

Radical **BLACK ART** **A WORKING CONVENTION**

AN OPPORTUNITY
FOR THOSE ACTIVELY
INVOLVED IN THE PRODUCTION
OF RADICAL, BLACK ART
TO MEET TOGETHER
AND DISCUSS THE FORM,
FUNCTION & FUTURE
OF THEIR WORK.

PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY 28th MARCH, 1984

UKAIDI CENTRE
NOTTINGHAM.

TIME TABLE

This day of reasoning will begin at 10.30am with a welcome by one of our speakers, LUBAINA R.A. HIMID.

Following this, MARLENE SMITH of the BLK ART GROUP, will introduce the day, setting it into its context.

The morning session will then begin, and go on till 1.00pm

It will concern itself with the examination of contemporary Black Art, highlighting its successes and failures relative to the economic, social and political realities faced by the Black Community, both in this country and world wide.

There are three speakers in this session, and their talks will be integrated into the general discussion. The function of the speakers will be to inject concise points into the discussion. These points will be based on their knowledge/experiences in their own fields of work.

At 1.00pm there will be a break of one hour during which food will be available.

The afternoon session, which goes on till 6.30pm, will be similar in format to the morning. Again, our three speakers will offer their contributions in an attempt to arrive at a coherent working philosophy around which future radical Black Art activity can operate.

Towards the end of the afternoon session, our fourth speaker, REMI KAPO, will offer his concluding talk.



At 7.00pm, the Nottingham based TURBO BLACK ARTS CO-OP will present an evening of militant verse.

SPEAKERS

The speakers chosen for this event are all individuals keenly involved and committed to the development of Black Art in this country. They are namely;

LUBAINA R.A. HIMID.

Organiser of exhibitions of work by Black women artists, including; FIVE BLACK WOMEN (Africa Centre) and BLACK WOMAN TIME NOW (Battersea Arts Centre).

She is also, presently writing a thesis about the lives and work of young Black artists, at the Royal College of Art in London.

JOHN AKOMFRAH.

Works with the London based BLACK AUDIO/FILM COLLECTIVE.

SHAKKA DEDI.

Director of the BLACK ART GALLERY, and founder member of OBAALA; THE ORGANISATION OF BLACK ARTS ADVANCEMENT AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES.

REMI KAPO.

Author of 'A SAVAGE CULTURE'; an insight into British racism. He is also involved with the PEOPLES GALLERY, in Kentish Town.

The meeting will be chaired by EDDIE A. CHAMBERS, of THE BLK ART GROUP

This convention was organised by THE BLK ART GROUP, an association of young Black artists and art students, who share a common commitment to the development of an art which responds directly to the social and political conditions faced by Black people world wide. The present line up of the Group is:

MARLENE SMITH.

Art student at Bradford College.

DONALD RODNEY.

Fine Art student at Trent Polytechnic.

KEITH PIPER.

Fine Art graduate from Trent Polytechnic.

EDDIE CHAMBERS.

Fine Art graduate from Sunderland Polytechnic.

PREAMBLE

This convention has set itself the sizable task of plotting a way forward for radical Black Art. In organising the convention, we as a group have paid much attention to the shortcomings and failures of previous seminars and discussion groups whose aims have also been to establish progress in the field of Black Art. In particular, I am referring to our own "FIRST NATIONAL BLACK ART CONVENTION" of October, 1982.

It seems now to be quite reasonable to suggest that there is no universal consensus of opinion on the practise and communication of art by Black people. Furthermore, it now seems too simplistic to assume that there are only two groups that Black artists can align themselves to; These being:

- 1) Artists, who are Black, and who produce work in the view of western aesthetic individualism.
- 2) Artists who are Black, and believe that their work must actively contribute to the vital process of consciousness-raising among Black people.

The term generally used to describe the work produced by the second group is 'Black Art'. However, it has become apparent the 'Black Art' is not a term that any one type of Black artist can claim exclusive rights to. Last year saw the cultural activist collective, CREATION FOR LIBERATION, mount what they termed; 'The First Exhibition of Contemporary Black Art in Britain'. DARCUS HOWE, the tour de force behind 'Creation for Liberation', makes it clear that they are "concerned with the work of men and women, some perhaps with no formal training, or who do not earn their living as artists, whose work not only expresses the aspirations and preoccupations of the mass of Blacks, but reflects the dynamism, vibrancy and innovations Blacks bring to bear on their approach to life in general".

Last year also saw the establishing of THE BLACK ART GALLERY. Those responsible for the gallery state that, "we believe the Black Art is born out of a consciousness based upon experience of what it means to be an Afrikan descendant wherever in the world we are. 'Black' in our context means all those of Afrikan descent: 'Art'; the creative expression of the Black person or group based on historical and contemporary experiences".

We also have to take into account the considerably weighty opinions of veteran Black Art activist RASHEAD ARAEEN: "It would be naive to think that art or cultural activity alone can change the world, or that in our cultural struggle we can ignore socio-economic and political forces. However, the struggle within the domain of art/culture against domination can strengthen the overall struggle".

Here then, are three differing viewpoints all using the term 'Black Art'. This being the situation, as a group, we decided to make the aims and format of this convention as specific as possible. Thereby attempting to cut out much of the counter-productive exchanges that have characterised most gatherings of artists and members of the Black community.

We have publicised this convention as being about 'Radical Black Art' in order to differentiate it from the somewhat overused term 'Black Art'. We will be discussing solely around the view that our art must aim to raise the consciousness of Black people. Put in forceful articulate terms, we will not be departing from the belief that we should "bend our art into an ensign around which to rally the people. Let it raise our consciousness and stimulate debate as to how most effectively we can conduct our struggle, inspire organised

self defence, expose and oppose our enemies, and seize justice".

This decision means that viewpoints that run counter to the aims of this convention will not be discussed. Through our publicity material, we have tried to make it abundantly clear what this day of reasoning will revolve around.

Basically, the day will be made up of two sessions: 10.30am - 1.00pm, and 2.00pm - 6.30pm. There will be no smaller groups, as is the normal practise for conventions of this nature. After the mornings welcome and introduction those in attendance will then begin the process of examination of contemporary Black Art. It is of the utmost importance that we talk (especially) about our failures and shortcomings in frank, brisk and honest terms. If we are not prepared to come to terms with our weaknesses, we can never hope to put our strengths into their correct context. Are Black artists failing in their self-appointed duty to communicate with the Black community? Concerning those responsible for the running of the BLACK ART GALLERY: are they failing to make meaningful political impact on the Black community? If so, why? These are the type of questions that we need to discuss in the morning session.

The failure of previous conventions and seminars to a large extent, has been an inability to ground the period of collective discussion in solid reality. That is to say, what actually is/is not happening at the present. For this reason we are making a clear distinction between what is happening at the moment, and what we would like to see happen. The morning session will be concerned with the former, and the afternoon session will concern itself with the latter. If Black Art really is in a less than healthy condition, we need to realise why, and then go on to attempt to rectify the situation by discussing and formulating tactics and future activities that will attempt to make Black Art an effective radicalizing component within the overall Black consciousness movement.

Although one of our speakers is actively involved with the BLACK AUDIO/FILM COLLECTIVE, we will be mainly concerned with the development and propagation of visual art.

THE BLK ART GROUP.
MARCH 1984.

THE BLK ART GROUP,
3, LINDSEY WALK,
HYSON GREEN,
NOTTINGHAM,
NG7 6DJ