



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the *Harlem on My Mind* exhibition
records, 1966-2007 in the Archives of American Art

Justin Brancato

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Harlem on My Mind exhibition records
Identifier:	AAA.schoallo
Date:	1966-2007
Extent:	3 Linear feet 0.371 Gigabytes
Creator:	Schoener, Allon
Language:	English
Summary:	The Harlem on My Mind exhibition records measure 3.0 linear feet and 0.371 GB and date from 1966-2007. The records contain exhibition and book files, correspondence, research material, printed and digital material and photographs from the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition. Also included is material documenting additional exhibitions, conferences and events relating to the original exhibition.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers were donated to the Archives of American Art in 2009 by Allon Schoener.

Processing Information

The papers were processed by Justin Brancato in 2010. Born-digital materials were processed by Kirsi Ritosalmi-Kisner in 2019 with funding provided by Smithsonian Collection Care and Preservation Fund.

Preferred Citation

Harlem on My Mind exhibition records, 1966-2007. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original material requires an appointment.

Ownership and Literary Rights

The *Harlem on My Mind* exhibition records are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

Biographical Note

Allon Schoener (b.1926) is a writer, cultural historian, consultant, and organizer of exhibitions that focus on topics such as African Americans, Italian Americans, Jewish Americans, and the history of the Lower East Side. His best known exhibition was the highly controversial show "Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America." A graduate of Yale University, he currently lives in Los Angeles.

"Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America 1900-1968" was a 1969 exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art organized by Allon Schoener. The exhibition documented life in Harlem through the use of photographs, film and audio recordings. It was created under the directorship of Thomas Hoving and contributed to the exhibition model commonly known as the "blockbuster" show.

At the time, the exhibition was much reviled, having received harsh criticism from critics, politicians, and the public alike. The initial spark was an essay in the accompanying book by 17-year-old Harlem high school student Candice Van Ellison. The essay contained prejudicial remarks about members of the Jewish, Irish and Puerto Rican communities. The book was quickly removed from the Museum and pulled from bookshelves by the publisher.

Additional criticism focused on several key issues, including the exhibition's multimedia platform; the lack of paintings and sculptures, particularly by African-American artists; and a thematic presentation that used documentary techniques that focused on sociological and cultural issues. Such criticism was compounded by the Harlem Cultural Council's withdrawal of support.

Schoener wrote that the objective of the exhibition was to "demonstrate that the black community in Harlem is a major cultural environment with enormous strength and potential? that this community has made major contributions to the mainstream of American culture in music, theater and literature." The exhibition documented Harlem from its beginnings in the early 20th century as a prosperous white neighborhood, through the influx of southern African-Americans, up to the civil rights movements of the late 1960s.

After the original exhibition ended, Schoener spent the next several decades working intermittently on re-creations of the exhibition, some of which failed to see fruition. Others succeeded, culminating as shows at Columbia University and the I. P. Stanback Museum. Schoener participated in numerous panel discussions, events and conferences, including the Schomburg Center and Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM).

His book, *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America*, was reissued after a prolonged struggle to obtain the rights from its original publisher. Editions were published in 1979, 1995 and 2007, with forewords by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and U.S. Congressman Charles B. Rangel.

Scope and Content Note

The "Harlem on My Mind" exhibition records measure 3.0 linear feet and 0.371 GB and date from 1966-2007. The records contain exhibition and book files, correspondence, research material, printed and digital material and photographs from the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition. Also included is material documenting additional exhibitions, conferences and events relating to the original exhibition.

Correspondence, 1967-2007, concerns all aspects of production and coordination of the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition, the public's response to the controversial Candice Van Ellison catalog introduction, letters of support, the 10th Anniversary celebration, and a letter from U.S. Representative Charles B. Rangel.

Exhibition files for the original "Harlem on My Mind" exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1968-1969, include awards, budgets, construction and installation notes, floor plans, an installation log, invoices, notes, photographs, public relations, schedules, research, statistics, printed material and audio relating to the exhibition.

"Harlem on My Mind" exhibition re-creation files from 1978-2007 contain correspondence, project outline, and exhibition files including Harlem: USA/International Traveling Exhibition and Cultural Festival, 1985-1987; Columbia University Exhibition, 2006-2007; and I. P. Stanback Museum Exhibition, 2006-2007.

Harlem on My Mind book files, 1967-2007, consist of correspondence, invoices, outline, permissions, royalty statements, notes and writings.

Conferences and events, 1978-2007, include: "Harlem: The Last Ten Years," International Center of Photography, 1978-1979; Post Modernism Conference, Brooklyn Academy of Music; "Global Cities," 1985-1992, Schomburg Conference, 1993-1999; "A Walk Through Harlem," Schomburg Center, 1999; "The (Un)making of the Black Cultural Mecca," the New School, 2003; "Harlem Displaced" and "Harlem in Our Eyes," Steven L. Newman Real Estate Institute, 1999-2006; and "Harlem Then and Now," Schomburg Center, 2007.

Printed material, 1968-2007, includes newspaper and magazine clippings, three editions of *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America 1900-1968* (1979, 1995 and 2007), and the book jacket for the 1968 edition.

Arrangement

Most material is arranged chronologically unless noted otherwise in the series description.

The *Harlem on My Mind* exhibition records are organized into 6 series.

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1967-2007 (Box 1; 0.4 linear feet)
- Series 2: Exhibition Files, *Harlem on My Mind*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1967-1969 (Box 1; 0.9 linear feet, ER01; 0.371 GB)
- Series 3: *Harlem on My Mind* Re-creation, 1978-2007 (Box 1-2; 0.3 linear feet)
- Series 4: *Harlem on My Mind* Book, 1967-2007 (Box 2; 0.3 linear feet)
- Series 5: Conferences and Events, 1978-2007 (Box 2-3; 0.8 linear feet)
- Series 6: Printed Material, 1968-2007 (Box 3; 0.3 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Exhibitions

Types of Materials:

Awards

Notes

Photographs

Scrapbooks

Sound recordings

Names:

Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.)
Rangel, Charles B.
Van Ellison, Candace

Occupations:

Authors

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1967-2007

(Box 1; 0.4 linear feet)

Allon Schoener's correspondence includes all aspects of production and coordination of the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition, including managerial, procedural and curatorial issues. Correspondence also documents the public's response to the controversial Candice Van Ellison catalog introduction and includes letters of support for the exhibition. Notable correspondents include photographer Todd Webb and Thomas Hoving, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; as well as correspondence from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York State Council on the Arts, Library of Congress, *Life Magazine*, and Underwood and Underwood News Photos, Inc. Also included are memoranda from Metropolitan Museum of Art and New York State Council on the Arts, and a letter of congratulations from U.S. Representative Charles B. Rangel, author of the foreword to the 2007 edition of *Harlem on My Mind*.

Box 1, Folder 1-3	General, 1967-1969 <i>(3 folders)</i>
Box 1, Folder 4	In Response to Candice Van Ellison's Introduction, 1969
Box 1, Folder 5	In Support of Exhibition, 1969 <i>(photocopies)</i>
Box 1, Folder 6	Tenth Anniversary of Exhibition, 1978-1979
Box 1, Folder 7	Susan Cahan, 2001
Box 1, Folder 8	Stephen Dubin, 1998-1999
Box 1, Folder 9	<i>George Magazine</i> , 1998-1999,
Box 1, Folder 10	Charles B. Rangel, 2007

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Series 2: Exhibition Files, *Harlem on My Mind*, 1967-1969

0.371 Gigabytes (ER01)
(Box 1; 0.9 linear feet)

Exhibition files for the original "Harlem on My Mind" exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1968-1969, document awards, budgets, construction and installation notes, floor plans, installation logs, interview and photographic topics, invoices, notes, photographs, progress reports, public relations schedules, research, scheduling, slide projections, sound script, statistics, titles, printed material and audio for exhibition.

The file on the exhibition's budget includes correspondence, budget reports, lists of materials and resources, and notes for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1969 exhibition.

Photographs include images that were either used or considered for the 1969 exhibition, as well as oversized contact sheets of the exhibition's installation.

Invoices are filed numerically, using Schoener's numbering system.

Box 1, Folder 11	Award undated
Box 1, Folder 12	Budget, 1967-1969
Box 1, Folder 13	Closed Circuit Television Facility, 1968
Box 1, Folder 14	Community Advisory Committee, 1968
Box 1, Folder 15	Construction and Installation Notes, 1968-1969
Box 1, Folder 16	Floor Plan, 1968 <i>(oversized material housed in OV 6)</i>
Box 1, Folder 17	Installation Log, 1969
Box 1, Folder 18	Interview and Photographic Topics, 1968
Box 1, Folder 19	Invoices, 1968-1969 <i>(original collation retained)</i>
Box 1, Folder 20	Notes, undated
Box 1, Folder 21	Photograph and Slide List, 1968
Box 1, Folder 22	Photographs, undated
Box 1, Folder 23	Installation Photographs, undated <i>(oversized material housed in Box 5)</i>

Box 1, Folder 24	Photography Research, 1967-1968
Box 1, Folder	Photocopies of Photographs
Box 1, Folder 25-26	<i>Harlem on My Mind</i> Exhibition, 1968-1969 (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 27	Bill Miles Notebooks, undated
Box 1, Folder 28	New York Public Library, undated
Box 1, Folder 29	Progress Report, 1968
Box 1, Folder 30	Public Relations Schedule, 1968
Box 1, Folder	Research
Box 1, Folder 31	Historical Note, undated
Box 1, Folder 32	Historical Note and Chronology, undated
Box 1, Folder 33	Printed Material, <i>Harlem: A Study in Depth</i> , undated
Box 1, Folder 34	Scheduling, 1968
Box 1, Folder 35	Slide Projections, 1968
Box 1, Folder 36	Sound Script, 1968
Box 1, Folder 37	Statistics, 1968
Box 1, Folder 38	Titles, 1968
Box 1, Folder	Printed Material
Box 1, Folder 39	Exhibition Announcements and Invitations, 1968
Box 1, Folder 40	Poster for "Harlem on My Mind" Exhibition, undated
Box 1, Folder 41	Audio for Exhibition, undated (cassette tape and 33 1/3 rpm vinyl record; oversized material housed in Box 5) Includes born-digital records, see ER01.

Folder ER01	Audio for Exhibition (Undated), Digital Audio Recording, 2019 <i>0.371 Gigabytes (Two computer files)</i>
Box 5, Folder	Installation Photographs, 1969
Box 5, Folder	Audio for Exhibition, undated <i>(33 1/3 rpm vinyl record)</i>
Oversize 6, Folder	Floor Plan, 1968

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Series 3: "Harlem on My Mind" Re-creation, 1978-2007

(Box 1-2; 0.3 linear feet)

"Harlem on My Mind" re-creation files consist of correspondence, project outline, and exhibition files including: Harlem: USA/International Traveling Exhibition and Cultural Festival, 1985-1987; Columbia University Exhibition, 2006-2007; and I. P. Stanback Museum Exhibition, 2006-2007.

The correspondence concerns various versions of planned re-creations of "Harlem on My Mind," some of which never came to fruition.

Box 1, Folder 42-44	Correspondence, 1978-1995 <i>(3 folders)</i>
Box 2, Folder 1-2	Correspondence, 1995-1996, undated <i>(2 folders)</i>
Box 2, Folder 3	Project Outline for New Exhibition, 1995, undated
Box 2, Folder 4	Harlem: USA/International Traveling Exhibition and Cultural Festival, 1985-1987
Box 2, Folder 5	Columbia University Exhibition, 2006-2007
Box 2, Folder 6	I. P. Stanback Museum Exhibition, 2006-2007
Box 2, Folder 7	Photography List, undated

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Series 4: *Harlem on My Mind* Book, 1967-2007,*(Box 2; 0.3 linear feet)*

Harlem on My Mind book files consist of correspondence and documents including: New Press, invoices, outline, payments, permissions, royalty statements, notes and writings. Correspondence documents the challenges of publishing several editions with different publishers over three decades, and includes book contracts from Random House and Dell Publishing (Delacorte Press). There is correspondence with Random House and Grove Press regarding disputed ownership rights to *Harlem on My Mind*. Among the notable correspondents are Thomas Hoving, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and photographer James Van Der Zee, known for his portraits of African-American New Yorkers.

Box 2, Folder	Correspondence
Box 2, Folder 8-9	General, 1967-1999, undated
Box 2, Folder 10	William J. Clinton, 2002
Box 2, Folder 11	Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 1993-1995
Box 2, Folder 12	New Press, 1993-2007
Box 2, Folder 13	Invoices, 1968-1969
Box 2, Folder 14	Outline, undated
Box 2, Folder 15	Payments, undated
Box 2, Folder 16-17	Permissions and Reproduction Rights, 1968-1979, undated <i>(2 folders; oversized material housed in Box 5)</i>
Box 2, Folder 18	Royalty Statements, 1969-1982
Box 2, Folder	Notes
Box 2, Folder 19	Budget, undated
Box 2, Folder 20	Chronology of African-American History, undated
Box 2, Folder 21	Miscellaneous, 1977-1978
Box 2, Folder	Writings
Box 2, Folder 22	Introduction Statements, 1969
Box 2, Folder 23	Forewords and Introduction, 1995, undated

Box 2, Folder 24 *From Pariah to Hero* by Allon Schoener, 2007

Box 5, Folder Permissions and Reproduction Rights, 1968-1979, undated

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Series 5: Conferences and Events, 1978-2007,

(Box 2-3; 0.8 linear feet)

Conferences and events include: "Harlem: The Last Ten Years," International Center of Photography, 1978-1979; Post Modernism Conference, Brooklyn Academy of Music; "Global Cities," 1985-1992; Schomburg Conference, 1993-1999; "A Walk Through Harlem," Schomburg Center, 1999; "The (Un)making of the Black Cultural Mecca," the New School, 2003; "Harlem Displaced" and "Harlem in Our Eyes," Steven L. Newman Real Estate Institute, 1999-2006; and "Harlem Then and Now," Schomburg Center, 2007.

Box 2, Folder 25	<i>Harlem: The Last Ten Years</i> , International Center of Photography, 1978-1979
Box 2, Folder	Post Modernism Conference, Brooklyn Academy of Music
Box 2, Folder 26-27	Correspondence, 1985-1988 <i>(2 folders)</i>
Box 2, Folder 28	Program Committee, 1985-1987
Box 2, Folder 29	Proposal and Outline, 1985-1986
Box 2, Folder 30	Book Proposal, <i>The Post Modernism World</i> , 1986-1988
Box 2, Folder 31	Floor Plans, 1986 <i>(oversized material housed in OV 6)</i>
Box 2, Folder	Writings
Box 2, Folder 32	<i>Impasse Post-Moderne et Transition Post-Media</i> , undated
Box 2, Folder 33	Une Critique de l'Exposition <i>Les Immatériaux</i> , undated
Box 2, Folder 34	Printed Material, Newspaper and Magazine Clippings, 1985-1987
Box 2, Folder 35	Photographs, Polaroids of Theater, undated
Box 2, Folder	Global Cities Event
Box 2, Folder 36	Correspondence, 1985-1992
Box 2, Folder 37	Proposal, 1987-1988
Box 2, Folder 38	Budget, 1990
Box 2, Folder 39	Notes and Printed Material, undated

Box 3, Folder 1-2	Schomburg Conference, 1993-1999, undated
Box 3, Folder 3	<i>A Walk Through Harlem</i> , Schomburg Center, 1999
Box 3, Folder 4	<i>The (Un)making of the Black Cultural Mecca</i> , The New School, 2003
Box 3, Folder 5	"Harlem Displaced" and "Harlem in Our Eyes," Steven L. Newman Real Estate Institute, 1999-2006
Box 3, Folder 6	"Harlem Then and Now," Schomburg Center, 2007
Oversize 6, Folder	Post Modernism Conference, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Floor Plans, 1986

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Series 6: Printed Material, 1968-2007

(Box 3; 0.3 linear feet)

Printed material includes newspaper and magazine clippings about the original exhibition and its impact over the years, as well as material researched by Schoener. Also found are three editions of *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America 1900-1968* (1979, 1995 and 2007), and a book jacket for the 1968 edition.

Box 3, Folder 7	Book Jacket, <i>Harlem on My Mind Cultural Capital of Black America 1900-1968</i> , 1968
Box 3, Folder 8-9	Books, <i>Harlem on My Mind Cultural Capital of Black America 1900-1968</i> , 1979-2007 (2 folders)
Box 4, Folder	Newspapers and Magazine Clippings
Box 4, Folder 1	<i>Harlem on My Mind</i> , circa 1967-2007
Box 4, Folder 2	Research, circa 1966-1993

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