

Why Is Art Important — continued from page 2

reflect the cultural identity of the resident. I pause to notice whether the art is an original or a print; whether it is by an artist whom I admire or am familiar with. Needless to say, I am encouraged each time I find walls replete with paintings, particularly if they reflect a bias towards my own culture.

One of the things which distinguishes art from the mundane is that while beauty is emphasized, the manner in which it is expressed is the critical factor. The artistic expression, be it paintings, poems, plays or whatever, must also in some way reflect or represent a natural occurrence. As with the moment's hesitation while walking in the snow, it must capture a certain element of timelessness. As with the momentary hesitation when there is a thought inside a heart-beat, though endless, it never loses the characteristic of movement. In a word, it must be happening. When a painting or song or when a play or poem expresses a characteristic outside of time, then the drawing changes in purpose and becomes art. When we look at paintings and become immediately aware of ourselves and our beauty, then it is art.

There are times when we pause for a moment and reflect on our past experiences. We look to see if we have grown. We attempt to assess which things are meaningful and what lessons have been learned. Art is the perfect vehicle to stimulate this type of introspection. Occasionally I will look at a painting and find a remarkable insight regarding something which I thought to be very ordinary, but which had somehow become quite interesting. When I see a painting of an old barn, winding road or a weather-beaten door, I imagine what stories

they could tell. I wonder what shared experience exists or I wonder why I find it beautiful.

Finally art has a very unique characteristic. There is a certain mystique about it, particularly when we look at an abstract painting or a piece of modern art that does not remind of us anything familiar to us. Sometimes poetry can be so obscure as to seem meaningless or a play may be positively boring. Yet many of these expressions are considered reflective of our highest ideals. It is not always easy to understand. It is most special and unparalleled when it seems whimsical. When it appears to be purely amusement, entertainment, it can nonetheless ignite a fascination which will strike that spark. This illumination may result in nothing more than a faint smile of appreciation. It is this quality of gratification which is the closest thing that human beings do which expresses an essential quality of godliness. When one realizes that the rhyme and meter, the choice of palette and brush strokes, the powerful emotional dialogue of the script, is but a simple amusement, then one can better appreciate why the dust of the earth became a living soul, and embodies and essence of our being. No matter how ridiculous or familiar, art enables us to express that aspect of ourselves which is identical to the nature of God which is Creativity.


It is this particular element which causes the most difficulty and creates the greatest challenge for artists. Art is often regarded as unessential. It is considered to be a luxury, not really necessary. It isn't like a table or chair. It isn't a bed of lettuce or straw. I mean, what is it for and what can it do?

Certainly it can't mow the lawn! And why does it cost so much money...That painting costs \$3,000 – what! You must be crazy! You must think I'm rich or something! No way! Unfortunately, these attitudes are prevalent and affect the creative spirit of many in our community who have accepted the responsibility of making and providing art for us. It affects the willingness of those who are the guardians of our culture and who promote its preservation through the production of plays or the sale of books, frames, paintings and prints. Yet it is only through the persistence of these individuals, through their unflinching commitment to hang tough and make it from one February to the next that we are able to access that part of us which is so much like God and which represents the highest ideals of beauty within ourselves.

Each of us should make a point of showing or developing a greater appreciation of art in our community this year. We should make it a priority to seek out and become familiar with the local artists. We should get to know Artists James Huff, Leo Rucker, Lewis Cornessl, et.al. Each family should find time to visit the Diggs Gallery at Winston-Salem; Special Occasions Bookstore which is on Martin Luther King Blvd., near Winston-Salem State University. The Delta Arts Center on Third Street, as well as King Solomon's Bookstore which is located in the Marketplace Mall. Why not book an art party by calling Gerry's Fine Art and Framing at (336)922-1035. These are but a few individuals and businesses providing this essential support to our cultural expression and preservation throughout the

year. They help us to learn and appreciate things about ourselves and each other. Finally, we should realize that art is not simply a commodity for the wealthy or rich who can afford to buy it. Art must be accessible to all of us no matter how meager our means. Art is not for the rich, it is art that makes us rich.

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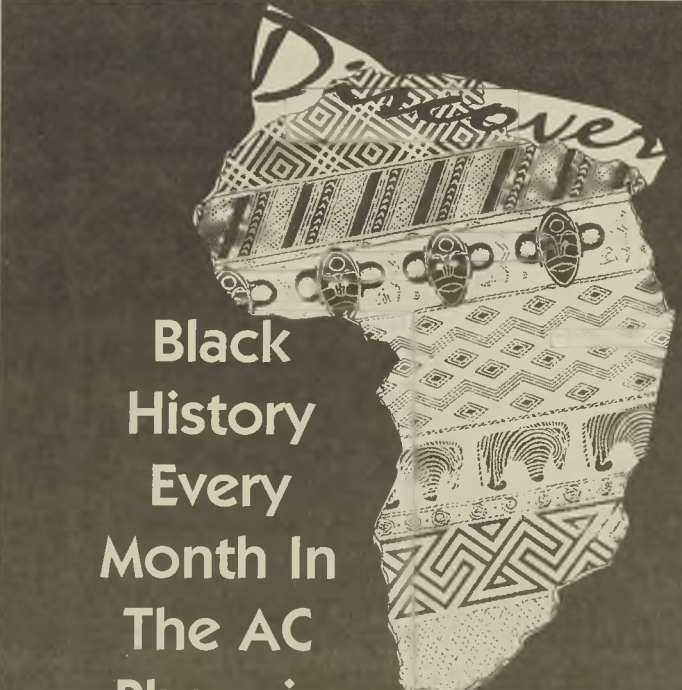
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