



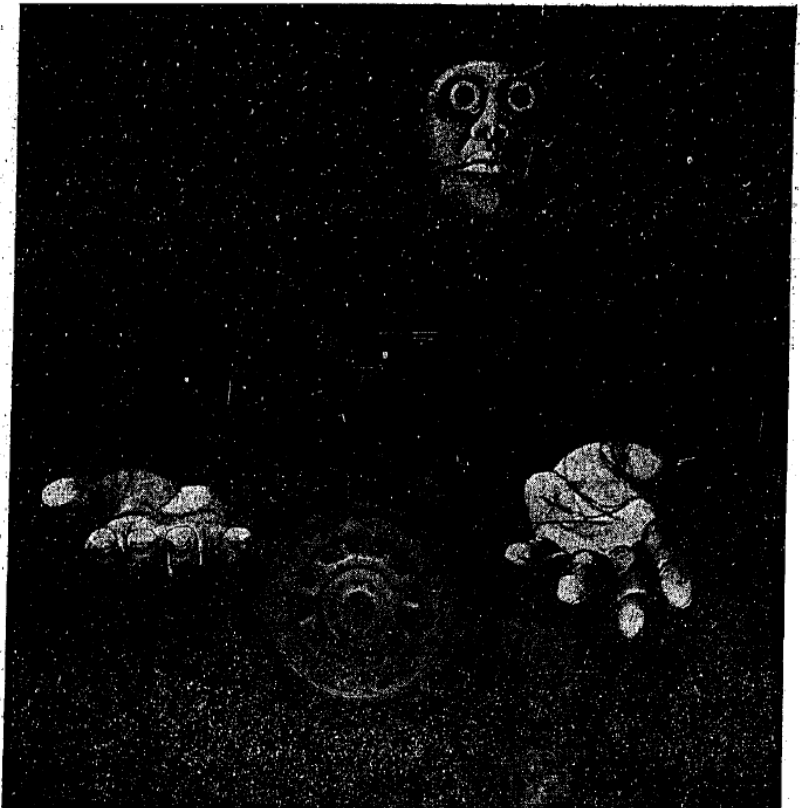
SALON 94

Los Angeles Times

Black Trio Blends Art, Anger in Graphics

Henry J Seldis

January 26, 1971



IN BLACK AND WHITE- Charles White's "J'Accuse #1" is part of a black artists display at County Museum of Art.

STATEMENT OF CONDITION- Timothy Washington's mixed-media offering, "Why Poverty?" is included in the County Museum of Art exhibit by three black artists which runs through March 7.

Black Trio Blends Art, Anger in Graphics

BY HENRY J. SELDIS
Times Art Critic

Medium and message are used separately to convey poignancy in the works of three black artists being exhibited in the graphics department of the County Museum of Art through March 7.

Veteran artist-teacher Charles White is joined in

this display by two younger men, David Hammons and Timothy Washington. While all of the work is figurative and much of it deals dramatically with the black man's condition in America, only Hammons' "body prints" approach present-day graphic considerations uppermost in the minds of experimental artists.

Artistically, the exhibition

is basically a conservative one. One can readily think of three other black artists whose work is more closely related to current creative preoccupations, if not to semi-literary statements regarding the anger felt by blacks in the face of lingering indifference and bigotry, found in too much of white society.

There is a biblical solemn-

nity about the large drawings and prints which White exhibits. His works are firmly rooted in the neo-Renaissance realism espoused by Mexican muralists and East Coast social realists in the 30s and 40s.

White's larger-than-life figures are heroic and idealized symbols that seem timeless rather than topical in their appeal. While their

style often gives them a dated air, the urgency and clarity of their message fulfills the artist's intention to be able to appeal to a mass audience. Through the virtuosity of his line and the depth of his feelings, White conveys a sense of sorrow and endurance that lends an air of timelessness to the body of his work.

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GRAPHICS DEPARTMENT- "Man in Grass," a body print by black artist David Hammons, is being exhibited at County Museum of Art through March 7.

Timothy Washington. His concerns range from creating a greater awareness of his people's plight to a deep need for bringing man closer to nature.

Washington's works are not prints but plates from which prints could be made had the artist chosen to use them in this traditional manner. Instead, he presents sheets of aluminum sprayed with enamel paint and then carefully scratched with an etching needle.

In a number of the most interesting of Washington's experiments, he

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BLACK ARTISTS

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Anger and topicality, as well as technical innovation, draw attention to David Hammons' considerable talents. He has taken White's deliberate exploration of his own ethnic sources a step further, applying the lessons learned to a variety of prints that explore both the inner and outer struggles he shares with other black artists of a wide variety of artistic persuasion.

If his "body prints" are not entirely novel (the French artist Yves Kline applied similar activities to painting), the high degree of technical competency demonstrated by his extraordinary combination of body printing and silkscreen techniques is remarkable.

There is something absolutely haunting about the best of these works which range from the eroticism of "Sexy Sue" to the immensely powerful protest image titled "Injustice Case." By using his own body to create some of these images, Hammons not only strengthens his direct connection with the spectator but broadens the concept of monoprinting.

Range of Concerns

Technical unorthodoxy also marks the entries of

turns the plates into collages or relief sculptures by combining them with materials quite foreign to the dry-point technique so basic to his work.

At times, his images lose considerable strength by being overly melodramatic or even coy, as in "Parakeets." His potential as a powerful, though basically literal, visual artist is best exemplified by such images as "Raw Truth" and "Exist."

Excellent Training

It is important to note that the younger two of these artists seem to have received excellent training at Chouinard and Otis Art Institute and that White has been a teacher of recognized importance here for many years.

Whatever objections are being raised to this exhibition ought to be judged with reference to the excellence of the images these artists have created rather than to the degree of fury that can be found in their pictorial protests.