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"The Value of an Art Exhibit."

While art in any one of its various forms is not to be found on the schedule of the courses offered at the Cardozo Night School, I do feel that a large number of the students are interested in the subject. It is for this reason, and for the sake of its cultural benefits that I would like to mention a recent exhibition which was held at the National Museum in Washington.

The Negro has made a very definite and permanent contribution to the art world. This was demonstrated without any doubt by the splendid showing made by our artists.

The exhibition was sponsored by the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Perhaps it is not generally known by our student body that one of the first exhibits of Negro art to be shown in this country was at the Dunbar High School. Since that time several have been held and our artists have come a long way. Their progress has been most gratifying.

Getting back to the recent exhibition. Just imagine yourself at the museum and we will look again at some of the things I saw.

There were oil paintings, water colors, block prints, sculpture in wood and soap, music and literature. Some of the work was done by professional artists and some by students of Howard University. The students of the public schools came in for their share of praise too. One could not help having a feeling of justifiable pride as he looked upon these artistic offerings of members of his race.

I think I derived the greatest joy from a group of water colors done by Louis M. Jones of Howard University.

There were scenes of the rugged New England coast, there was a most inviting door way, a true colonial type. The passway leading up to the door was simply flooded with sunlight and was flanked on either side with a profusion of flowers in a veritable riot of color. There was also a bowl of flowers exquisite in coloring and perfect in execution.

The pupils of the Southeast House Art Studio under the direction of Miss Jones gave an excellent account of themselves, as did the students of the Free Art Workshop and Studio sponsored by the Harlem Adult Education Committee of New York. Such well known artists as James A. Porter, Edwin A. Harleston and William E. Scott were well represented.

In connection with this exhibition, Mr. Alain Locke of Howard University gave an interesting illustrated lecture on Negro and African art and showed how closely the two are allied. Mr. Locke stated that the characteristics of modern art are, "simplification, stylization and symbolic significance, designated by emphasis on form and form relations, and through the virtuosity of technique. These same characteristics are to be found in African primitive sculpture."

"The Negro of today," he said, "has to make a choice in his artistic expression between nationalism and racialism." "If he is nationalistic he will, in this country, be American, if he is racial, he will strive to recover and carry on African traditions."

I do not know what course our Negro artists will pursue but judging from what I saw, I should say that the tendency is nationalistic rather than racial.

In our efforts to acquire speed in the typewriter, fluency in languages, to solve problems in mathematics, to become more familiar with the history of our country, let us not forget our place in the art world. There is no limit to its cultural benefits.

No race can make a worth while and lasting contribution to civilization which lacks a strong cultural background.

Accepted.

Art

Portia Reid Daniel

November 20, 1983.