

RAISE FOUR MAIN POINTS -

- (1) HISTORY
- (2) ETHNIC V BLACK ARTS
- (3) FUNDING PATTERN
- (4) BLACK CONTROL

(2) ETHNIC V BLACK ARTS

The term Ethnic Minority Arts was popularised by the publication of report by Naseem Khan "The Art Britain Ignores". The report was received with mixed feelings. The funding bodies and educational institutions welcomed it as an educational document providing them with vivid descriptions of what was happening in the ethnic communities.

Some artists welcomed as potential exposure of their activities while others denounced its content, its direction and its tone.

Rasheed Araeen a visual artist felt the report was a "white liberal bid to keep coloured people's position marginal in society".

The focus of the report was on the traditional arts of the ethnic communities. The report talks about the folk dances, music, festivals, with little reference to the society in which people are living.

Concept of ethnic arts served one purpose. Besides providing the white society with exotic entertainment, it is imposing a specific cultural role upon the black community the result of which could limit its ability to express its reality in the contemporary context.

Rather than challenging the status quo the term ethnic arts perpetuated the relation of black people to white dominant society.

Ethnic Arts was more acceptable a term than 'black arts'. Rasheed offers the following reason 'the reason for this can only be that it has not been in the interest of the art world to come to terms with what it could offer a challenge to its values, attitudes and prejudices. As a result, black artists have remained invisible and on the margins of society.'

The term many believe has had a specific and damaging effects on the ability of ethnic minorities to use their art as a valid means of expressing themselves and as a challenge to the structure controlled and run by the British arts establishment.

What emerged as result of report of the popularisation of the term "Ethnic Arts" was a view of minority arts as a sort of decorative addition to arts festivals, as educational tools, as instruments for making the majority take up tolerant attitudes rather than a structure where minorities were central and in control.

This contrasts sharply with developments in other areas for instance the campaigns centered around the education of West Indian children and black homelessness and Asian battered women have produced countless numbers of supplementary schools, hostels and houses all controlled and run by black communities. This is not the case for the arts. There are no black arts institutions, black arts workers in the established funding bodies, arts administrators.

The concept of ethnic minority arts and the way it has been used, first to divert and isolate ethnic minority artists and secondly as harmless entertainment and exotica has had an important part to play in this situation. The need at present is to re-examine the concept, to re-assess its present function and to involve the ethnic communities in reshaping it.

(4) BLACK CONTROL

Black people to set up and control own institutions.

Black people to be involved in policy decision making

Black people to be involved not just as advisers but full participants in policy formulation in dispensing of public funds. Until that happens black people will be continuously marginalised and in turn their art forms.

Black arts must be seen as central to main arts programme, visual artists, musicians, dancers, writers, actors, actresses, directors have existed and continue to exist so the argument that they just don't exist is false. It's the attitudes of those in power who continue to marginalise and keep black arts on the periphery. It's their ignorance and not lack of creative talent - black community that keeps black arts.

What is needed

(a) Creation of institutions - black theatre

- black print shops
- Film and video work shops
- black art centres
- black art galleries
- black book shops
- black dance companies
- black music studios

(b) Involvement of black people in decision making that means -

- (i) employment of black people at all levels and not just as tea servers and security guards but as administrators, directors, managers, programme controllers, technicians.
- (ii) black people represented in all decision making.

Black artists contributed to British art - Rao, ChR Jones

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Return to Room.....

Black Artists - White Institutions

①. History of black arts ✓ emerge from economic & political struggle.

Parents care - concerned with filling stomachs. No attention given to cultural life.

2nd phase political struggle of black people

(a) 1958 - IWA brought cinema
held meetings also focused
point for localisation

(b) Nottingham Carnival - blacks took
to streets

(c) writings - all expression of
establishing cultural identity

(d) Black Power struggle 60's, 70's -
black is beautiful

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Cultural expression too dangerous, too penetrating. Indigenous community not recognising cultures of other communities - not if being used as political expression.

Emerged Ethnic Arts - devoted one energy of black artists.

Ethnic arts more acceptable than to established funding bodies, School + other institutions.

Black Arts not popular term.

Ethnic Arts ^{seen} ~~used~~ as exotic show cases; educational tools. Many got jumped on this bandwagon.

What exists today is a cultural expression not necessarily well held by the community but defined by the established. This is reflected in the funding pattern of black arts -

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A quick survey will show the performing arts now funded. Thus ethnic dance, music given prominence since it does not challenge. Look like Imrah Cassio, Linan Lewis Johnson, Soko Sakuma have never received grants or winter bursaries - why not because they challenge the establishment & their traditional view of art; they challenge & resist being ~~too~~ labelled as ethnic artists

~~Similarly - dance - if you are trying to set up contemporary~~

dance

Black theatre is another good example of which establishment dictating its direction.

The emergence of black theatre relates to the emergence of black art

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Phase 1 was black actors & actresses
trying to get parts in white theatre.
They played stereotype roles, they
had to be put into white architecture
since they had none of their
own.

Phase 2. As result of struggle of
black people both politically &
economically black writers had
seen patronage from white
established theatres eg Royal
Court, Riverside put on to
add black play & commission
to add black play with.

What do ~~two~~ people with what
~~the~~ the theme go from
cultural education to anti racism
with very little in between.

Nothing about joys of life, about
family

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