

"But is it Art?"

Review by C.A. Whittemore

UNCA presented the 11th annual "Celebration of the Arts" on April 10. This year's symposium, titled "But is it Art?", utilized the mediums of lectures, exhibits, dance, theatre, music and creative writing to explore the question "What constitutes a work of art?" The evening performances and exhibits were held in Lipinsky Auditorium. Celebration '91 was made possible through a grant from UNCA's Cultural & Special Events Committee, and subsidized by Sonopress, Inc.

The art exhibits were shown in the lobby outside of the auditorium. Amongst these exhibits were clay and ceramic works by several women in our community: Pam Wilson's "Frogs in Brick," Tressa Thornton's "Temple of Erzulie," and Cindy Margolus Wynn's "These Are Not Tea Pots."

Wilson's "Frogs in Brick" is a fun exhibit which entails three clay frogs sitting in a bed of clay pebbles. The bodies of the frogs were formed on the potters wheel; Wilson's hand formed the rest. Each frog exhibits an irresistible, playful quality.

Thornton's "Temple of Erzulie" is constructed out of clay. Thornton formed the hexagonal base and walls of the structure using the method of extruding (pushing clay through a press). The top of the structure is a wheel-thrown dome. Two human skeletal figures protrude from the center of the dome.

Each wall of the structure contains a veves (ornamented heart). During Voodoo rituals veves are drawn on altars, etc., to invoke the female spirit of Erzulie. Once invoked, Erzulie possesses the body throughout the ritual. This exhibit has a mysterious allure, yet an ominous effect.



Wynn's "These Are Not Tea Pots" are "kettlelike" ceramic sculptures. The bodies of these curiously designed, sci-fi "nuclear pots" (Wynn) are slip (liquid clay) cast in a plaster mold. The handles and feet are hand built. As a finishing touch, Wynn combines black copper oxide with a low-fire O4 glaze. This particular combination creates a dark lustre with copper flecks. The sculptures are well-crafted and intriguing.



Another star from our community who participated in "But is it Art?" was none other than Michael Sheldon as Cookie LaRue. For those of you who don't know her, Cookie is a gum-chewing, beehive-topped, overly made-up, bespectacled, culturally illiterate, well-meaning reflector of American values. Reminiscent of the "ole timers" weaving of a tale, in half-an-hour Cookie took the audience on a journey in and out of a series of satirical vignettes.

The journey took the audience into K-Mart, the Catholic church, an art gallery, a ride on a city bus, a lecture on art and, last but not least, into Cookie's home-life in her "double-wide sweet double-wide."

For those of you who missed this incredible production, here is a sampling. Cookie refers to the revitalization of K-Mart as "marinating a hot dog in Grand Marnier." While on her bus ride home, Cookie spots a broken down church bus with the slogan "Prayer Works" stamped across its side. At the art gallery, Cookie overhears a woman describing a painting as being "surreal," and Cookie asks her what breakfast has to do with art. (Read slowly, and think about it!)

Continuing the journey, when Cookie is asked to give a talk on art, she says she doesn't know anyone by the name of Art. To jazz up the taste of communion wafers, Cookie takes along a jar of Cheez-Whiz. And lastly, for all of those potluck queens in the audience, Cookie revealed the recipe for, and tips on how to make, the perfect tuna casserole.

Judging by the rip-roaring laughter and nods of approval, the audience seemed to be saying "Wow, this is the best from Cookie LaRue yet!" Sheldon's performance was fine-tuned, polished and absolutely flawless. HBO Comedy Special, watch out! Here comes Ms. LaRue.

After taking the audience on a hilarious journey, Cookie LaRue wrapped up her performance by giving the audience an alarming statistic: During the half-hour show, 30 people had died of AIDS. Thus art, for Cookie, does not hover in an etherial sphere divorced from reality. Art can and should affect us, and help us effect change in the world today. ▼

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assistance to MAC, and part of this trip's focus was to put these mechanisms into place. Funding for technical assistance is made possible by a grant to NAPWA from the Centers for Disease Control.

NAPWA is an advocacy organization for PWA's. It has 117 affiliates in 48 states, and has begun expansion into South America and Europe. There are no other NAPWA affiliates in North Carolina, according to Thewes.

Thewes explained that NAPWA was founded by PWA's who felt they didn't have a voice in decisions that were being made about their health and health care. The greatest need was quick access to information.

Eventually a national office was set up to manage three NAPWA programs: centralized referral, which provides a newsletter, a toll-free number for HIV information, and toll-free computer information to all members of NAPWA; a national speakers' bureau with about 200 members, all with HIV, but of diverse backgrounds; and field training and coalition building. The Asheville visit is part of the latter program, Thewes said.

Thewes then demonstrated NAPWALINK, the organization's computer network with HIV information.

The most-used aspects of NAPWALINK are the clinical drug trials database and the news and information database. A number of newspapers get their HIV information from NAPWALINK's news and information database.

MAC will be getting a modem, which will allow them direct access to NAPWALINK, which Thewes described as the best source of AIDS information available.

MAC spokesperson David Owens said, "Paul and Robert helped us to set some goals and opened our eyes to some community resources. They gave us guidelines to coordinate our efforts with existing resources."

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