State University in 1971 with his B.S. degree in art design and, in 1972, became a graduate assistant at the Weatherspoon Art Gallery where he studied exhibition design, mounting and crafting. He received his M.F.A. degree from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro in 1973.

Rodgers' academic career progressed in 1974 when he was named director of the art program at Voorhees College. Leaving Voorhees in 1977, he assumed the position of assistant professor of art at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. In 1984, Rodgers began the "Art of the Modern World" series in Ocean City, Maryland. In 1990, he joined the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture and was charged with conserving, promoting and interpreting the history of black Marylanders and became chairman of the commission in 1993. As chairman, he supervised the Banneker-Douglass Museum in Annapolis, Maryland. Also in 1993, Rodgers was named associate professor of African American Art History at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore and was also named Artist-in-Residence at Mesa State College in Colorado.

In 1996, Rodgers became director of the North Carolina Central University Art

Museum, which houses the largest collection of African American art in the state. In this capacity, Rodgers served as organizer and curator of several high profile exhibits including Edward Mitchell Bannister: American Landscape Artist, Re-connecting Roots: The Silver Anniversary Alumni Invitational, Charles White: American Draughtsman, Elizabeth Catlett: Master Printmaker and William H. Johnson: Revisiting an African American Modernist. In 2006, Rodgers was named Professor of Art and Director of the North Carolina University Art Museum. He has published several art compilations including William H. Johnson: Revisiting an African American Modernist and Climbing Up the Mountain: The Modern Art of Malvin Gray Johnson. Rodgers painted the official portrait of the first African American member of the North Carolina Council of State and the first African American State Auditor for North Carolina, Ralph Campbell. Rodgers has received numerous research grants and awards including: a National Endowment for the Humanities for study at the Vatican Museums and the American Academy in Rome, a Fulbright-Hays Study Abroad award for research in Kenya and Tanzania, and grants from the North Carolina Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Duke-Semans Fine Arts Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation to support museum exhibitions and programs.

Rodgers is the father of two and lives in North Carolina with his wife, Shilda Glover Rodgers.

Kenneth Rodgers was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on June 22, 2007.

Related Entries

Jordan-Matthews High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

B.S.

University of North Carolina at Greensboro [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

M.F.A.

South Carolina State University [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Professor

Florida A&M University [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1973 to 1974]

Instructor

Voorhees College [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1974 to 1977]

professor and department chair

University of Maryland Eastern Shore [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1977 to 1996]

Associate Professor

North Carolina Central University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1996 to ?]

Professor and Director

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Member

Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture [MEMBEROf]
[from 1990 to 1996]

Member

Maryland Humanities Council [MEMBEROf]
[from 1992 to 1996]

Member

North Carolina Arts Council [MEMBEROf]
[from 1997 to ?]

Panelist