

The african american artist charles searles essay sample



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The line, space, light, color and design may define the achievement of any given artwork. However, no one can deny that it is the greatness of the theme that makes the over-all effect and elicits the sublime reactions from the observers. The experience of gazing through the painting itself transcends the point of view of the painter and the observers are compelled to create their own about it. As entirely inspired by postmodern era, Charles Searles his innovative style and intense art form, best known for curvilinear, sometimes biomorphic sculptures primarily made of painted wood, aluminum or bronze. Thus, he is qualified to be nominated as the 20th-century figure whose work/artistic contributions can be classified in both the Age of Modernism and the Age of Pluralism for the 20th Century Genius Award.

Cued by both African and Western inspiration, Charles Searles' (1937 - 2004) sprightly create abstract constructions, most of these in textured and brightly painted wood create a kind of syncopated whole. Although his art pieces are individual, bits and parts recur from work to work, in different colors and arrangements: *Filàs for Sale* (Nigerian Impression Series 1972), for instance, reverberates the mixture of rhythmic schemes and bright colors. As a proponent of postmodern art, Searles' artwork in acrylic canvas makes the sun as the focal point of the painting. In curvilinear fashion, the painting used alternate colors of magenta and yellow for the sun radiates concentric circles. In the painting, there are 5 black Africans, which located on the upper left, upper right, the edge of the right hand side and one in the lower left and the last one is at the mid-low of the painting and all of the Africans are projected outward from the sun.

Figure 1. Searles' *Filas for Sale* (1972).

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This abstract postmodern painting might have been inspired with his trip to Africa because while studying at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1972, Charles Searles won a fellowship to visit Ghana, Nigeria and Morocco. This African trip strongly influenced Searles' use of color and pattern as well as forms inspired by African sculpture and dance. He is made famous for his dynamic and colorful sculptures. Since 1978 he was already concentrating on abstract sculptures. His works usually hangs on the wall or stand freely on pedestals, the joined cutout segments suggest a harmonious aggregation that vibrates with the medley of integration between the cultural forces of African and Western traditions.

Comparing his work with a 19th genius William Merritt Chase's Nursery, Searles' Filas for Sale demonstrated much on how can be used expressively with the use of arbitrary colors, while The Nursery exemplifies how perceptual colors can be used to show the world naturalistically. In addition, taking a closer analysis at the colors independently, observers also have to understand how the design of the paintings has helped to reinforce the use of the formal elements. Again, the expressive colors in Filas for Sale showcase a connotation of the bustle and flurry of movement, some sort of a celebrated dance which encompasses the heart of the African marketplace, i. e. the joyful and busy African lifestyle. On the contrary, the naturalistic colors in The Nursery enable its observers to appreciate the harmony under the fine weather. However, most elaborate similarity in both geniuses' work that is present in both paintings is the sun, which signifies the symbols of life.

Another famous artwork of Searles is Forest Dance, a large-scale sculpture in acrylic paint on birch plywood that addresses the concept of African dance. <https://assignbuster.com/the-african-american-artist-charles-searles-essay-sample/>

Art critic Murphy (1993) established that this particular art form speak quite a lot about New York painter-sculptor Charles Searles, who is incidentally also a percussionist. Searles signified that he does work with dance a lot in his paintings and with dancers in his music. He also has Picasso-inspired figurative paintings that are brightly painted, somewhat geometric and flattened. Arranged in an interlocking pattern, the overall effect creates a lively rhythm, related to the vital spirit of improvisational jazz. He has three other sculptures namely Freedom's Gate, Striving and Warrior.

In 1992, Seales was invited to Oakland, California on the basis of an appearance on the PBS program Kindred Spirits to help develop McClymonds High School's Afrocentric Transformation Project, which will be implemented with 9th-graders. He was also commissioned to create an exterior sculpture for the First District Plaza, in West Philadelphia, and is scheduled for a show in October, at the Malcolm Brown Gallery, in Shaker Heights, Ohio.

Previous paintings and collages by African-American artists like Aaron Douglas and Romare Bearden become stylized evocations of aspects of the African past and of the American black tradition of the blues. Powell evaluates the tonal and rhythmic play in paintings by blacks as what Albert Murray has termed "the visual equivalent of the blues." The crucial issue of who makes and who writes history-so often raised in historiography-is central. For Powell, the artist is a maker of traditions: a historian of the textures, shapes-and perhaps even the sounds-of "epochs" ("styles are epochs") gone by and yet vividly with us. Herein, suggests Powell, lay the seeds for a theory of African-American art and its efflorescent traditions (Fabre & O'Meally, 1994, p. 14).

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Although many African-American artists have been the subjects of general art histories and art biographies, the actual works themselves have more or less been relegated to a position of illustrating that history rather than being central to it. Questions regarding the existence of a unique school or style of “ African-American art” and the recognizable traits and relationships of such to African and Western art traditions are frequently addressed, yet to a great extent they are still left unanswered (Powell, 1989).

Contemporary efforts by scholars and critics to define an “ African American,” or “ black” aesthetic have resulted in no clear consensus of meaning or value. Many have completely rejected the notion of an African American aesthetic, and argue that it is impossible to distinguish common characteristics among the works of African-American artists (Hilton 1977, D25). On the other hand, when preconceived notions about the art of African Americans are shattered by artists working in widely employed modes of Western modernism and postmodernism, confusion among the critical rank and file sets in.

Among the many false assumptions implicit in these arguments concerning “ African-American” art are the misconceptions that: (1) so-called Western modes of modern and contemporary art making are essentially European in origin, and (2) the term “ African-American” art presupposes that all black artists would be creating in that mode. Tripped by these fallacies, those purporting to define “ African-American” art offer an empty term; its use as a tool of visual segregation attests to its hollowness (Honig Fine, 1991).

Even when scholars have acknowledged the presence of an “ African American” aesthetic, it is almost always seen as synonymous with a social realist style, or with what is described by some as nationalistic art (Gaither, 1970). Although this emphasis on an object’s “ content” and sociopolitical import—seen in the works of both black and white artists—is now receiving a much warmer reception than it did a decade ago, focusing on it alone often obscures the formal issues which concern so many African-American artists. Furthermore, when one sees the “ African-American” aesthetic as limited to realistic works which rely strongly upon social and political messages for their appreciation, other works which stretch one’s capacity to “ read” a meaning are somehow placed outside of this “ African-American” sphere, regardless of the attitudes underlying them (Gibson, 1991).

Since the World War I, it is a painful fact that there is a crisis of representation that has triggered cultural responses to black urban migration and the contemporary crisis of representation in African-American humanist intellectual work that determines their cultural and critical responses, or the lack of response, to the contemporary crisis of black urban America. Thus, classifying an African American like Searles with the 20th century Genius Award could emanate positive responses with the increasingly multicultural America.

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