

afro-american art and art in america: a problem in methodology*

george ehrlich

Long before the search for a "Black identity" was paired with the tactics of confrontation on the American college campus, serious attention had been directed toward the arts of Black Americans. Unfortunately, in the visual arts the results of scholarly interest have not been commensurate with those in literature or in music. Today this apparent neglect is an issue and the circumstances of the visual arts seems retarded. The problem then is even more fundamental than the incorporation of a specialized history into a general history; we have instead the questions of why the historian of the visual arts has apparently neglected a field of investigation, and what significance do the visual arts have in Afro-American culture?

Of course there have been some investigations and exhibits, but even a fairly recent one by the Bowdoin College Museum (1964)¹ is typical of the rather uncertain direction that has characterized many of these pioneer efforts at an historical view (in contrast to providing a showcase for current production). The published material which is available to us for a study of the past is not really adequate to identify the nature of what might be called Afro-American art, so interpretation or evaluation of what we do know is problematical at best.² We must deal with three centuries and a considerable geography. And, since there is pathetically little information available, even to the dedicated student of American art, the profession is also open to the charge of White racism, especially if this lack of publication is presented as an accurate index of the actual status of the visual arts within the Black cultural milieu.

We are in an era of hyper-sensitivity when we deal with any aspect of the problem of Afro-American culture, and it is tempting to sidestep the issue of the status of "Black art." Yet we must acknowledge that the efflorescence in the arts that pervades the Black community today concentrates more on literature, drama, poetry and music than it does on painting, sculpture or still-photography. It is also unlikely that the visual

arts will play much of a role in the various Black Studies curricula which have been requested, if the public reports concerning these requests are accurate.

As a White, art historian who is a student of American art, my objectivity about Afro-American art is suspect, especially if I suggest the major issue for the cultural historian is to provide for art generally within cultural history rather than to develop an ethnic-based art history. But this is a moot point until there is an adequate fund of scholarship upon which we can draw.

Which way do we go in order to discover the truth about Afro-American art? How can we cut through the prejudices that exist on several counts, and on both sides, Black and White, and so arrive at a method whereby we can give a credible answer to the question about Afro-American contributions to the visual arts?

First, it might be well to acknowledge a few preliminary facts.

We know that the Black historian has been an important force in the development of a documented history of the Black man in America. However, there are few Black, art historians, and the total profession in the United States is rather small in number with a majority of this small group³ not interested in doing research in American art (White or otherwise).

Objects as well as written documents are the usual source materials for the art historian. The collection of objects and artifacts often precedes the search for documents, and it is apparent to any museum visitor that adequate collections are not available for the study of Black American art.

Finally, disciplined investigation and authoritative, scholarly presentation carries the greatest long-range impact upon the academic community. But we do not have as yet an adequate number of individual studies that will provide the basic literature out of which a history of Afro-American art will come.

Our problem then is two-fold. How does one go about gathering the visual documents, and in which direction(s) should investigations be made?

The identification of objects pertinent to the historical study of Afro-American art might simply mean recognizing those artists who were Black Americans. Unfortunately, this is not an easy task even though the objective is simply stated. We must understand that art by Black Americans is not necessarily an identifiable Black American Art, especially if we keep the entire range of the visual arts under surveillance. Even with the pictorial arts we cannot rely on subject matter, or a painting style, as the Bowdoin College exhibition illustrated. Indeed, until there is the identification of an adequate sample of art by Black Americans, one cannot be certain whether a history of Black American art is a meaningful objective.⁴ The contemporary scene provides us with a somewhat differ-

ent problem as will be noted below. However, the logical place to begin is by mounting exhibitions as material is identified and by publishing catalogues. This last is most important since it makes a direct contribution to the record.⁵

We need to be aware that the identification of objects as coming from Black Americans does not really isolate this production from the totality of Art in America; and this interrelationship becomes a factor of some importance in the matter of how to organize the material and develop the appropriate disciplined investigations. However, before we examine this interrelationship we might look at the complexities associated with ethnic classification.

We can have two levels of categorization. First, there is a general ethnic grouping, and here the number and range would depend upon the definition used, such as Afro-American, Amer-Indian, English Colonial, etc. But a generalized, ethnic group can be sub-divided in several ways, and with a category such as Afro-American art we have at least two sub-groups we can identify. It is when we operate at the sub-group level that we can see some of the factors which can influence analysis and interpretation.

Contemporary Afro-American art can be divided into that which reflects the conscious assimilation of influences from African sources, or attempts to be Afro, and that which essentially is indistinguishable from the art of White Americans.

From the fragmentary evidence now on hand, we know that the latter is a tradition that goes back into the nineteenth century and possibly earlier.⁶ Our other group, Afro or Africa-influenced art, is not necessarily a modern manifestation, but the contemporary exponents of this point of view are operating quite differently than their historical equivalents would have. This Africa-influenced movement, which might be labeled "Ethnic Revival," can and does draw upon a readily available body of knowledge and collections of African art. This availability is fairly recent as is the art which is clearly derivative of African sources. In order to examine historical Afro-American art against the background of possible African influence, it is necessary that African art, as such, also be considered.

Although the indigenous arts of Africa are not a sub-group of Afro-American art, the former must be given consideration if the character of the "Ethnic Revival" or that of the art of Black Americans in general is to be comprehended.

Interestingly enough, the art of Africa has received considerably more disciplined investigation by American art historians than the art of the Afro-American. That this is so should not be seen prejudicially. There is, in the United States, a recognized body of experts on what is called, unfortunately, "Primitive Art." Included within this designation are the arts of Black Africa. There are effective museum displays, and there

is a rapidly growing literature on the subject. This literature shows us two things about African art which must be kept in mind when we deal with the matter of influences. First, the bulk of the preserved artifacts are of fairly recent origin, most no earlier than the mid-nineteenth century. An important exception is the excellent bronzes of Ife and Benin, and there are, of course, a number of others. Second, this literature and expertise on African art is still in its early stages of development, and only in recent years has the matter of stylistic categories, uses, chronologies and the like been stabilized. So it is quite possible that preliminary estimates of the nature of African influence on historic Afro-American art may be modified as our knowledge of African art increases. Also, it is quite possible that the current movement, which we have labeled the "Ethnic Revival," might become an influence in the type of direction given to the study of the arts of Africa.

Given these several factors, and the recent surge of effort to establish Afro-American culture centers, exhibits and symposia objectivity for both Black and White historians will be difficult to maintain. Considering the fluidity of our current values, maintenance of the distinctions outlined above is important if we are to make headway in our search through the rather large geography and chronology that must be considered. Furthermore, despite recent interest, the visual arts do not stand very high in the contemporary Black community when they are compared with the other arts. Significant results, based upon systematic study, are not going to appear quickly; and it is likely that for some years we will have fragments rather than the comprehensive outline that lends itself to undergraduate teaching.

Since the dedicated student will find the current state of published material on Afro-American art (by any name) to be that of bits and pieces, and very little of that is readily available, where does one begin? How does one proceed? A publication, such as *The Journal of Negro History*, is not oriented toward the history of art.⁷ The economic, social or political historian will find more he can use in this journal than can the art historian. Other such journals, that carry the impress of scholarship, present the same problem. Presumably these periodicals provide us with an index to issues of concern as they exist within the Black, intellectual community. Understandably, the visual arts are a less compelling issue than economic independence; but, if we are to heed the urgent counsel that the history of the United States should be written so as to provide a more balanced and accurate treatment of the Negro in American history, we must assume that *all* aspects of the history of America should be considered. Yet the Black historians, who argue persuasively for objective parity for Black American history, are not providing the same sort of guidance in the visual arts that they have given in the social or economic sectors. Under these circumstances we cannot be certain that the history of American art is as much "out of joint" as is the

general history of the United States, insofar as equity to Black America is concerned. Until fundamental studies of a variety of types are made, we cannot even make, much less answer, an accusation of racism as being a key factor in present histories of American art. Indeed, other types of prejudice might be more relevant issues.

Studies in art history are usually motivated by the stimulation from a group of objects which have some stylistic identity, or by a quality piece whose provenience or attribution is questioned or unknown. Frequently we wish to learn more about an artist whose work is provocative. Stimulation is difficult to come by in the area of Afro-American art if we are hard-pressed to find the artifacts which can be identified as Afro-American. And without the identified object, the artist is not visible. When compared to music or literature, accessibility does not operate in favor of the Black, visual arts. We cannot help but wonder if the artifacts, the objects created by Black Americans, were destroyed through either neglect or willfulness. Literature and music are not as susceptible to physical destruction, but then this anticipates a conclusion for which there is no supporting evidence.

A look at the work of identified Black artists of recent years (before the "Ethnic Revival" assumed importance) suggests an alternative answer. In all likelihood, the art production of Afro-Americans did not have special, easily identified, Afro-American characteristics. This production is not readily visible against the background of the White majority, and there is a greater visual affinity than one might expect in a society polarized on a color basis.

Even subject matter is not necessarily a useful clue to the origins of the artist, since both Black and White artists have access to and use the same themes (if they choose to work in a representational vein). We know that some White artists, such as Winslow Homer or Thomas Hart Benton, made a point of selecting Black people as subjects when the choice was purely a personal matter, one without social or political implications. Even if we assume that a Black artist will have a higher degree of sensitivity to a Black subject, the artistic quality of the resulting work is more dependent upon the overall competency of the artist than upon some special ethnic sympathy. Competency is not tied to particular stylistic attributes, and where we can see the work of a competent Black artist who does paint "Black subjects," such as Jacob Lawrence, the ethnic content or the competency is not dependent upon a particular style.

In the utilitarian arts, or in those which are directly dependent upon commissions from the patron, personal interpretations are less likely than in painting, sculpture or photography created speculatively. There is, of course, the potential of stylistic identity in an art such as architecture, but geographic or ethnic origins seem to be more and more subordinated to the exigencies of use, materials and the vagaries of taste.

Only the extraordinary artist-architect, a rarity among the Euro-Americans, consistently can prevail over the taste of his clients; and Afro-American architects are fewer in number than in the other visual arts (if professional meetings are any index). Didactic content, as it might appear in architecture, tends to be confined to building types.

In summary then, the present evidence seems to point to the argument that whatever art the Afro-American has produced over the past three centuries, it is likely to be more of one piece with the total of American art than to be an isolated element. This makes identification and interpretation harder, simply because of the enormity of the total in which the search has to take place. This also reduces the challenge for the Black, art historian if ethnic identity is the compelling element in the search.

However, we must assume on the basis of current production that there is an art that can be identified, by document if not by style, as Afro-American. Whether this art extends back more than a couple of generations in our history, or whether it may have identifiable ethnic significance is, for the moment, beside the point. We have suggested that the most likely instrument to gather the basic data, to advance working hypotheses, to give structure to what otherwise would be fragmentary, is the Black historian. This task obviously calls for more Black historians of American art than are now available, if we are to have results parallel with those provided for American history in general by such as John Hope Franklin. Unfortunately, there are relatively few art historians, White or Black, who specialize in American art, so perhaps the preliminary solution would be some lateral movement of research interest by the Black, cultural historian.⁸ American Studies has benefited frequently from this type of cross-discipline investigation, where motivation and insight can compensate for deficiencies in specialized knowledge and experience. This is the best solution for a situation where the specialist has ignored or neglected a field of study.

If interest in the subject can be developed past the argumentative stage, and if we do evolve a body of basic materials, then we can enter the phase where analysis and interpretation may produce a history of Afro-American art. But this history, if written, will operate within two contextual envelopes. The first is that of American art in general. The second is the larger matrix of Western art, of which American art is but a modest portion. Western culture, as it is usually defined, has a small African component which consists primarily of that portion of Africa that came under the Greco-Roman sphere of influence. Later developments are not usually given a major place in the general narrative except where they intersect with European developments; the sub-Saharan, as a cultural area, is considered as non-Western. This policy, which is based upon a variety of factors, reinforces the position of those advocates of "Black identity" who stress separatism. But historical classifications, or

heritage identification, cannot prevent the American environment from having an effect upon an artist operating within it; and this environment is predominantly Western as it is usually defined. Ethnic or geographical origins manifest themselves in a variety of ways, and there are numerous localisms in speech, dress or habit which demonstrate the tenacity of these influences; but only in a culturally isolated community do we find independence from the pervasive criteria of a Western tradition. The Afro-American was not isolated within an African tradition transported to the United States, but rather he became a part, even though segregated, of the Euro-American milieu. This is, after all, the source of considerable anguish today for those who seek the heritage which was systematically suppressed. That some of this heritage has persisted, albeit submerged from the view of all but the expert specialist, is not pertinent in this instance.

Until it can be demonstrated otherwise, the historical art of the Afro-American must be presumed to have a relationship (if only through the technics) with Western art in general. This then makes the study of Afro-American art a rather complex exercise, because we can and must operate on more than one level of analysis and interpretation. A full understanding cannot occur unless all avenues of approach are considered.

We need look no farther than so American a movement as the "Hudson River School" of landscape painting to see that there is no convenient local boundary for American art history, and so by extension for Afro-American art history. We could isolate the Hudson River School; we could develop a chronology, identify masters and see stylistic changes quite independent of a European context; but we will have created a distorted history. Unfortunately, this orientation is inherent when one elects to write a history of *American* art. In such a history, the painting narrative typically begins with the portraits of the seventeenth-century limner, and while this is quite reasonable, these admittedly minor works achieve thereby a greater status than the quality or the historicity of the work warrants. A minor, eighteenth-century painter, by the very act of having painted in the colonies, can gain a recognition that superior, but later, painters cannot. Early American work has historical significance, but esthetically it is provincial and primitive. The student of American art must temper antiquarian zeal with a fair amount of objectivity. The same problem will exist with Afro-American art, which at present is extremely vulnerable to a parochial and emotional interpretation. If ethnic enthusiasms segregate the art of the Afro-American from its contextual envelopes for reasons other than identification, we may have a history which is more likely to mislead than to inform or ridicule than honor.

Yet a distorted history is likely to occur, whether it is through neglect

or vested interest, simply because of the problems inherent in the study of the visual arts.

If we turn to a recent and non-controversial example, we might see this problem more clearly.

Not too long ago, a straightforward record was published under the title, *Painting in Texas: The Nineteenth Century*.⁹ This publication is essentially a catalogue and the text is clear and informative. The various influences upon painting in Texas are noted and a variety of works are presented for consideration. Many of the artists either are noted only for their Texas subject matter or have reputations that are limited to that state. Indeed, of the fifty-seven artists listed by name in the "Table of Contents" of the Texas book, only seven are in the index of Larkin, and of those, only four are listed in Green.¹⁰ Mrs. Pinckney adds fifteen more names in an appendix titled "Little-Known Artists."

Painters in Texas during the nineteenth century are not "common knowledge" among American art historians, regardless of the reasons. The Pinckney book makes no attempt to inflate reputations or to over-evaluate the works; the primary objective is to tell the story of the noteworthy frontier artists who worked in Texas during the nineteenth century. Her book is a valuable document for the specialist or the enthusiast. But the book really assumes value only if the reader is equipped with both a knowledge of the history of Texas and of American painting in general. Ignorance of either or both of these "envelopes," makes *Painting in Texas* less than it should be. The book, however, also adds to our knowledge of Texas and of American painting, and this mutual feedback between areas of knowledge makes the Pinckney book more valuable than a cursory skimming might suggest. This same type of mutual feedback will undoubtedly apply in the matter of a history of Afro-American art, provided that the potential reader is equipped with the requisite, interacting areas of knowledge. Just looking at the art will not be enough.¹¹

The emotional intensity now invested in Afro-Americanism far outstrips even that of the most braggart enthusiast of the Lone Star State, for Texans have an established identity (authentic or not). But in either case, a loss of objectivity in viewing the record demeans the material presented for examination.

The search for an identity can make the reading of visual documents a problematical thing. This is particularly true in the pictorial arts. There is the problem of attempts to see didactic content where often little or none exists. Interpretations can be exaggerated to make up for the deficiencies in the source material. Since a great deal of the visual arts of America can operate as historical documents, the way in which the viewer reads the material can modify the accuracy of the document as much as can the originating artist's technical skill, observational attitude or objectivity. The artist who tries to make a single object serve as both

an historical record and as an esthetic work is likely to adjust the one objective to serve the other.

If we look at the Indian paintings of either Carl Bodmer or George Catlin, we can see the historical aspect dominant. If we look at the political paintings of George Caleb Bingham, we see the other. The use of art-as-document will always raise the question of the accuracy of the document. At best, the art object can be a primary document, but quite often we must interpret (edit) what we see. This might be labeled the "what did George Washington really look like" problem. Even where we have a record as significant as the Civil War photographs of Matthew Brady and his associates, we are limited to that which was photographable as well as of interest to the photographer. As a record of a major war, these photographs are misleading if they are taken at face value and without the understanding of what limitations were operating. Only with these limitations in mind can there be a meaningful analysis and interpretation.

But a viewer can read a picture as he chooses to, and if didactic commentary is desired, it probably will be found. If there is a desire to look first for Afro-American art rather than for art by Afro-Americans, we already have a form of interpretation of content for content's sake, and this before data is gathered. If this occurs, the results are likely to have less value since there will have been an isolation of parts which will obscure their rightful placement and relationships within the total. It is necessary that we begin by identification, that is with making a useable record, but this rather important job can be tedious. Also, one cannot measure this importance solely by the quality of the work surveyed. Until there is a useable record, built with care and control, we will not be able to give a significant answer to any question that deals with Afro-American art. And until there is a systematic investigation, we will not know the range or extent of the record, much less its contents.

We can assume that there will be diligent investigation, and this will lead to the establishment of a record which can be used. Based upon evidence now available, we can anticipate that the record will show that a great deal of Afro-American art will be trivial, naive, derivative and mediocre. A portion will consist of that which can be dignified by the label "vernacular," and only a small amount of Afro-American art will justify the label "Distinguished."

How can this harsh judgement be made before the fact?

Because this same evaluation can be made for American art in general, and here the record is rather extensive and clear.

We can also expect that there will be a similar attitude toward their antiquities, by Afro-Americans, as that already evidenced by Euro-Americans toward their physical past. We can expect that an exaggerated importance will be assigned to the early art of the Afro-American which will match the loving displays now accorded the Euro-American equiva-

lents by the many devoted societies which have created, not recreated, a visual history of America.

Misinterpretation, or over-enthusiastic interpolations will increase as the quantity of examples decrease. With the case of the art of the Afro-American we also have the likelihood of over-compensation in the matter of analysis and interpretation. This is a problem already with the work of White artists that is difficult to accept on conventional terms.

Even a careful scholar, such as Professor Kaplan in the catalogue for the Bowdoin College exhibit,¹² can be charged with over-interpretation in the matter of how the Negro was represented in paintings. He notes that in paintings that represent the Black man, by the colonial artists, "rarely . . . did the painter ever start to see the man behind the masquerade."¹³ It is easy to accuse the colonial painter of lacking feeling for the Black man, but the typical colonial painter rarely penetrated behind the mask of any sitter, and the personality of the subject, Black, White or Red, was not the objective of the face-painter of the seventeenth or eighteenth century. This is a major reason why the work of John Singleton Copley stands out; he was the first American painter who had the competency and the vision to paint consistently more than surface appearance and penetrate into the personality of his sitter.

Kaplan also expressed a concern that when the Black man is shown in nineteenth-century genre pictures he is represented as carefree and joyous.¹⁴ This obviously would be a distortion of his actual state in most instances in the nineteenth century. But a painter of that period normally avoided the unpleasant as a theme when engaged in "serious painting." Even Bingham, when he deliberately chose a dramatic and controversial theme, "Order # 11,"¹⁵ and included Blacks in the picture, ended up with a staged tableau in the tradition of a melodrama.

The artist in the nineteenth century was not oriented to act as a news photographer does today. Even the facile, nineteenth-century artist-reporter, as was Winslow Homer once, tended to deactivate his subjects, and the drawings became depersonalized through their reproduction by wood engraving. Winslow Homer became an effective painter and frequently represented Black men; his watercolors from the Bahamas are a noteworthy group by the standards of most critics. But it is easy to see that with these pictures Homer was making a painting, not a social document, and there is a greater emphasis on capturing the light than on the social or economic status of the people who populate the scenes.

In brief then, it is easy to accuse the White artist of not representing the Black man with accuracy, but this is a misinterpretation of the function of the artist as viewed by that profession (especially in the nineteenth century). A more serious issue is not the lack of social-comment painting in the nineteenth century, but rather its low estate today when issues with serious moral implications are deemed of major importance in our present society, and artists are much freer to pursue individual

interpretation.¹⁶ Apparently, other art forms have taken over this role of commentary which does not need translation through the agency of the critic.

Afro-American art, over the past three centuries, should not be faulted for what was not done. Rather, it must be viewed as a specialized element in a total cultural pattern of a people that have led two lives, one viewed internally, and the other as seen by the larger White society. This does not mean we need to write two separate histories, but rather that there will be various interpretations accorded a given body of material. This makes it even more important that the Black community develop art historians, not so that Afro-American art history will be taught, but to provide balance in American art history.

The issues of finding a "Black style," or of reinforcing an Afro-American identity, are less critical to me than is the use of sound procedures in the development of the record. The historiographic problem is really without color. The Black historian will no doubt have the greater motivation, and be more purposeful in his willingness to investigate this area, but the methodology is already established and is ready for use. Our concern is whether the sense of urgency with which the questions are being asked might force erroneous interpretations by premature use of the early results of investigation. Since there is an urgency, the likelihood is that the most accessible portion of the subject will receive the earliest attention, and this means the art of the past two or three decades. The contemporary scene is not only accessible, but it also seems more attractive to the White advocates of "the cause." The early development of a "recent history" of Afro-American art therefore seems reasonable; however, there is a danger that using the present to guide us into the art of the past will provide a disorientation. A generation gap operates independently of ethnic issues, but where pride and/or ethnic revivalism are contributing factors, we may find a more willing rejection of those antecedents which do not fit a conception of the contemporary. There is precedence for this because, whether on style or on the issue of artistic autonomy for the artist, in the twentieth century we have dismissed a great deal of nineteenth-century art of many origins. The critical abuse and historical neglect accorded to the production of earlier generations has produced a distorted history of nineteenth-century art quite independent of ethnic issues. We are only now making repairs in this structure.

Perhaps we expect more from the historian-critic of the arts than he can give. Certainly the independence of the contemporary artist has produced a situation wherein concepts of taste, quality, relevancy or significance are more personal questions than cultural issues. And if we add to this the ethnic factor with all of its emotional overtones, it may be impossible to develop a history of Afro-American art which has con-

tinuity through the present and which will satisfy the needs of the Black and the White communities.

For the time being, we might arrive at a more workable solution by separating (for purposes of analysis and interpretation) the more recent art of the Afro-American from that which is earlier. Possibly World War II would be a logical watershed. The history of more recent art can then be related to the development of the independent nations of Africa, or of African studies in general, if this is desirable. However, this type of chronological separation may well produce at least two answers to the question "What about Afro-American Art?" But if the general history of American art is any guide, a single answer to such a basic question is likely to be artificial and forced.

Regardless of the pitfalls and the probable tedium, the time seems quite ripe for a systematic study of both historic and contemporary Afro-American art. The contemporary Afro-American should have the motivation, and we trust that he will be able to discriminate—in the proper sense of the word—between contemporary values and those of the past. The resulting enlargement of our record of American art will be of benefit to all of us.

University of Missouri—Kansas City

footnotes

* The principal objective of this paper is an examination of the methodological problems which are raised by the need to ensure the development of an American art history which will give the work of Black artists balanced attention within the larger narrative. In no way is this an attempt to summarize the publications of writers on the art of Afro-Americans or to draw conclusions concerning the work of individual artists. The writer of this paper does not pretend any special expertise in Afro-American culture, but he does feel qualified to speak to the issue of factors affecting research in American art, and in the teaching of the history of American art, both activities which are important to American Studies.

1. *The Portrayal of the Negro in American Painting* (The Bowdoin College Museum of Art, 1964). This exhibition consisted of eighty paintings, by both Black and White artists, and covered two-and-a-half centuries. The catalogue has an introductory essay by Professor Sidney Kaplan.

2. A major exception is James A. Porter, *Modern Negro Art* (New York: The Dryden Press, 1943) which has just been reprinted (1969) by Arno Press and the *New York Times* as part of the project, "The American Negro, His History and Literature." Porter's work was one of the first systematic studies and a key one for any examination of the art of the American Negro. It is surprising that Professor Porter's example of careful and objective scholarship has not been followed by an increasing flow of studies documenting the years subsequent to World War II or amplifying his pioneer work. A factor might be the trend of American art, both Black and White, away from social realism practised by many in the thirties, thus reducing one element that was important in grouping artists.

3. It has been estimated that during the academic year 1961-1962 there were only about 500 full-time art historians teaching in the United States, and of these some 300 held the Ph.D. See *The Visual Arts in Higher Education* (College Art Association, 1966). In 1968-1969 there may be twice that number, but probably no more than that.

4. Obviously, one can write a history which concerns itself only with Negro Art, as did James A. Porter; but he has demonstrated the difficulty in documenting work done prior to World War I, and how frequently the work of Black Americans intertwines with the art and the institutions of the White majority. While specialized studies can be written and are necessary, especially monographs on individual artists, it may be that the best way to present the art of Black Americans is as Art by Americans. Certainly there are many contemporary Black artists that want their work to be judged strictly on its merits without ethnic reference.

5. An excellent case in point is the catalogue which was prepared by James A. Porter for an exhibition, *Ten Afro-American Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, which was mounted at

Howard University in commemoration of its centennial, and held February 3, to March 30, 1967.

6. This can be seen in the work of many artists, including three major historical figures, Robert S. Duncanson (1817-1872), Edmonia Lewis (1843-1900?), and Henry O. Tanner (1859-1937).

7. There is, of course, a body of writings by Black scholars and about the work of Black artists, but only a small fraction has been published in or reviewed by periodicals covered by the *Art Index*. This is a real problem for the White art historian whose training takes him to standard bibliographic tools which do not reveal much of what we can find in the bibliography of Porter's *Negro Art*. Until there is more publication in indexed art journals, or until there is a concerted attempt to prepare a major, updated bibliography on the subject of Afro-American art, much that has been published is likely to be missed by those who should be reading it.

8. The example of the late Alain L. Locke (1886-1954) is one worthy of emulation as a model.

9. Pauline A. Pinckney, *Painting in Texas: The Nineteenth Century* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1967). This was published for the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art in Fort Worth.

10. The four that appear in Oliver Larkin, *Art and Life in America*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), and Samuel M. Green, *American Art* (New York: Ronald Press, 1966), are George Catlin, John James Audubon, Seth Eastman and Martin Johnson Heade, none of whom can really be called Texas painters.

11. That is why exhibitions alone will not suffice and well-researched and carefully written catalogues by qualified people are so important.

12. Cf. n. 1.

13. Bowdoin College exhibition catalogue, [p. 2] of the essay.

14. *Ibid.*, [p. 4] of the essay.

15. There are two versions of Bingham's "Order #11" which differ slightly in minor details and size. The first version is in the collection of the State Historical Society of Missouri, in Columbia, while the second is in the Cincinnati Art Museum.

16. As Professor Porter notes in his 1969 Preface to *Negro Art*, "it is rather significant that the most effective of the new crop of [Black] artists of the 1960's have chosen to express themselves more or less in the idioms of surrealist fantasy or abstraction or in abstract expressionism, while other have reverted to *Dada*. A few, as might be expected, have lately caught up to the featureless objectivity of the 'New Aesthetic' . . ." [p. 3-4]. In brief, the Black artist is following much the same goals as the White artist.