Guide to the Henry Delton Williams Papers

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Guide to the Henry Delton Williams Papers

Collection number: MS 154

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Henry Delton Williams Papers
Dates: 1950-2012
Collection number: MS154
Creator: Williams, Henry Delton.

Collection Size: 6.75 linear feet (5 boxes + 3 oversized boxes)
Repository: African American Museum & Library at Oakland (Oakland, Calif.)
Oakland, CA 94612

Abstract: Henry Delton Williams (b. 1941), costume designer who crafted pieces for Motown and Hollywood stars, was born in Alexandria, Louisiana. The Henry Delton Williams Papers includes performance costumes, clothing, and accessories designed by Williams, as well as correspondence, clippings, photographs and assorted printed material documenting his career as a gospel singer and fashion designer.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
No access restrictions to the Henry Delton Williams Papers. Collection is open to the public.

Access Restrictions
Materials are for use in-library only, non-circulating.

Publication Rights
Permission to publish must be obtained from the African American Museum & Library at Oakland.

Preferred Citation
Henry Delton Williams Papers, MS 154, African American Museum & Library at Oakland, Oakland Public Library. Oakland, California.

Acquisition Information
Collection donated to the African American Museum & Library at Oakland by Henry Delton Williams.

Processing Information
Processed by Sean Dickerson, June 08, 2017.

Biography / Administrative History
Henry Delton Williams (b. 1941), costume designer who crafted pieces for Motown and Hollywood stars, was born in Alexandria, Louisiana. His father worked at the local saw mill, performed gospel music and provided tailoring services. In 1945, hearing of naval supply jobs in the Bay Area, the family moved to West Oakland, California. The family then relocated to East Oakland where Williams attended Roosevelt Junior High School and Oakland High School. Williams went on to work at the Chevrolet assembly line while pursuing a career in gospel music, singing with such talents as the Hawkins Family and on the weekly live gospel show for KRE radio, Berkeley.

In 1963, Williams was offered a singing contract with the Los Angeles Gospel All Stars. After returning to Oakland, Williams decided to pursue a career close to the entertainment business and enrolled in Laney College to be a designer-tailor. After graduating in 1968 Williams opened The Original Brothers clothing store at the corner of 18th and San Pablo Streets in
West Oakland. The Original Brothers was the first dashiki shop in the Bay Area, a West African-inspired garment which found a market in America during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Popular with Merritt College students, the Original Brothers also developed Afro hair care products, predating the introduction of Johnson's Afro Sheen. When students at Oakland High protested in demand of a Black Student Union in 1969, the Original Brothers were called alongside the Black Panthers to negotiate between the administration and the students.

Around this time, Williams began making slack suits for the Whispers (then performing in residence at the San Francisco Whisky-A-Go-Go) and the Edwin Hawkins Singers. Over the next decades he would develop a business designing entertainment costumes for performers such as Martha Reeves, Tina Turner, Marvyn Gaye, Sherrrie Payne, Freda Payne, the actor and former Oakland Raider Fred Williamson, Janie Bradford, and Lenny Williams of Tower of Power. Williams also made costumes for Hollywood productions, such as Dr. Black, Mr. Hyde (1976), and the Fred Williamson films Adios Amigo (1976), Death Journey (1976), Mean Johnny Barrows (1976), No Way Back (1976), and One Down Two to Go (1982). He would later go on to open A.F.A.R. (“American Fruit with African Roots”) Creations Fashion Art Gallery and remained active through his career designing for Motown events such as the Tribute to Heroes and Legends (HAL Awards). In 2010, the African American Museum & Library at Oakland honored Williams in the exhibition Extraordinary Person, Extraordinary Life.

Scope and Content of Collection
The Henry Delton Williams Papers includes performance costumes, clothing, and accessories designed by Williams, as well as correspondence, clippings, photographs and assorted printed material documenting his career as a gospel singer and fashion designer. The papers are arranged into seven series: Series I. Costumes and accessories Series II. Correspondence Series III. Newspaper clippings Series IV. Tribute to Heroes and Legends (HAL Awards) Series V. A.F.A.R Creations Series VI. Assorted printed material Series VII. Photographs

Arrangement
Series I. Costumes and accessories Series II. Correspondence Series III. Newspaper clippings Series IV. Tribute to Heroes and Legends (HAL Awards) Series V. A.F.A.R Creations Series VI. Assorted printed material Series VII. Photographs

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.
Payne, Freda
Reeves, Martha
Williams, Henry Delton
African American fashion designers.
Costume design--California--Los Angeles--History--20th century.
Fashion--African influences.
Soul (music).
Rhythm and blues music--California.

Costumes and accessories
Physical Description: 6 boxes
Series Scope and Content Summary
Includes performance costumes, fashions, and accessories designed or used by Henry Delton Williams.

| Box 2                  | Two piece men's brown polyester suit work by (worn by Lenny Williams) |
| Box 3                  | Leopard Suit "Crowns" hat (worn by Freda Payne) 2005-06-15          |
| Box OM 55              | Two piece men's Kente suit (worn by Henry Delton Williams)           |
| Box OM 56              | Gold metallic lace halter top and gold lace ruffled bell bottom pants (worn by Martha Reeves) |
| Box 5                  | Green and gold "Crowns" hat                                       |
| Box 4                  | Four Afro wigs (worn during the Wizard of Fashion stage production) 2010-10 |
| Box 5                  | Three black berets (worn during the Wizard of Fashion stage production) 2010-10 |
| Box 5                  | Ten cowgirl party hats (worn during the Wizard of Fashion stage) 2010-10 |
Correspondence 1998-2011

Physical Description: 1 folder
Series Scope and Content Summary
Includes letters of thanks and an e-mail regarding an interview with Henry Delton Williams.
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically.

Box 1:1
Letter from Martha Reeves to Henry Delton Williams re: thanks 1998-09-03
Box 1:1
Letter from Eulanna Allen to Henry Delton Williams re: 2008 PHAT Friends Award 2008-03-31
Box 1:1
E-mail from Janie Bradford to LaVera re: Questions for the Delton interview 2011-01-18

Newspaper clippings 1972-2002

Physical Description: 1 folder
Series Scope and Content Summary
Includes press and clippings regarding Henry Delton Williams' career as a gospel singer and fashion designer.
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically.

Box 1:2
Jet magazine cover featuring Honey Cone Trio (wearing Henry Delton Williams) 1972-09-02
Box 1:2
"The 'D' is for distinguished' newspaper clipping circa 1970s
Box 1:2
Newspaper advertisement for Mopres Recording star Mr. Delton at the Memory Lane Supper Club, Los Angeles circa 1970s
Box 1:2
"Mr Delton" The Communicator 1981-07-16
Box OM 23
Photocollage of newspaper clipping "Fashion star has designs on Oakland," Oakland Tribune and Henry Delton Williams A.F.A.R. Creations business card 1998
Box 1:2
"Oakland Caravan Goes to Hollywood," The Post 2002-09-29
Box 1:2
Inside Oakland feature on Henry Delton Williams 2002-09-29

Tribute to Heroes and Legends (HAL Awards) 1988-2008

Physical Description: 3 folders
Series Scope and Content Summary
Includes programs, invitations, and special editions of Entertainment Connection magazine from the Tribute to Heroes and Legends (HAL Awards). Also includes a DVD of Henry Delton Williams interviewing entertainers at the 2008 HAL Awards.
Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by format.

Entertainment Connection magazine 1988-2006

Box 1:3
Entertainment Connection magazine Vol. 1 No. 5 1988-09
Box 1:3
Entertainment Connection magazine Vol. 3 No. 22 1990-07
Box 1:3
Entertainment Connection magazine 2002 HAL souvenir edition 2002-09
Box 1:3
Entertainment Connection magazine 2003 HAL souvenir edition 2003-09
Box 1:3
Entertainment Connection magazine 2006 HAL souvenir edition 2006-09
Box 1:3
Entertainment Connection magazine 2006 HAL souvenir edition 2006-09

HAL Awards DVD 2008

Box 1:4
HAL Awards DVD 2008

Programs and invitations 1996-2006

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Box 1:5  Program for the seventh annual HAL Awards 1996-09
Box 1:5  Program for the seventh annual HAL Awards 1996-09
Box 1:5  Invitation to the thirteenth annual HAL Scholarship Awards [two copies] 2002-09-22
Box 1:5  Brochure for the thirteenth annual HAL Awards 2002-09-27
Box 1:5  Brochure for the fifteenth annual HAL Awards 2004-09-24
Box 1:5  Brochure for the fifteenth annual HAL Awards [two copies] 2005-09-23
Box 1:5  Invitation to the HAL Scholarship Award [two copies] 2005-09-25
Box 1:5  Brochure for Heroes and Legends Over the Years undated

A.F.A.R Creations undated

Physical Description: 1 folders
Series Scope and Content Summary
Includes promotional material related to A.F.A.R. ("American Fruit with African Roots") Creations Fashion Art Gallery.

Box 1:6  A.F.A.R Creations, Henry Delton Williams business card undated
Box 1:6  A.F.A.R Creations tri-fold brochure undated
Box 1:6  A.F.A.R Creations Art Gallery announcement undated

Assorted printed material 1953-2012

Physical Description: 2 folders
Series Scope and Content Summary
Includes assorted printed material collected by Henry Delton Williams related to his life and career as a gospel singer and fashion designer.
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically.

Box 1:7  Oakland Tribune home delivery certificate of merit to Henry Delton Williams 1953-11-30
Box 1:7  Poster (small), black and white advertisement for the Designers Fashion Forecast featuring Henry Williams Delton with Johnny Talbot and De Thangs, Sportsman Club, Oakland, California 1966-09-25
Box 1:8  The Songs of Janie Bradford songbook 1975
Box 1:7  Movie Poster (small) Adios Amigo 1976
Box 1:7  Movie Poster (small) Death Journey 1976
Box 1:7  Movie Poster (small) Mean Johnny Barrows 1976
Box 1:7  Movie Poster (small) No Way Back 1976
Box 1:7  Spokane American Music Festival program 1997-07-03
Box 1:7  Event advertisement for the Kung Pao Kosher Comedy 9th Annual Funny Girlz, Herbst Theater 2007-05-19
Box 1:7  Card advertisement for Blues in the Night, Post Street Theater circa 2000s
Box 1:7  Flyer for the benefit concert the Smooth Sounds of Llloyd Gregory and Friends 2012-05-12

Photographs 1950-2010

Physical Description: 5 folders
Series Scope and Content Summary
Includes includes 56 photographs, most of Henry Delton Williams' clothing designs and clients.
Arrangement
Arranged by identification number.

Box 1:9  Anne Williams and Henry Delton Williams [001] 1950
Box 1:9  Henry Delton Williams Oakland High School class photo [002] 1957
Box 1:9
- Henry Delton Williams Oakland High School graduation photo [003] 1959
- Group portrait Henry Delton Williams with two singing partners [004] 1960
- Henry Delton Williams tabling for the Original Brothers Afro Products, Oakland Auditorium [005] 1968
- Photograph of a female and male model wearing designs by Henry Delton Williams, reverse: ‘modeling at the Playboy Club in San Francisco’ [006] 1969
- Henry Delton Williams modeling a two piece brocade suit with oversized bow (front view) [007] circa 1960s
- Henry Delton Williams modeling a two piece brocade suit (alternate view) [008] circa 1960s
- Unidentified man in red polyester suit [010] circa 1970s
- Group photograph of Fred Williamson and Pam Grier posing on a tennis court with three unidentified men [011] circa 1970s
- Autographed portrait of Honey Cone signed by Shelly Clark, inscribed: ‘to Delta, I hope we work together forever’ [012] circa 1970s
- Henry Delton Williams and Barry Gordon [014] circa 1991
- Henry Delton Williams, Martha Reeves, Sherrie Payne, Claudette Robinson and two unidentified men [015] 1995
- Photograph of (left to right) Henry Delton Williams, Sherrie Payne, Freda Payne, and Fran Gray [016] circa 1990s
- Group portrait of (left to right) Freda Payne, Sherrie Payne, and Fran Grey, wearing designs by Henry Delton Williams [017] circa 1990s
- Freda Payne in a quilted jacket designed by Henry Delton Williams [018] circa 1990s
- Colorful suit jacket, reverse: ‘hand sewed by the elder of the tribe in West Africa, designed by Henry Williams,” [019] circa 1990s
- Autographed photo portrait of Martha Reeves, inscribed: “thank you for my lovely birthday gift, the jacket that feels like a hug from a dear friend,” [020A/B] 1997
- Smokey Robinson with Henry Delton Williams [022] 1998
- Lunell Campbell wearing Henry Delton Williams [023] 2007
- The Temptations at the Heroes and Legends Awards [024] 2002-09
- Vivica Fox at the Heroes and Legends Awards [025] 2002-09
- Group photograph of (left to right) Freda Payne, Gallads Knight and Henry Delton Williams at the Heroes and Legends Awards at the Beverly Hills Hotel [026] 2002-09
- Sequence halter top, reverse: ‘design for Martha Reeves and the Vandellas,’ [027] circa 2008
- Group photograph (left to right) Henry Williams, Paul Moody, the Supremes, and Martha and the Vandellas, Las Vegas Hilton [028] circa 2000s
- Unidentified woman wearing a Henry Delton Williams two piece suit [029] undated
- Unidentified man wearing a Henry Delton Williams Kente suit [030] undated
- Henry Delton Williams wearing Kente Cloth two-piece suit [031A/B] undated
- Kente suit (two piece) [032] undated
- Freda Payne performing on stage [033] undated
- Freda Payne wearing a fur coat [034] undated
- Rack of Henry Delton Williams kente suits [035A/B/C] undated
- Henry Delton Williams wearing a fur coat on fashion show stage [037] circa 2000s
- Henry Delton Williams on fashion show stage [038] circa 2000s
- Henry Delton Williams playing the piano [039] undated
- Woman in “Crowns” hat with unidentified students [040] undated
- Man in cowboy hat standing with HAL Awards and Scholarship Dinner sign [041] undated
- Three unidentified women walking red carpet [042] undated
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