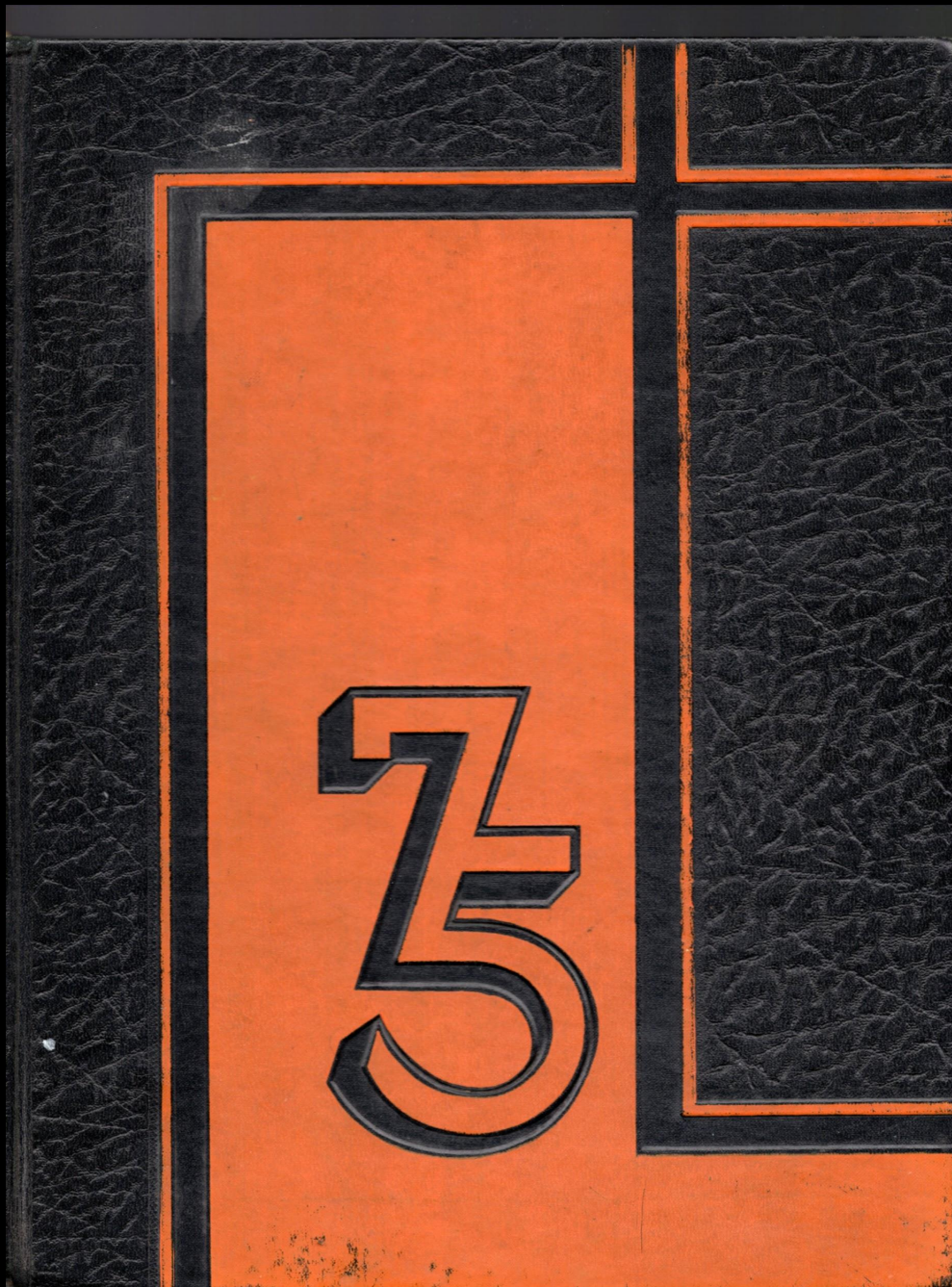
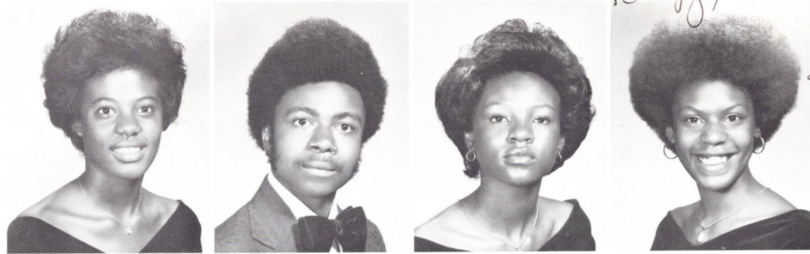


Explore the Archival Materials

The following pages
include additional content
related to select archival
materials on display.



Overbrook High School (Philadelphia, PA) Yearbook, 1975.
Private collection of Beau McCall.



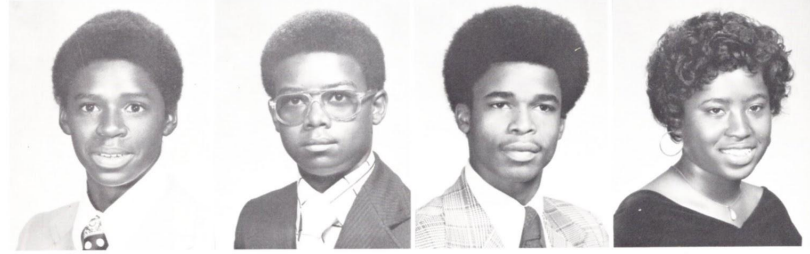
NANCY EVANS

REGINALD EVANS

TERESA EVERETT

NORMA FACEY

*Best of luck to
Crazy Patricia person
Harold
x77*

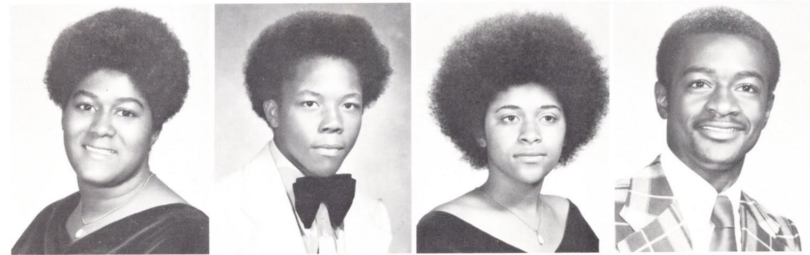


CLIFTON M. FAMBRO

HAROLD FAMBRO

PAUL L. FARMER

MICHELLE FASSETT

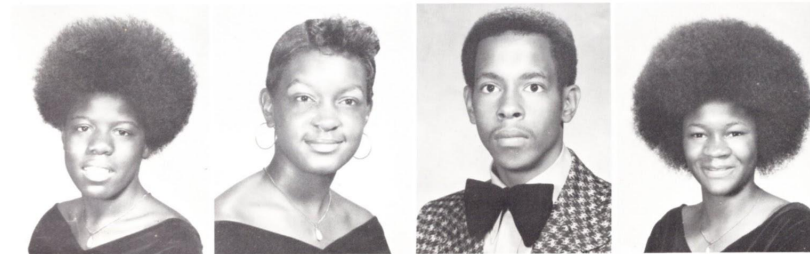


ALBERTA E. FAUSH

BRYANT FELTON

SANYA FERGUSON

CLEVELAND FERRON

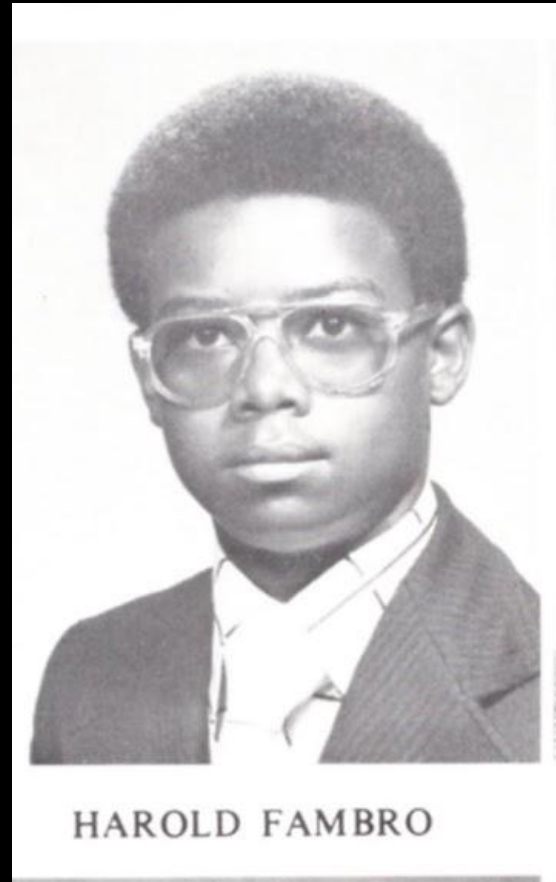


DORETHA FIELDS

RENEE FIELDS

ROLAND E. FINGER

ROSE FISHER



HAROLD FAMBRO

Overbrook High School (Philadelphia, PA) Yearbook, 1975.
Private collection of Beau McCall.

Before he reinvented himself as Beau McCall, he was known by his birth name: Harold Fambro. After his parents married, his surname was changed to McCall. Here he is (second row from the top and second from the left) with his cousin, Clifton M. Fambro aka Miche Fambro (left from McCall). As this yearbook demonstrates, McCall was a popular student in high school known for his creativity and style.

DINNER-DANCE COMMITTEE

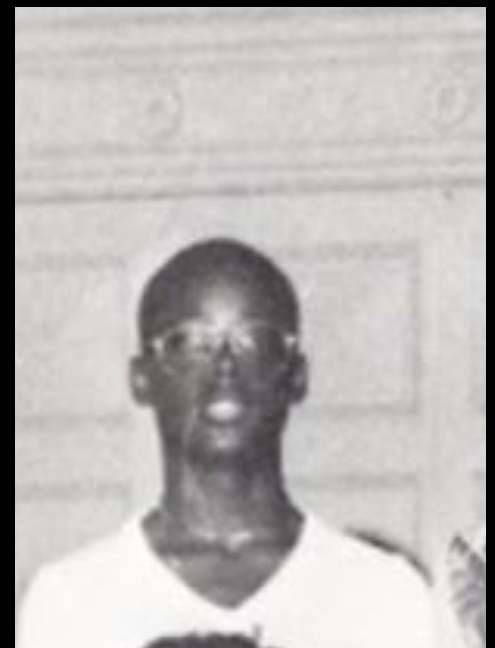


GRADUATION COMMITTEE



Overbrook High School (Philadelphia, PA) Yearbook with a photo of Beau McCall and the dinner-dance committee he served on, 1975. Private collection of Beau McCall.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE



SENIOR PROM COMMITTEE

Overbrook High School (Philadelphia, PA) Yearbook with photos of Beau McCall and the special activities and senior prom committees he served on, 1975.

Private collection of Beau McCall.



The junior class met with many problems concerning their junior prom. There was not enough class encouragement to have the function, so the school dropped all its plans for it. We were to be the only class in the School District of Philadelphia deprived of a major function.

But someone had hope, Willie Barksdale, a member of the junior class, had the time and faith we needed. A date was set, and J & A Caterers, Raw Image, and the junior class looked forward to June 14 as a night to party.

And party we did from 8:00 P.M. to 1:00 A.M. There was plenty of food to eat: salads, meats, knickknacks, and drinks. The music was mellow, and that night for O.H.S. junior class of '74 was fine.

JUNIOR PROM



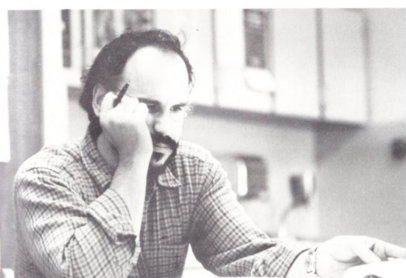
Overbrook High School (Philadelphia, PA) Yearbook with a photo of Beau McCall, 1975. Private collection of Beau McCall.



George Allen, Department Head



Catherine Wisdom



Leslie Kamison

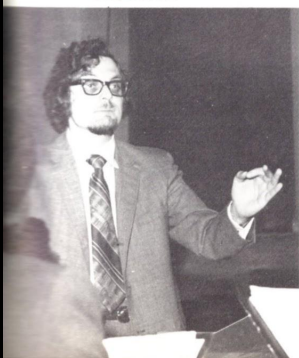


Dolores Farinre

FINE ARTS & MUSIC

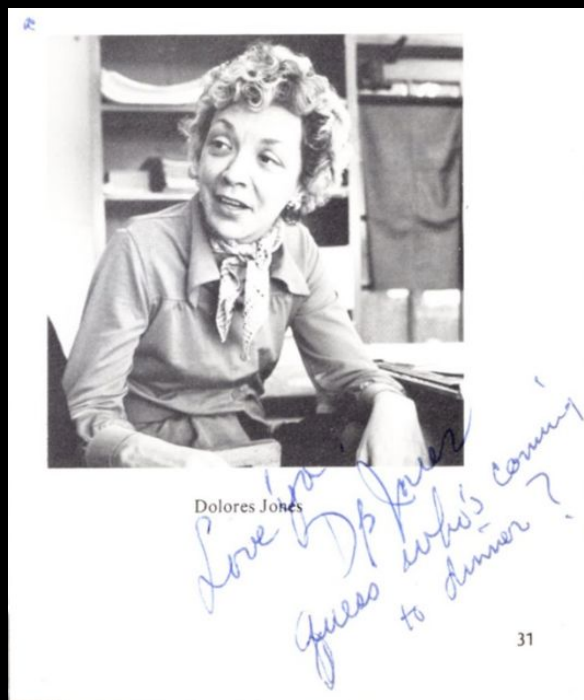
Barry Lozenski

Carl Yaffe



Dolores Jones

*Love you
D.B. Jones
guess who's coming
to dinner?*



Dolores Jones

*Love you
D.B. Jones
guess who's coming
to dinner?*

Overbrook High School (Philadelphia, PA) Yearbook with a note from Dolores Jones, 1975. Private collection of Beau McCall.

McCall's high school teacher, Dolores Jones, encouraged him to enter a popular art contest sponsored by the Gimbels department store in cooperation with the Philadelphia School District. He ended up winning one of the top four prizes in the outstanding crafts and sculpture category and landing in *The Philadelphia Tribune*.

Jones's note states "Love you...guess who's coming to dinner?" And it is signed, "D.B. Jones."

Bowser Assaults Mayoralty Foes

By LEN LEAR
(Of The Tribune Staff)
Philadelphia Party
mayoral candidate Charles
W. Bowser denounced his
opponents Thomas Foglietta
and Mayor Frank Rizzo for
"criminal irresponsibility
in urging violence,"
relating recent remarks by
both men to the murder last
week of a desegregation
planner in Dayton, Ohio.
Dr. Charles A. Glatt, 47,
an Ohio State University
professor, was shot to death
while he was working on a
plan to desegregate
Dayton's public schools.
Neal Bradley Long, who
had a son that would have
been bused across town as a
result of the plan, admitted
shooting Dr. Glatt six times.
Police said Long also admitted
to the sniper-murders of at least 25
Blacks in the past four
years.

"This is precisely the type
of thing I was talking about
last month when I denounce-

ed statements by Rizzo and
Foglietta as irresponsible
and reprehensible," Bowser
said in an exclusive inter-
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"I ALSO relate their
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there are many deranged
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might respond to
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Foglietta by acting violent-
ly against other citizens.

"After all, they might
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referred to by Bowser were
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busing, Foglietta said in a
Southern High School
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Rizzo's comments were
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right into the sides of their
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Young Artists Exhibit Works at Gimbels

Artwork of more than
2,000 students in
Philadelphia public secondary
schools are on exhibit
at Gimbels Department
Store, 9th and Market Sts.,
until Saturday, October 18.
The exhibit, the 15th
annual sponsored by
Gimbels and the School
District of Philadelphia, is
entitled Young Artists '75.

On display are works by
students in grades seven
through 12 in all media
including oils, watercolors,
pastels, crayon, pen and
ink, charcoal and acrylics
as well as sculptured pieces.
Work will be both two and
three-dimensional.

The works are on display
on the 3rd floor during
Gimbels' regular store

hours, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
daily, except Wednesday
when the hours are 10 a.m.
to 9 p.m.

Prizes will be awarded to
all students participating in
the exhibit. Every student
will receive a citation, and
an additional 250 students
will receive gold Gimbels Pin
Awards.

an Is Under Attack Following a Pattern Other DOT Chiefs

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YOUNG ARTISTS — Four of the award winners in the 15th Annual Young Artists Exhibition sponsored by Gimbels in cooperation with the Philadelphia School District pose in the third floor gallery of some 3,000 works of art being displayed through October 18 in the center city store. Shown are (from left): Kenneth Page, student at Strawberry Mansion Junior High with his "Best in Grade 8" work; Timothy Jones, Edison High, with "Best of Grade 11" art; Angel Maldonado, Stoddart-Fleisher Junior High, with his First-Prize winner awarded by the Head House Crafts Committee; and Harold McCall, Overbrook High, one of outstanding crafts and sculpture division winners.

A GROUP of 28 banks
and savings and loan

The Philadelphia Tribune press clippings (photocopy), 1975.
Private collection of Beau McCall.

With the encouragement of his high school teacher, Dolores Jones, McCall entered a popular art contest sponsored by the Gimbels department store in cooperation with the Philadelphia School District. He ended up winning one of the top four prizes in the outstanding crafts and sculpture category and landing in *The Philadelphia Tribune*. Here we can see the type of work McCall created—in this case a rug sculpture—prior to buttons becoming his primary medium.

Bowser Assaults Mayoralty Foes

By LEN LEAR

(Of The Tribune Staff)

Philadelphia Party mayoral candidate Charles W. Bowser denounced his opponents Thomas Foglietta and Mayor Frank Rizzo for "criminal irresponsibility in urging violence," relating recent remarks by both men to the murder last week of a desegregation planner in Dayton, Ohio.

Dr. Charles A. Glatt, 47, an Ohio State University professor, was shot to death while he was working on a plan to desegregate Dayton's public schools. Neal Bradley Long, who had a son that would have been bused across town as a result of the plan, admitted shooting Dr. Glatt six times. Police said Long also admitted to the sniper-murders of at least 25 Blacks in the past four years.

"This is precisely the type of thing I was talking about last month when I denounc-

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"I ALSO relate their remarks to the two assassination attempts on President Ford. Public officials must be especially sensitive to the fact that there are many deranged people in this society who might respond to statements by Rizzo and Foglietta by acting violently against other citizens.

"After all, they might figure that violence is alright; otherwise, why would respected public officials like Rizzo and Foglietta give their approval to it? This is why I say it's reprehensible for people in public life to urge violence in order to get votes."

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two measures were ap-
proved which would pre-
vent the Department of
Health, Education and
Welfare from forcing a
school district to bus pupils
to achieve racial balance.

The irony is that passage
of the measures — which
were tacked onto an HEW
appropriations bill — was
supported by several liberal
Democratic senators, some
of whom had helped to forge
the landmark civil rights
legislation of the 1960's that
is now in danger of being
undercut.

Those backing the anti-
busing amendments in-
cludes Senate Majority
Leader Mike Mansfield
(Mont.), Gaylord Nelson
(Wis.), Stuart Symington
(Mo.), Thomas F. Eagleton
(Mo.), and Joseph Biden
(Del.), author of one of the
two anti-busing riders.
They were joined by Henry
M. Jackson and Warren G.
Magnusen (both of
Washington State).

A GROUP of 28 banks
and savings and loan



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Sportswear Scoop

Patricia Field: Yuppie-Proof

NEW YORK — Patricia Field, probably Manhattan retailing's most prominent downtown doyenne, says people have been asking her why she decided to open a second shop in the midst of a recession.

"First of all, we needed a bigger space — we were busting out of the seams at the other store," explains Field.

In an interview at her new Patricia Field store at 408 Sixth Ave. between Eighth and Ninth Streets. Her first Patricia Field store opened at 10 East Eighth St. in 1971.

"But, you know, our clientele is not affected by the recession because we never had the yuppie market," Field adds. "My customers aren't overmortgaged."

In fact, Field points out that while her clientele — which includes a host of downtown performers — have never had a lot of disposable income, they spend steadily.

"This is a cash economy, not a credit business," says Field, whose business nevertheless accepts credit cards. She expects sales to reach about \$4 million for the first year. "They're into 'wear it today, lose it tonight and buy something new tomorrow.'"

Field describes the new place as "sweet." "It's like a little department store," she says, referring to the store's layout as a "classic format."

Of course Field's idea of "sweet" strays a bit from the norm. With seven mirrored disco balls hanging over the atrium area, walls covered in pink quilted satin, shelves painted red and edged in gold, and blue metallic fringe separating the front of the store from the back, the space is a downtown diva's dream shopping environ. Of course, lots of pretend-divas love to shop there, too.

The three-level shop is about 6,000 square feet in total. The front half of the first floor is filled with hip accessories like clear vinyl handbags and funky hats. There is also a fully stocked cosmetics counter, a "wig bar" and loads of costume jewelry. Beyond that on the first floor is the new men's wear area, where youngsters from diverse backgrounds — all of whom seem to be vitally interested in downtown fashion

and most of whom are involved in the local club scene — mingle together and with tourists, checking out the big, baggy denim looks from Living Doll.

Upstairs, the women's department is the sort of place where young men feel comfortable trying on short, tight skirts and a slim young woman tries to decide whether the tiny, bright orange nylon and Lycra spandex short shorts she's squeezed into "are supposed to be this tight."

Lingerie and swimwear are also on the second floor. Some of the more unusual merchandise in the women's area includes sheer, feathered swing shifts and tops, \$120 and

\$95, from Kanae & Onyx; sheer polyester anoraks in a rainbow of colors, \$38, from Busy Girl; fake ostrich-trimmed denim shorts and vests, \$70, from Jorjee; and black leather and stretch pieces, \$130 for a vest to \$250 for black stretch and leather pants, from Mambo. Stretch pieces from Field's own line, House of Field, range from \$68 for leggings to \$128 for catsuits.

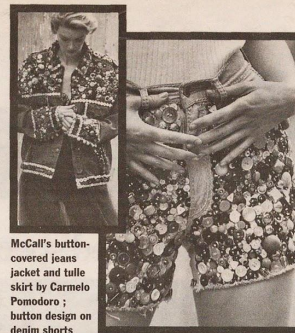
On the third floor a full service hair, wig and beauty salon is slated to open by the summer's end.

The original store, about three blocks away, does about \$2 million annually, according to Field. While she thinks the neighborhood could handle two Patricia Field stores, the focus of the original — which is about 1,700 square feet — is going to be changed to lingerie.

"This is going to be our version of lingerie, of course," she says. "I want to expand into the whole look, you know, for go-go dancers, strippers, entertainers. They're a large part of our clientele."

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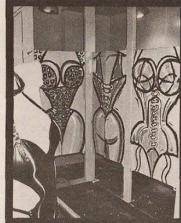


McCall's button-covered jeans jacket and tulle skirt by Carmelo Pomodoro; button design on denim shorts

PHOTOS BY THOMAS ANTONACCIO



Patricia Field at the wig bar; muralled dressing room doors by Martin



Buttons and Beau

NEW YORK — It takes **Beau McCall** up to two months to apply the 1,500 buttons that go into creating one of his signature designs, which are really wearable art.

Because of the production time involved, McCall had taken orders only from private clients. Now he is offering a 15-piece denim collection to retailers.

It's a collection of samples he has made over several years, buying the basic items either used or at retail and then decorating them.

He sees upscale, fashion forward boutiques, such as New York's Martha International, as a prime target for his wares. He has approached **Lynn Manulis**, president and creative director of Martha Inc. She said she hopes to display the line in her windows and take special orders.

The line includes jeans jackets, a bolero jacket, shorts, bustiers, caps and vests. A jeans jacket with black, green and red buttons wholesales for \$650, a bustier covered with white and gold buttons is \$200, and a cap is \$100.

When he was selling to private clients exclusively, McCall's would wear one of his jackets to events where the crowd included wealthy, fashion-conscious or artistically inclined guests. People often asked about the jackets, and sometimes he would make a sale.

Now he has enlisted the help of **Billy Keye**, a former model and an entrepreneur, to act as his sales rep.

Keye's plan is to have one or two stores purchase the entire collection for the first season and then continue the button concept as an item business while McCall develops other sportswear concepts.

He begins each design by procuring the denim apparel ready made — used or new. "I only work on denim because it's more durable. These pieces are something you can have for a lifetime." ■

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MADE IN ITALY

CASHMERE, SILK, & CASHMERE/SILK KNITS

BY APPOINTMENT 212.582.0042

Women's Wear Daily press clipping (photocopy), 1992.
Private collection of Beau McCall.

McCall's first major press opportunity came with this *Women's Wear Daily* write-up by award-winning journalist and fashion expert, Constance C.R. White. It is notable as it shows how McCall has successfully blurred the lines between fashion and wearable art, with his work being praised as the latter in what's been referred to as the "Bible of fashion."

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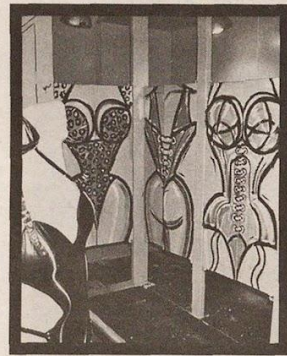
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PHOTOS BY KYLE ERICKSEN



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MADE IN ITALY

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BY APPOINTMENT 212.582.0042

Beau! Please bring one showstopper
The *Lois*

HARLEM INSTITUTE OF FASHION

in cooperation with

The

National Association of Milliners, Dressmakers and Tailors, Inc.

will celebrate their

27th Anniversary

on

Saturday, October 30, 1993

*with a premiere showing of a 53 piece collection
of the late great designer*

Peter Davy

at the

*Black Fashion Museum
155 West 126th Street*

6:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Reservations

V.I.P. (Includes reception): \$50

Raffle tickets on original oil painting by Julius F. Lane

General Admission: \$25

The Harlem Institute of Fashion (HIF) 27th Anniversary Program, 1993. Private collection of Beau McCall.

On this program, HIF founder Lois K. Alexander-Lane requests that McCall bring one of his "showstopper" wearable artworks for the runway show. Indeed, McCall's button ensembles were some of the most popular pieces at the HIF runway shows and Alexander-Lane's comment attests to the power of his work.



HONORARY CHAIRPERSON:

Alma J. Goss

National President

National Association of Milliners, Dressmakers and Tailors

HONOREES:

Special presentation of
The Harlem Institute of fashion Appreciation Awards

Barbara Hairston

Laura P. James

Mary Mallard

Johnnie Marshall

Cedric J. Washington

Lillian Williams

Black Fashion Museum Appreciation Award

Mrs. Grace Johnson

Museum donor and sister of Peter Davy



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the Black Fashion Museum, and the
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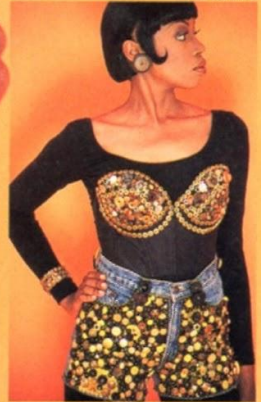
Sisters in Style magazine, 1996. Private collection of Beau Mccall.

Here, McCall received one of his earliest spreads in a magazine to showcase his wearable art. Several pieces in the spread are on view in the *Buttons on the Body* section.

button up!

Button yourself into trend-setting apparel and you're sure to be the show stopper of the season.

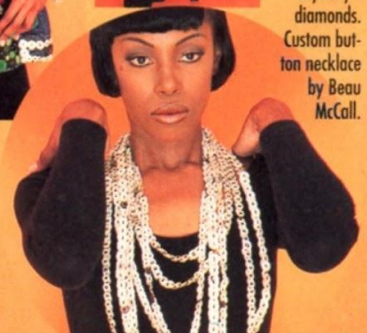
My evening is precious and so is my apparel. You'll be "ret-to-go" in this little number. Blue denim bustier, shorts, bracelet and earrings by Beau McCall.



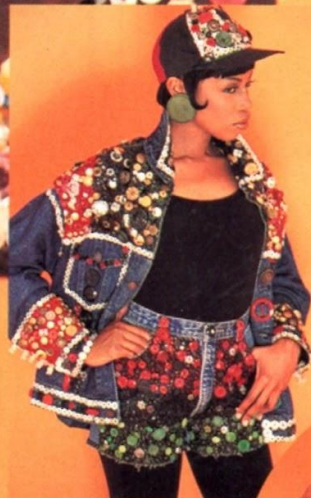
Everyone will stand at attention and you will have 2,000 buttons at your side. Black denim jacket and earrings by Beau McCall.



With this matchless accessory, you won't be worried about anybody's diamonds. Custom button necklace by Beau McCall.



All decked out with everywhere to go. This ensemble stops the traffic! Button/blue denim, basketball cap, jacket, shorts and earrings by Beau McCall.



With this piece of art in your closet, there will be no more debating about what to wear. Brown denim bolero jacket, corset and earrings by Beau McCall.

Produced and fashion coordinated by Robert Dea Deadman. Photographer and Makeup Artist, Daniel Green, Jr. Hair, Margaret Johnson for Unique Touch Hair Salon, Brooklyn, NY. Models, Greta and Tammy-Silk. Model Management. Unitards Danskin. Boots, Stuart Weitzman.



Ultimate Black Hair Guide magazine, 2000.
Private collection of Beau McCall.

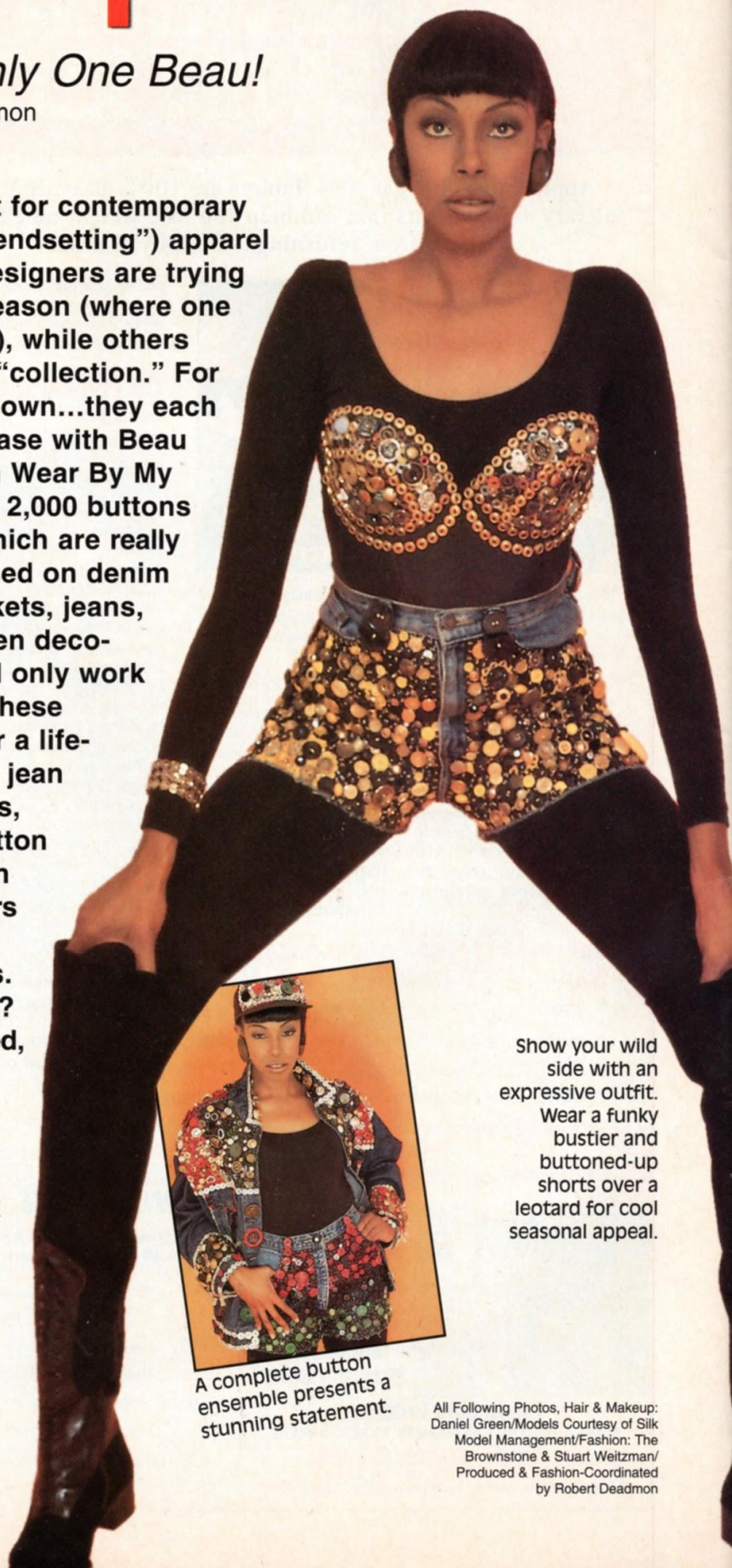
Contemporary Directions

Many Buttons And Only One Beau!

By Robert Deadmon

Designer Beau McCall sees the market for contemporary (what he calls "fashion-forward and trendsetting") apparel changing in the 21st Century. Some designers are trying to make a cohesive collection every season (where one piece is complemented by every other), while others have an item-driven line rather than a "collection." For the latter, single pieces stand on their own...they each make a powerful impact. Such is the case with Beau McCall, owner and designer for Button Wear By My Own 2-Hands. Beau applies more than 2,000 buttons to create just *one* signature design, which are really wearable art. The entire collection is based on denim clothing. He buys the basic items (jackets, jeans, tops) either used or at retail prices, then decorates them to suit his client's tastes. "I only work on denim because it's more durable. These pieces are something you can have for a lifetime," Beau explains. The line includes jean jackets, a bolero jacket, shorts, corsets, bustiers, caps and vests, even to a button jewelry line! Because of the production time involved, Beau originally took orders only from private clients. Now he offers a 20-piece denim collection to retailers. Why are Beau's designs so in demand? Because they only employ what is needed, and nothing extraneous. One item of Beau's collection is enough to spruce up your entire wardrobe...his fashions are a combination of timeless clothes and endearing art. Beau McCall's work is extremely innovatively fastidious and his talent most compelling. But, see for yourself!

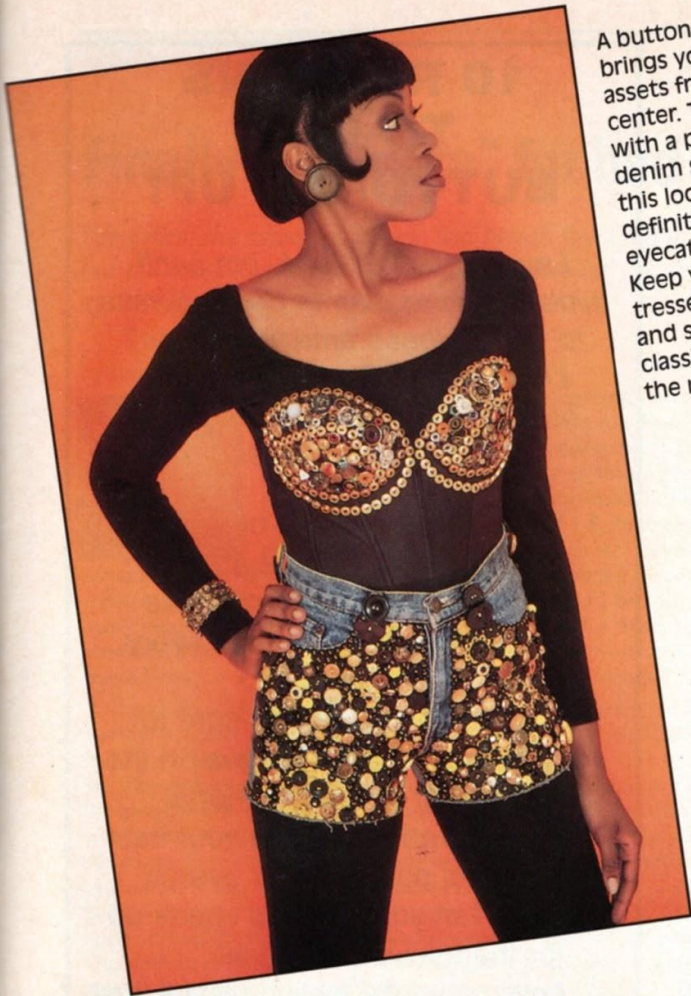
Beau McCall
Button Wear By My Own 2-Hands
By appointment only
(212) 932-8235, New York City



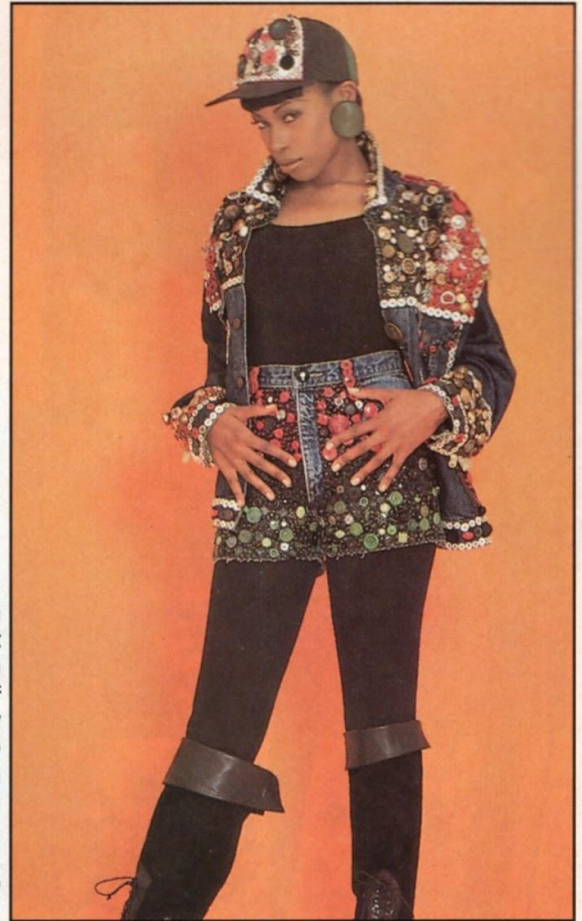
A complete button ensemble presents a stunning statement.

Show your wild side with an expressive outfit. Wear a funky bustier and buttoned-up shorts over a leotard for cool seasonal appeal.

All Following Photos, Hair & Makeup: Daniel Green/Models Courtesy of Silk Model Management/Fashion: The Brownstone & Stuart Weitzman/Produced & Fashion-Coordinated by Robert Deadmon



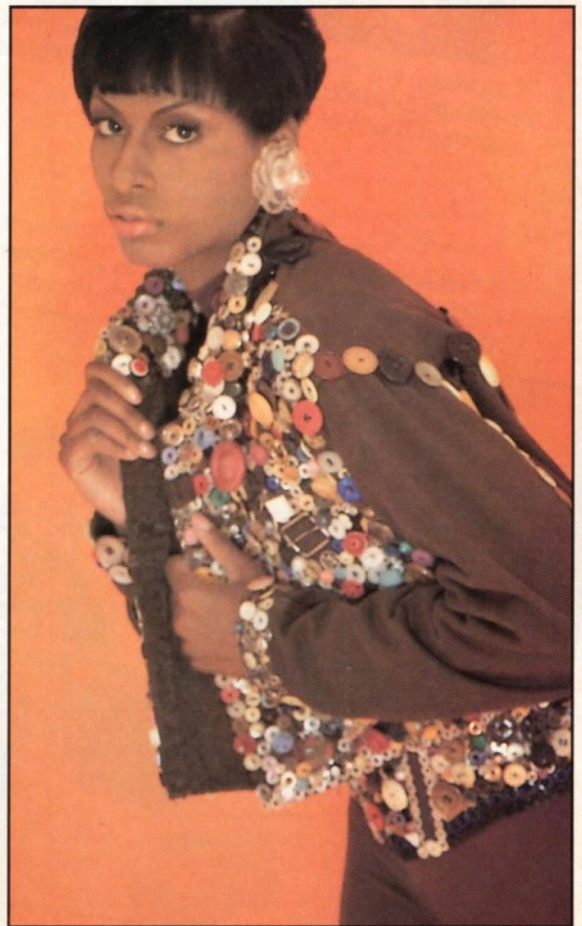
A button bustier brings your assets front and center. Teamed with a pair of denim shorts, this look is definitely eye-catching. Keep your tresses slick and simple in a classic bob for the most appeal.



Make a statement without saying a word! If you really want to be noticed, wear a button-down outfit...shorts, cap and jacket, all in blue denim.



Check out this black denim jacket festooned with buttons. It's the perfect addition to any casual fall outfit (and it will ward off any chilly breezes too).



Buttons, buttons everywhere! Pair a cute pixie cut with a brown denim button bolero and even button earrings for a perfectly playful look.

Contemporary Directions

10 REASONS TO GET BUTTONED UP!

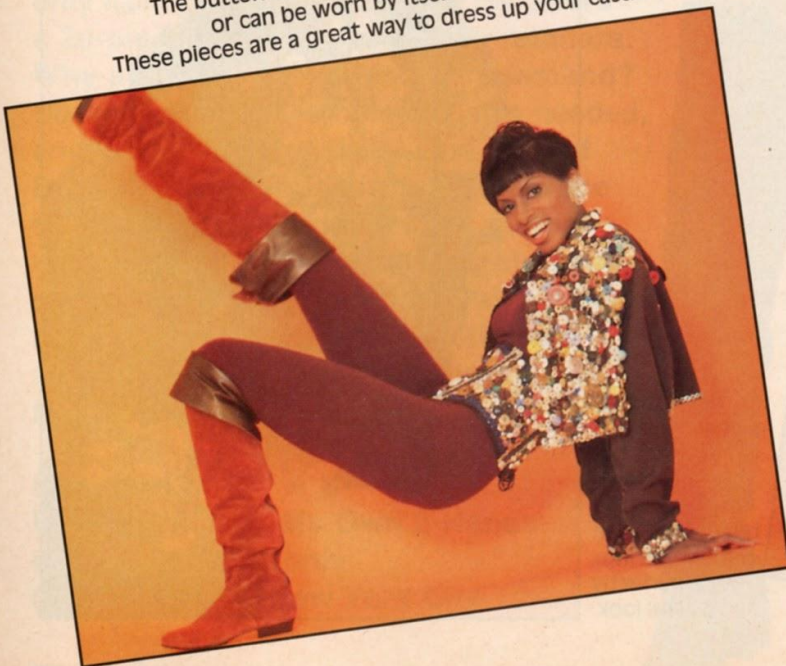
Love these fashions, but can't think of any reason to treat yourself to one of these amazing styles? Don't worry! We have thought of them for you! Now go ahead and indulge yourself!

1. You need a pick-me-up...all the clothes in your closet are so boring. Just any one of these items will add pizzazz to every single outfit you own!
2. Any "buttoned" look is sure to turn heads...and you *are* on the lookout for a new boyfriend!
3. You're tired of making your hair the focal point of your overall style. Let your clothes speak up for themselves for once!
4. Anytime you're feeling playful, just don a cute piece of button jewelry to instantly express yourself! (Button jewelry looks great with anything from casual wear to evening wear, by the way.)
5. You want to stand out from the crowd...in more ways than one!
6. You need something to wear with that pair of blue suede shoes you bought last year.
7. You want to buy a little something special to celebrate your recent promotion...what could be more special than this?
8. You've been looking for a gift for that person in your life who already has everything!
9. T-shirts and jeans just don't do it for you anymore...you want something with a little more substance.
10. And the best reason to get buttoned up? Because you want to, of course!



Dress up any little black dress with this shimmering, glimmering vest by Beau McCall. A simple bob, parted on one side adds the perfect touch of sleek sophistication.

The button corset seen here complements the jacket, or can be worn by itself as a standout accessory. These pieces are a great way to dress up your casual style.





Shiny
Objects,
Sharp
Minds
20+
Jewelry
Luminaries



Poster
Inside
75 years
americraftmag.org
june/july 2018

&
Piñatas,
Buttons,
Surfboards

American Craft magazine, 2018.
Private collection of Beau McCall.

Several years after his successful return from hiatus, McCall was profiled by the esteemed *American Craft* magazine where writer Joyce Lovelace proclaimed him to be the "Button Man" writing, "In the hands of Beau McCall, humble buttons become poetry."

American Craft Council

craftcouncil.org/magazine/article/button-man

Button Man

Beau McCall uses everyday fasteners to tell big stories.

Thursday, July 19, 2018

June/July 2018 issue of *American Craft* magazine

Author Joyce Lovelace



Redpotionno.1 (2014) celebrates a character in Ntozake Shange's play, for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf.

Beau McCall

In the hands of Beau McCall, humble buttons become poetry.

Consider *Redpotionno.1*, a sculpture he created for the 2014 group show "I Found God in Myself," which celebrated the 40th anniversary of Ntozake Shange's acclaimed play *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf*. Inspired by "One," a poetic monologue by a character known as the Lady in Red, it's a cast-iron clawfoot tub covered in buttons, most of them red. Inside, the subtle figure of a woman reclines, cleansing her body and spirit, leaving a residue of stars and flowers, glitter and rhinestones, all rendered in whimsical buttons.

To conceive the work, McCall drew on a memory of the 1982 PBS production of the play, with actress Lynn Whitfield as the Lady in Red. “She was young, sensuous, just oozing sex appeal across my TV screen. I never forgot,” he says. At the exhibition opening, he got to meet the playwright herself. Looking at his interpretation of her poem, she said, “No, that’s not Lynn Whitfield, sweetheart. That’s me. This is about me,” he recounts with a chuckle.

Such are the special moments McCall enjoys these days as an artist in full bloom, one who has worked exclusively, devotedly, with buttons for the better part of four decades. A longtime New Yorker based in Harlem, he uses buttons – hundreds and thousands of them – to tell stories: big, overarching narratives of life, love, family, and the African American experience, but also the tiny tales contained in individual buttons.

He loves everything about buttons: their history as ornament and fastener, the endless variety of designs, even the different sounds they make when hit together. (Shell and pearl are “high-pitched, clicky”; plastics have a flat tone, “like tap dancing.”) He makes jewelry and small objects but also wall hangings and freestanding pieces. “I like a large canvas,” he says. “The more buttons, the more of a story I can tell.”

His own story began in Philadelphia, where he was born in 1957. His earliest ambition was to be a roller derby star – “I would put my skates on and just glide.” But at around 10, he became enamored with his mother’s strappy sandals. “I asked would she buy me a pair? She said she couldn’t, because they were women’s sandals.” Undaunted, McCall cut up his Keds and attached colored wire left behind by the man who’d installed their telephone.

“I said, ‘Mom, these are boy’s sandals. I made them.’ She was flabbergasted.” From then on, she nurtured his creativity, enrolling him in art programs and making sure he always had whatever supplies he needed as he went through material phases: macramé, papier-mâché, toothpicks, terrariums, even leftover chicken bones he’d turn into jewelry.

He got into fashion in his teens and taught himself to sew by taking clothing apart and putting it back together to his own liking. He bleached his jeans, wore them with one leg cut off – “Flo Jo gets the credit for that, but I did it way before she did” – and added embellishments. His flair was such that nobody gave him flak for his personal style, which was gender-neutral ahead of its time. “I just felt like clothing didn’t have a sex. If I could pull it off, then I would wear it.” Down in his parents’ basement, where the ironing board was set up, a jar of odd buttons sat on a stairstep. “Every time I ironed my clothes, I would stare at it,” McCall remembers. “After a while, I started having this dialogue with the buttons. I opened the jar up, took some buttons out, looked at them, put them back. This went on for a couple of months. Then one day it hit me: I should utilize these.” Soon he was decorating his sweaters and jackets with buttons, and turning heads wherever he wore them.

After high school, he headed to New York, hoping to break into the fashion industry. Through the 1980s and into the '90s, he was active with the Black Fashion Museum in Harlem, which put on shows where designers could cultivate their craft and be seen. He got further exposure going to art openings around the city clad in his button-bedecked creations. He had some success selling his work and was even written up in *Women's Wear Daily*.

By the late '90s, however, he was beset by personal problems, including the loss of many friends to AIDS. "I stopped creating for maybe 10 years. I could not muster up the energy. It was not a good period for me." Then he met his partner, journalist and curator Peter "Souleo" Wright, and "my life changed. He understood me as an artist." With Souleo's encouragement, McCall resumed working with buttons in 2010, this time in a sculptural way.

His work has since been in a number of traveling exhibitions, several of them organized by Souleo, including "I Found God in Myself." Souleo also conceived "Motown to Def Jam," a 2013 group show about the great blues, soul, and hip-hop record labels and the eras reflected in their music. For that one, McCall made three works: a 3-foot yellow 45 rpm disc adapter (a nostalgia item for boomers; "young people have no idea what it is"); a crown in tribute to Stevie Wonder's song "Happy Birthday," celebrating Martin Luther King Jr.; and *Dear Mom*, inspired by the 1973 hit "I'll Always Love My Mama" by the Philly group the Intruders, showing McCall's arm proffering flowers to his mother, still his biggest supporter.

"Music is a big part of my life," says the artist, who works late at night, with jazz, funk, and "a little country-and-western here and there" in the background. "If it's good to my ears, I'll listen to it." His buttons can come from flea markets, thrift shops, and his mother's collection. "When I get them secondhand, they've had another life. I give them a permanent life, their last destination," he says. For big orders and specialty items, his main sources are Lou Lou Buttons and Tender Buttons, both in New York, where he's a kid in a candy store. He buys white buttons in bulk and has them dyed to order. To make a piece, he often has plexiglass laser-cut into the desired shape, covers the form in fabric (usually sturdy denim), then sews button after button, in two layers – a bottom, uniform base and a decorative top. It takes anywhere from three to six months of patient handwork before he can present the finished product to the world.

"Sometimes I stand back and watch the response of the folks viewing my work, and I get a charge," he says. "It makes people happy, smile, feel good. It's well worth it, after all the time and effort and love I put into these pieces." And does he still wear his creations to show openings? "Of course," he says, laughing merrily. "Jackets, jewelry, armor, bracelets. So when you see me, you know which work belongs to me."

For McCall, his art is a way to leave his mark. He refers again to a Ntozake Shange poem, a line about wishing to be unforgettable, a memory. "This is how I feel about my work. I want to share my legacy," he says. "I feel like I'm just getting started, still emerging. This adventure is just blowing my mind. It's a very good time."



Clam magazine, 2022. Private collection of Beau McCall.



Beau McCall wearing his button apron. Photo by Lisa DuBois

BEAU MCCALL

BEAU MCCALL

My name is Beau McCall aka The Button Man aka Count Buttons aka Sir Buttons. I come from Down South Philadelphia, two blocks below Broad Street where the "PJ's" (aka public housing buildings) used to meet at 1212 Fitzwater Street. I am currently living in Harlem, USA.

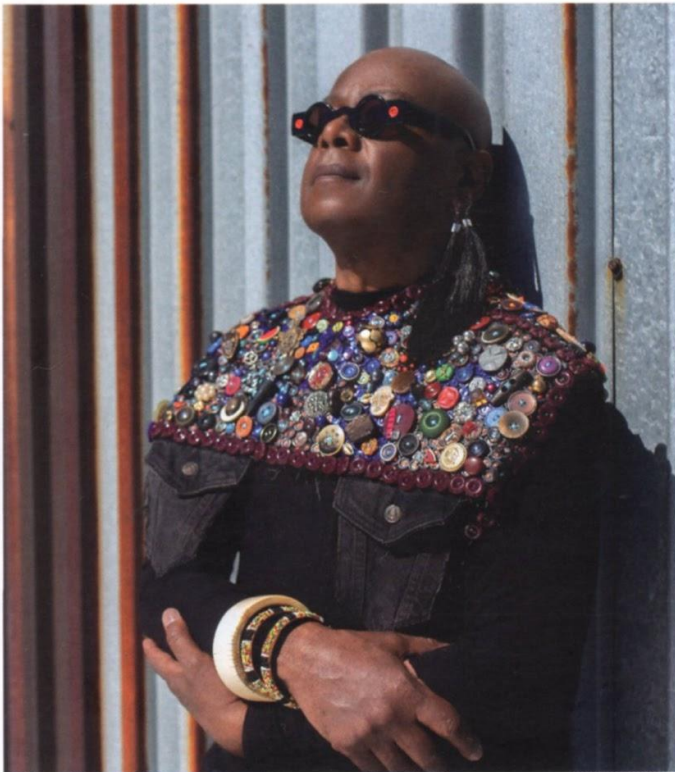
I don't think there is such a thing as a rebirth. In my mind, we all have different facets of our personality. Those different elements of who we are is brought out by the type of people we're surrounded by and our life experiences. To some that is a rebirth but to me it's just an extension of your total self. Resistance for me is staying away from all negativity regarding people, places, and things. To a certain degree. I am always trying to stay in my own zone for as long as possible and avoid outside interference and distractions. I prefer to be in my own bubble. I am resisting negativity. I am a very intuitive person. At certain points I can sense negativity and ill vibrations. Immediately, when I feel those things I will remove myself. If it won't be beneficial for me in the long run then I don't need to be in those spaces.

My art is about resisting negativity. When you wear my pieces or view my visual art they should bring a sense of joy and positivity to those who encounter it. Even with my socially conscious works I am making a statement challenging whatever negative force there may be.

Lately, I've been focused on creating new work for my first-ever retrospective Beau McCall: Buttons On! opening in 2024 at the Fuller Craft Museum. During this process it feels more like a remix than a rebirth. My work constantly repurposes materials from buttons to denim to t-shirts. And it's all tied to my per-

sonal history or world history in some way or another. Rebirth can sometimes be interpreted as being divorced from the past. So I like to say I am experiencing a remix—taking the past and the present and placing it in a new light. For example, I made a series of button yokes where I strip down a denim jacket and just embellish the yoke area. In Button Yoke: Motherland I used African-inspired buttons to reference my African heritage such as cowrie shell and mask buttons. But the remix part is that I am adding in buttons that also speak to my cultural identity as a Black American. You can see that with the watermelon and pretzel buttons. And I have a Pisces button and the number 13 on the piece since that's part of my personal identity. My parents and I share 13 as our birth date in different months. This piece is all about remixing materials along with my past and my present identity.

Do you feel like you were born creative or was it something you had to learn? The answer to the above question is that I feel like I was born creative. I knew I was creative from an early age but I didn't understand where the energy was coming from. I didn't know why I was creative. As I began to go on my artistic journey I understood that a lot of it comes from the universe, ancestors, and the way I grew up. I think with every generation we strive to become a little closer to peace within ourselves. People are more conscious of their mental, physical, and spiritual health. I think with that growing sense of enlightenment we are resisting a lot of the negative teachings handed down to us generation after generation. I hope everyday that we each get a little bit closer to peace and freedom. [...]



Beau McCall wearing his Button Yoke: Motherland. Photo by Lisa DuBois

Drawing inspiration from the vast button collection of his mother and family, Beau McCall creates wearable and visual art by applying clothing buttons onto mostly upcycled fabrics, materials, and objects. With deliberate focus the buttons are arranged to stimulate one's curiosity and imagination, while simultaneously drawing attention to the unique history of buttons. Thereby McCall's work generates a discussion surrounding many topics such as pop culture and social justice.

As a creative artist, McCall began his professional career in Harlem in the 1980s after arriving from his native, Philadelphia with nothing more than two hundred dollars, a duffel bag and a few buttons in his pocket from home. Circa 1988 he made his critically acclaimed wearable art debut at The Harlem Institute of Fashion (HIF) show for HARLEM WEEK. McCall went on to become an established force within HIF's Black Fashion Museum collective presenting at their shows consecutively for ten years, as well being featured in their museum exhibitions and prestigious events. During this time, McCall's visually captivating work was featured in the fashion bible *Women's Wear Daily* and on the PBS version of George C. Wolfe's *The Colored Museum*.

McCall has also created a wearable art line called, Triple T-shirts. For these pieces, he upcycles three T-shirts by combining them into one flowing garment that can be worn in six different ways. Each style—from poncho to hoodie to shawl and beyond—brings dynamic versatility to traditional T-shirts. The shirts are curated to form a narrative about various socially-conscious and lighthearted themes.

McCall eventually applied his mastery of the button to visual art. Since then, he's been enthusiastically proclaimed by *American Craft* magazine as "The Button Man." His visual and wearable art has been included in exhibitions at The Museum at FIT, Nordstrom, the African American Museum in Philadelphia, Houston Museum of African American Culture, Charles H.



Beau's kool-aid art piece

Wright Museum of African American History, Stax Museum of American Soul Music, the Langston Hughes House in partnership with the inaugural Columbia University Wallach Art Gallery Uptown triennial and StoryCorps, and Rush Arts Gallery.

McCall's work is held in the permanent collection of public institutions and by private individuals including the Museum of Art and Design (New York), Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia), Victoria and Albert Museum (London), The Museum at FIT (New York), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York), Amistad Research Center (New Orleans), The Museum of Modern Art Library (New York), Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art (New York), Stonewall National Museum & Archives (Fort Lauderdale), and The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Library (San Francisco), Cyndi Lauper's True Colors Residence, and Debbie Harry of Blondie. McCall has been featured in the *NY Times*, *Associated Press*, *NPR*, *L.A. Times*, and more. In addition, he has served as a teaching artist at the Newark Museum of Art, the New York Public Library, and the Harlem Arts Alliance.

In 2021, McCall released his debut artists' book titled, *REWIND: MEMORIES ON REPEAT*, commissioned and published by SHINE Portrait Studio@ Express Newark, Rutgers University-Newark. The book honors the legacy of ten of McCall's deceased friends through collages composed of archival photos and images from his button artwork. The collages capture the late 1970s to the mid-1980s, from Philadelphia to New York, during the LGBTQ+ rights movement, the height of disco music and the AIDS crisis. In 2024, McCall will debut his first-ever retrospective titled, *Beau McCall: Buttons On!* at Fuller Craft Museum.

Through his work, McCall remains committed to channeling and contributing to the universal cultural legacy one button at a time.

For more information: BeauMcCall.com or IG: @beau_mccall

CARPAZINE

Underground.Graffiti.PunkArt Magazine

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Iceland Graffiti

Exclusive Interview with artist

Beau McCall

Carpazine magazine cover featuring Beau McCall, 2019.
Private collection of Beau McCall.

This magazine is significant as it is McCall's first-ever cover story.
The photos were shot by Greg Frederick.

Beau McCall

carpazine.com/beau-mccall

BEAU McCALL

Carpazine: Thanks for doing the interview, Beau. Give the readers some background information about yourself?

Beau McCall: I'm known as: The Button Man, Sir Buttons, Lord Buttons, and Count Buttons. I have these nicknames because in my art I work with clothing buttons. I've always been a creative person whether in music, fashion, or visual arts.

I've dabbled in the arts all my life and made pit stops here and there. I was in a punk rock band called Strange Beauties with two of my friends. I made all these crazy outfits for our performances with kool-aid as dye, shredded shirts, and collage shoes made out of paper. I had to redo the shoes every night because they'd get worn out after performances.

Creating the attire for my band got me more focused on fashion design. From there I started making wearable art using clothing buttons like denim shorts, jackets, and so forth. I did that for a period of time, got featured in Women's Wear Daily and some other highlights before I burned out.

I took a 10-year hiatus before I reinvented myself around the middle of the 2000's as a visual artist. And now, I just call myself a creative artist and I do whatever inspires me artistically.

Carpazine: What do you think is unique about your work / style / technique / those in your genre?

Beau McCall: First and foremost, my work is unique because of the medium. There aren't a whole lot of visual artists who work with buttons as their primary medium. Aside from that, my process is unique. Most of my work has two layers—a base layer and a decorative

layer that are simultaneously hand-sewn. It is very tedious and laborious work. Other button artists have different techniques—some use glue, some use wire and string as the primary base. We each have a unique and interesting technical process.

Carpazine: What have you most recently completed and / or what are you working on now?

Beau McCall: When I finish a project I always have leftover buttons, thread, fabric, or whatever materials I was using. So most recently, I took some leftover items and started making these wearable faces. Tribal masks from Africa inspired it. But I am not directly referencing any particular tribe. The face is created as a stream of consciousness. I just grab whatever is around and let the vibe and energy dictate what the face looks like.

I am also working on a t-shirt project called Triple-Ts. It started with my collection of my own personal t-shirts. I am a hoarder when it comes to clothing. Before I decide to donate clothes I try to repurpose it. I came up with the idea of combining two or more t-shirts into one wearable work. I make stories and narratives within the works so each one has a theme. You can wear the shirt about five different ways since it has three holes for the neck. The easy part is physically putting the shirts together. The hard part is putting the narrative together. Since each shirt has a theme I have to go hunting down shirts that will match a theme and create a story. I have sports, pop culture, social justice, art, and other themes. It's a lot of fun and people love the shirts. I am kind of addicted to this project right now.

Carpazine: How long do you spend on a work or exhibition? How do you begin?

Beau McCall: I start with the theme of an exhibition and from there I brainstorm ideas. Most of my work relates to my life. I cannot produce anything that I have no knowledge or experience of. I have to indulge in it one hundred percent so that when I converse about the story I am factual about my piece.

The amount of time I spend on a project depends on the scale of my piece. It can go anywhere from a month to six months. The longest piece I made was the bathtub for the exhibition “i found god in myself: a celebration of Dr. Ntozake Shange’s ‘for colored girls..’” I had no idea how to sew buttons onto a cast iron bathtub that weighed about 500 pounds. It took a month of trial and error. I had to find the right drill and map out how to sew buttons onto the bathtub. Once I found the technique it became easier but it was still a lengthy process of sewing for 12 hours a day for about five months.

Carpazine: What is most challenging about what you do? Most rewarding?

Beau McCall: The most challenging part is developing the idea and sticking to the idea. Once I start there is no turning back because the work is so tedious. Everything is hand-sewn and I sew anywhere from a 1,000 to 3,000 buttons depending on what it is. I can’t stop in the middle and say I want to do something else.

The early stages of creating the work are boring. I am mostly creating my outline, getting the piece prepped, and so forth. But I get excited once I am in the middle of the process and I see the shape coming to life. It becomes rewarding as the idea physically manifests into something I can see and touch.

Carpazine: What does your work mean to you?

Beau McCall: My work is my history and my legacy. It’s the evidence that I was here, that I existed, and that I contributed something positive to this world. I don’t plan to have any children. So I consider my work my children.

Carpazine: What inspired you (in general)?

Beau McCall: I am inspired by life—walking down the street going shopping, looking up at the sky, and having conversations with random people. Music, fashion, and other visual artists inspire me too.

Carpazine: What role does the artist have in society?

Beau McCall: Our role is to tell a story and to touch people. We are to connect with what's going on in real time. If the work an artist created doesn't have any emotional resonance with people then there's no point to it.

Carpazine: What do you dislike about the art world?

Beau McCall: Without the artists there wouldn't be an art world. And too often the artist gets the short end of the stick. There is a lot of inequity artists must deal with, especially when it comes to being fairly compensated or compensated at all for one's work and time. I know the art world is comprised of a lot of key players but artists deserve a little bit more fucking respect.

Carpazine: Is there a town or place in the world you consider inspiring?

Beau McCall: New York. It is the melting pot. You can see any and everything here. I am inspired by all of the various vultures that exist here.

Carpazine: Can you give the readers your Website and Facebook addresses so they can check you out?

Beau McCall: www.beaumccall.com

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