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Archives of American Art

Celebrating 175: Charles White Files, Burroughs, Margaret and DuSable Museum, circa 1949-circa 1971

Extracted on Feb-05-2023 05:28:19

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Toward A True People's Culture

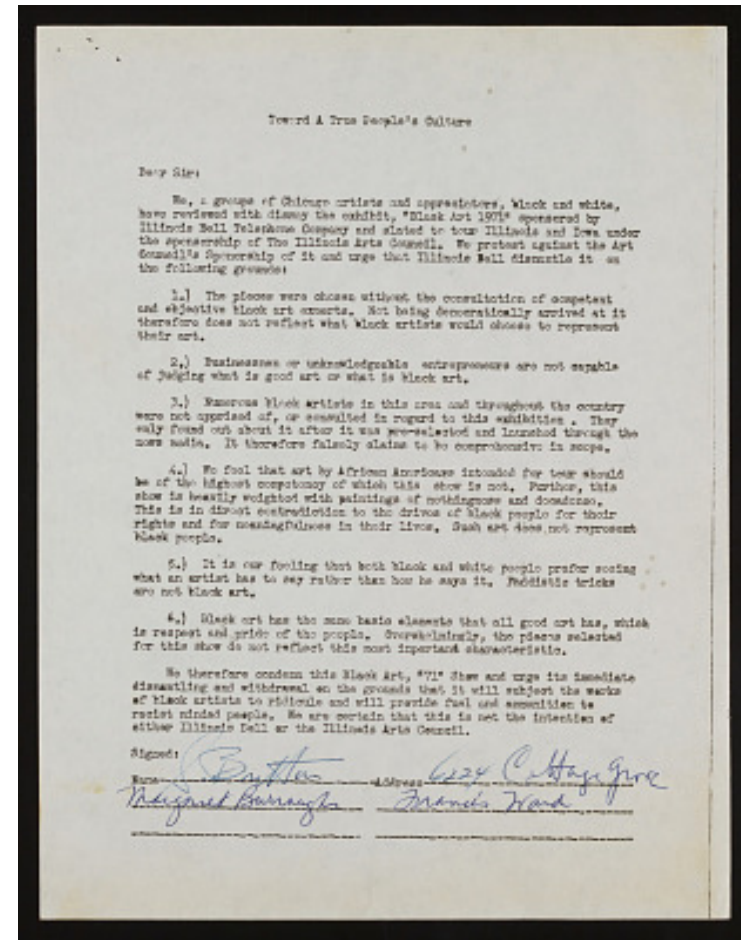
Dear Sir:

We, a groups of Chicago artists and appreciators, black and white, have reviewed with dismay the exhibit, "Black Art 1971" sponsored by Illinois Bell Telephone Company and slated to tour Illinois and Iowa under the sponsorship of the Illinois Arts Council. We protest against the Art Council's Sponsorship of it and urge that Illinois Bell dismantle it on the following grounds:

- 1.) The pieces were chosen without the consultation of competent and objective black art experts. Not being democratically arrived at it therefore does not reflect what black artists would choose to represent their art.
- 2.) Businessmen or unknowledgeable entrepreneurs are not capable of judging what is good art or what is black art.
- 3.) Numerous black artists in this area and throughout the country were not apprised of, or consulted in regard to this exhibition. They only found out about it after it was pre-selected and launched through the news media. It therefore falsely claims to be comprehensive in scope.
- 4.) We feel that art by African Americans intended for tour should be of the highest competency of which this show is not. Further, this show is heavily weighted with paintings of nothingness and decadence. This is in direct contradiction to the drives of black people for their rights and for meaningfulness in their lives. Such art does not represent black people.
- 5.) It is our feeling that both black and white people prefer seeing what an artist has to say rather than how he says it. Faddistic tricks are not black art.
- 6.) Black art has the same basic elements that all good art has, which is respect and pride of the people. Overwhelmingly, the pieces selected for this show do not reflect this most important characteristic.

We therefore condemn this Black Art, "71" Show and urge its immediate dismantling and withdrawal on the grounds that it will subject the works of black artists to ridicule and will provide fuel and ammunition to racist minded people. We are certain that this is not the intention of either Illinois Bell or the Illinois Art Council.

Signed:
Name: [[signature]] [[S. Brattam??]] [[/signature]] Address: 6224 Cottage Grove
[[signature]] Margaret Burroughs [[/signature]] [[signature]] Francis Ward
[[/signature]]



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