



Artists (L-R) Sherriann Haggard, Charlotte Lewis, Isaac Shamsud-Din and Mario Jackson listen as H.A. Hagood explains some of the problems of Black artists. Photo by Richard J. Brown

1ST Annual Black Artists' Gathering Held

by Jerry Garner

The first annual Black Artists' Gathering was held last Friday at PCC, Cascade Campus. The purpose of the gathering was for African-American artists to discuss the problems they encounter in attempting to sell and promote their artwork.

During the 3-hour-long forum entitled "Black Artists Crucified in Portland, Oregon", a panel of five local artists, Isaac Shamsud-Din, Sherriann Haggard, Charlett Lewis, Mario Jackson and H.A. Hagood, discussed the obstacles confronting African-American artists and solutions to correct these problems.

Each panelist agreed that as artists they must do more in an effort to make African-Americans and the general public aware of the importance of Black artwork, do more networking among themselves, and establish a place where their art can be viewed.

"Before we can promote our work, we as African-American artists must first educate our own people about the beauty of black art. All too often, when you look on the walls of many black homes, you won't find African-American art on them," replied artist Sherriann Haggard.

Haggard said it seems that every 10 to 20 years Black artists must prove the meaning of their art. "Unless there is blood in our art, we must explain its meaning," she said.

All five panel members said that it was difficult for them to promote and sell their work in Oregon. They blame this on racism, lack of public awareness to the importance of Black art, and the geographic location of Oregon. "It's very difficult for an African-American artist to work in Portland. I've worked in Chicago, New York and San Francisco. The resources—access—to things artists need to be successful come so much easier. This is not the case here in Portland," Isaac Shamsud-Din said.

Shamsud-Din and the other artists said in order to correct the problem, they must control their own market and attend art commission meetings to see what the commission is doing to promote and address the issues confronting African-American artists in Portland.

He said that the State of Oregon is almost at the bottom of the list when it comes to funding Black art. "Funding for Black art projects in this state over the last decade has been less than 1 percent. There is no commitment in the state for Black art."

Lewis said that since Reagan took office, federal funding for the arts has decreased dramatically. "This has had a negative impact on the ability of African-American artists to work," said Lewis.

The artists said that it's crucial they make an all-out effort to get an art cultural center in the community. They said an art center could assist the Black community and the general public on the value of African-American artwork, serve as a place where African-American artists could show their work, and a place where African-American artists could meet and discuss issues related to their crafts.

Besides the forum, the artists also sponsored an exhibit and auction.

During the event, local artists displayed and sold their work to the public. Shamsud-Din said the public's reaction to the exhibit and auction was great. "The people who came were very interested in the exhibit. They asked questions about the artwork and had a good

dialogue with the artists." Shamsud-Din said they are planning on having more such exhibits and auctions in the near future.

The forum and the exhibit and auction was sponsored by The Visual Arts Ombudsman Project and The Metropolitan Arts Commission.

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\$14,000	\$14,000	\$302.63	10.90%	\$12,600	\$272.37	10.92%	\$11,200	\$242.11	10.94%
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