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BLACK CIVILIZATION AND THE ARTS :

AFRICAN ART IN SEARCH OF A NEW IDENTITY

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BLACK CIVILIZATION AND THE ARTS:

AFRICAN ART IN SEARCH OF A NEW IDENTITY

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Civilization has manifested itself among Black Men in many unique ways, and Black Men have influenced civilizations all over the world and down the ages. By no means least among the elements of civilization, the arts have been perhaps the field of the Black Man's greatest contribution to the world's cultural heritage.

The authenticity of the claim laid by the Black Man to great ancient civilizations is now beyond doubt, the truth having been confirmed by famous scholars, including several from a different race.

Sir Arthur Evans certifies that by 500 B.C. Athens was unknown. She had to wait long to receive civilization from Africa through the island of Crete.

In the History of Nations (Vol.18, p.1, 1906), we read: "The African continent is no recent discovery.....While yet Europe was the home of wandering barbarians one of the most wonderful civilizations on record had begun to work out its destiny on the banks of the Nile....."

The argument that Egypt's ancient civilization was white has been refuted, again, by several men of knowledge of high standing who are not black.

Herodotus, who lived from 484 to 425 B.C., saw with his eyes and says in Chapter 57 of his Second Book, that the occupants of Egypt were black. He says the Ethiopians were dark and woolly-haired. The great Historian also saw such people in parts of the Near East. He adds: "Several nations are so too."

This information explained to Count Volney why Egyptians during his visit in 1787 were so Negroid in appearance. Especially so was the Sphinx.

In shocked admiration he exclaimed: "To think that to a race of black men who are today our slaves and the object of our contempt is the same one to whom we owe our arts, science, and even the very use of speech." (Oevres, Vol.2., pp. 65-68, 1925; Ruins of Empires, pp. 16-17, 1890).

Count Volney's contemporaries, Gustav Flaubert and Baron Denon agree with him. Denon says of the sphynx: "The character is African .....the lips are thick. Art must have been at a high pitch when this monument was executed," (Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt, Vol.1, p. 140, 1803). His sketch of the Sphynx in 1798 proves this. Flaubert in 1849, says: "It is certainly Ethiopian. The lips are thick. "(Notes de Voyages, p. 115, 1910).

The Temple of Amen is the mightiest structure of its kind ever made. Together with the adjoining buildings it stands far above the Acropolis of Athens and the Foro Romano. The Pyramids, with their art for the survival of the Soul, are a living miracle of engineering and technology.

These are all comments about the Land of the Nile, from which civilization flowed to other parts of the world at a time when Black men were its main inhabitants, and when Negro blood flowed in several of her Kings, the Pharaohs, and people of all classes.

More recently, Baron Denon drew a picture of King Mameluke and his children. (The Mamelukes ruled Egypt at the time of Napoleon's invasion in 1799). The sketch shows clearly the Negroid features of the children.

Like the Temple of Amen other great civilizations were buried further south. Such civilizations are Meroe, Axum, Gida, Zymbabwe, Bhlo-Dhlo, sand to oblivion until recent times. More are being dug up even today.

In West Africa, the Songhay Empire with Timbuktoo as its Capital flourished in 1500 A.D. It was ahead of most countries of Western Europe. There were also the Mandingo, Yoruba and Ibe civilizations. Ghana, one of the greatest, was the world's richest producer of gold. England named her largest gold coin "Guinea", which is a corruption of the name "Ghana". The whole of the West African coast was called the Guinea Coast and a gulf was given the same name. Today, two of West Africa's free countries bear both versions of the name.

Early civilizations in America and some other parts of the world, apart from Europe, were influenced in no small way by Black Men.

About 500 A.D. or earlier, Africans sailed to America and were responsible for Aztec, Maya, and Inca civilizations.

The Polynesians, a negroid people, crossed the Pacific to Easter Island, off the coast of Chile, and made the colossal stone statues.

North American Indians might have come from Mongolian stock but those who lived below the Rio Grande were of Negro origin. Monuments found after Columbus went to America were negroid. And the Negro type runs through most of Ancient Mexico's sculpture, which includes a stone portrait of a Black god.

Elizabeth Lawson tells us in her study outline of "Some of the early achievements of the African People", that the arts were highly developed in the ancient African kingdoms and were actually introduced to pre-historic Europe.

In his "Gift of Black Folk", W.E.S. Du Bois declares: "The Negro is primarily an artist." The Black Philosopher deplores the derogatory way in which Black Men are said to be of a sensuous nature, while they are actually the only race to hold at bay what he calls "the life destroying forces of the tropics."

Du Bois recalls that Semitic civilization was greatly influenced by negroes, and he reminds us of Nosseyeh, one of the five great poets of Damascus under the Omniades, and the Black Arabian hero, Antat.

Still farther from the shores of Africa, manifestations of ancient and recent Black Civilizations are revealed. Riva Palacio, a Mexican historian, says, "It is indisputable that in very ancient times the Negro race occupied our territory (Mexico) when the two continents were joined. The Mexicans recall a Negro god, Ixtilton, which means "Black-Face."

In his "Shadow of Atlantis", Colonel Braghine writes about a statuette of a Negro he saw in Equador which is at least 20,000 years old. He says: "Some statues of the Indian gods in Central America possess typical Negro features ....."

Early writers on Africa tell of traders from Guinea (actually ancient Ghana) trafficking in gold alloy to America.

Columbus and Balboa found Black Men on their arrival in that country.

The universal appreciation of Africa's cultural gifts to the world is voiced in J.A. Rogers' quotations from various sources from ancient to Modern times in the book, "Africa's Gift to America." I quote:

"Ex-Africa semper aliquid novi" (Out of Africa comes something always new) - Ancient Greek saying quoted by Pliny, the Roman historian, 23-79 A.D.

"He who has drunk of the waters of Africa will drink again" - An ancient Arab saying.

"I speak of Africa and golden joys" - Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part II, Act V Scene III.

"There is Africa and all her prodigies in us". - Sir Thomas Browne, English physician and author, 1605 - 1682.

So Africa, known later as the Dark Continent by some unread and untravelled people from Europe, had actually been a light to the world throughout the ages, her exploits and triumphs having been slowly buried in oblivion after the rise of European power during the days of the early Caesars.

But Africa, as we have seen, never left her great art traditions to rot with time, although the ant and weather did eat up most of her master-pieces in wood, thus obliterating centuries of what must have been great styles. Africa's greatest artistic gift to the world may still be her traditional sculpture, fresh and vivid in imagery and powerful in expression.

Africa's apparent sleep for centuries and the decay of her perishable art work have caused many skeptics to think her art has always been static. (There may be no wood sculpture preserved which is more than three hundred years old - and more work has been done in wood generally, than in more durable materials.) The stone, terra-cotta, iron, ivory and bronze works preserved over the centuries can, however, testify to old cultures that turned out fresh styles of work with the passing of the centuries.

Apart from earlier condemnation of Africa Sculpture it was thought that the continent had no aesthetic traditions. Although people now know this to be untrue, many cannot assign reasons sufficiently strong in favour of Africa. Let us examine the situation in some detail.

Before and around the beginning of this century European art collectors and critics condemned Africa sculpture of the past as crude rendering by saveges. These works were treated mainly as curiosities until certain poets and artists began to see genius in some of these pieces.

Vlaminck and his friends got interested, but it was mainly Picasso

who made the world to notice pictorially what new avenues had been opened to the western mind by these unique works. Braque, Modigliam, Braucusi, Arp and others followed, and European art assumed new dimentions and revitalised a bored art world.

The best known African art works being religious sculpture Africans have been thought to possess no art in the Western sense of the word. And several theorists think that art is art only when it is meant to be merely admired. Today, however, the doctrine of "art for art's sake" as the only valid form of art, has become out-dated, out-moded and uncalled for. For even paintings and decorations are now known to serve purposes beyond mere decoration. On the other hand, art works made as a means to an end have a right to be admired as vehicles of people's ideas about truth and beauty.

The world of African art embraces, apart from sculpture, all kinds of untility objects, decorative arts from scribbles to paintings; pottery, architecture, and textiles, rich in design and deep symbolism.

In the Space age, more than ever before, art has been seen to serve a great variety of purposes apart from decoration. Art goes into, and comes out of politics, religion, medicine, commerce, science and technology, commerce and the economy, ed cation and entertainment. Art is once again a means of survival, a vehicle for communication, and a weapon for psychological warfare. Art is more than ever a way of life and an intergral part of living; aesthetics have assumed broader and more challenging dimensions.

No art has served any of these purposes better than, and in some cases, as well as what we call African traditional art. And now that the sources that gave rise to some of these creations seem to have been cut off, learned men and women are crying frantically to preserve some of these traditions, or at least to record them and to make

enquiries into them which can tell us more about Africa and eventually about the world. For the African, despite the closing gap, has his own way of looking at the world and of communicating with people, rulers and gods. Whether an object is made for worship or for home consumption, the artist seeks to communicate with men, rulers, and ancestors, spirits, deities and God.

The African is aware of art as art, apart from its anthropological references. He had traditions of beauty, standards of behaviour, and a sense of value; in short, an aesthetic tradition. Africa has had men and women of taste ranking with the best in the Orient and the Western World.

Festivals, dances, and other ceremonies and performances are governed by rules among Africans. There is also, to a safe extent, the freedom of expression within a strict discipline.

The African knows a good dancer, musician, actor, carver or a great orator from a poor one. The good one not only knows the correct notes, steps, forms, words and emphasis; he also knows how to apply them to express himself within the rules and in addition he gives them a personal touch. The artist is well-respected. The great Dan Sculptor who was named Sra (hod) by his people; the Master of Buli, Prince Ighe Igha of Ife, who taught the sculptors of Benin and is worshipped as a god to this day; these are a few examples of artists who must have been acclaimed more highly by their people than Western artists have been appreciated.

Kamara Laye narrates in his "African Child" how customers at his father's workshop (he was a famous goldsmith) had minstrel to sing the artist's praises to make him accept an order when he was very busy.



Recently we learnt about the return of a stolen carving - a god - back home to Kom, Cameroon, after several years in the United States of America. A late paramount chief of the Kom people, Fon Yu, was a great carver himself, and might have made this famous sculpture, the "soul" of the people, whose return was received very emotionally by the Kom.

When chiefs and their retinues appear with their famous regalia, they are indeed performing an act of exhibition to portray the people's sense of beauty and the kings' dignity and glory as enhanced by these works of art.

The Ashanti are a great people who adopted whatever was beautiful in the cultures of people they conquered in battle. They preserved and incorporated the culture of the Bono with their own; they imported objects of art, like brass bowls, from north-east Africa. They also brought Superior Craftsmen from places like Gyaman and Brong to their court.

The rulers of Dahomey were another powerful people who encouraged and led in the assimilation of other cultures.

When Paul Gebauer visited Fon Ndi of Cameroon in his palace in 1933, he saw evidence of these ancient practices. The Fon, showing his guest around, exclaimed: "Truly wonderful is the handwork of the grassland people". This was perfectly true.

The famous travellers and historians Ibn Batuta and Ibn Khaldun both mention a great patron of art, Emperor Gongo Mussa (1312-37) of the Mandingo (Mali), who allowed writers to settle in his country. He brought from a pilgrimage to Mecca an Arabian poet and architect, El Saheli.

In our own times Sultan Njoya of Foubam in Cameroon , wrote a treatise advocating for a fusion of Islam, Christianity and animism. He also caused chronicles to be written, and made a collection of works by great Bamum craftsmen.

His rival, a Christian of note, Mose Yeyap, also founded a museum at Foubam.

For lack of written records about most of Africa's aesthetic ideas it has been thought that Africans cannot think or talk about art in a way involving criticism and appreciation which means there is nothing like a theory of art in Africa, and Africans cannot hold any view about art.

The African carver, weaver, or potter, has in his minds' eye what image he wants to creat before he starts, and from time to time he pauses to assess his progress. He is either satisfied or displeased at the end. If it is a feeling of power, magic, hanging, or serenity he wants to portray, it comes to the sculptor out of long practice, sensitivity and a vivid imagination. To him proportions are those of significance, not enatomical. To him nature is to be observed and admired, no longer to be copied but to be used in a stylised manner to express ideas that are intensely alive and pregnant with meaning.

Researchers like Gottfried Semper, Leo Frobenius, Ben and William Fagg have helped to put right the thoughts of many people about African art and artists. The artist has an opinion. Men like Himmelheber, Fischer and Vanderhoute bring out the fact that the artist and the layman often have something to say about intelligent and distinctive to say about works of art. They have also proved that groups of people have general views about types of work as stimulated by the elements that attract them most, such as texture in decorative works or resemblance in

portraiture. In the latter case, we realise that the traditional artist and critic looked for a relative resemblance, midway between copy and abstraction. In the art of portraiture (using masks and figures) Robert Thompson in thorough investigation among the Yoruba, notes that people generally look for this moderate resemblance, apart from visibility or clarity of parts, huminosity of surface giving play to light and shade; symmetry, upright posture, and calm composure. Vanderhoute has also been able, through experiment, to find the Dan criteria of beauty in elements like balance, rhythm, and symmetry, to name a few.

African traditional architecture, from modified caves to palaces and from granaries to temples, has character and display a high aesthetic sense. The character of structures often bears the imprint of the environment. Local materials have been used with reason and feeling. Etchings, drawings, paintings, reliefs and paste have been employed to decorate buildings and enhance the glory of their owners.

It has been supposed in the recent past that in Africa there are no words or thoughts equivalent to beauty and ugliness. This again is a fallacy, as in our languages we have vocabulary to express what we feel about a thing, pleasant or unpleasant, good or bad, beautiful or ugly, right and wrong. Like the Greek who were noted for their love of beauty, and who had the word "agathos", meaning "good" "beautiful", and "courageous in battle", Africa languages have words whose equivalents are "good", "bad", and at the same time mean "beautiful" and "ugly". In several languages there are specific words for each kind of quality. In Ewe we say Edze tugbe (she's beautiful), edze doka (he's handsome), eny. (he/she/it is good). In Twi we say Ne ho ye fe (he/she is good-looking), bone (evil), papa or yie (good), etc.

We have always had an opinion about personal beauty contests which have been held in traditional African Societies.

Facial marks are made not only for identity but for beauty. The figure, the head and the limbs are adorned with paint, metal, glass and stone ornaments, and clothing. Scarification is greatly indulged in. In some areas this is done not only to excite the sight but the touch, too, of a man as he observes and caresses his wife. Also certain parts of scars are very sensitive and as a result the man's caresses in these areas excite his woman greatly.

Even people have their own ideas of the beauty of the female figure. In Ghana, the main principle lies in the shape of an egg, as Kofi Antubam states in his "Ghana's Heritage of Culture". There is the love of plumpness, especially in the bust, the buttocks and the calves. The head and figure of a baby are kneaded towards the desired form by the use of a towel and hot water.

African societies have their own norms of social behaviour, and children are given strict education. Adolescents are initiated into adulthood by special rituals sometimes lasting for several months or a few years, during which education becomes very rigorous. Secret societies have their rules and offenders are severely punished.

There is beauty of speech among black peoples. Great orators are respected. A good speech is full of wisdom and rich with proverbs and witty remarks, humour, and sometimes venom. Symbolism is an important feature in oral literature as in sculpture architecture and textiles. A resonant, expressive voice, good posture and action, are impressive to the African too.

There are universal standards of life and living, but there are group, area and racial standards and values too, which divide the world into different cultures. Time and contact with the outside

help to modify these norms. Each sculpture ought to be appraised and judged with care. When faced with anything unfamiliar a person should not approach it merely on his own regional or personal estimations. The work or the situation should be examined in its own context; and it is important today that critics should experience the arts of different times and lands to be good judges of any one.

Today, there is a fusion of culture in Africa, and therefore a conflict and a marriage between aesthetic ideas, especially in the urban areas, where the cinema, the book, the church, western education and technology have injected eastern and western elements into our bloodstream. Many now prefer European fashion, music, dances and plastic arts to traditional ones. Having lost contact with our traditions we are naturally attracted to the strange new forms which have become familiar sights and sounds in our cities and on our highways. A few intellectuals and old-timers lament the vanishing horizon and abhor the apparent threat of enslavement of the African mind which has seemingly stopped appreciating things African.

There are, however, those who have taken the middle course because they have accepted the inevitability of, and necessity for change in a world which is moving on from stage to stage. They believe that the best from our tradition should fuse with the best from outside to create a new liberated, universal and unique African. But we must hope that man will win, and that Africa, after what seems an endless nightmare, will identify herself among the continents as an independent member of the world, with both body and mind untied, and with a higher sense of value in her social, artistic, scientific, technological, economic, religious and cultural life.

Black Africa in transition has a life and an art that are more varied than ever before. Art ranges from stone-age to the modern, and includes painting, industrial and commercial art. The last two are still on virgin soil.

Africans are not new to art which is directly linked with the physical side of life - industrial art. That and commercial art are on virgin soil in so far as the former is taken for granted and the latter has not yet made the right communicative impact on the people. Industries are now growing, and advertising agencies with modern facilities are springing up.

Everybody will readily agree that these arts should be nourished, the one to make life more beautiful and more abundant, the other to facilitate and make communication clear and precise. Both would be a great lubricant to the economy. The so-obviously-economically viable arts, the prestigious fine arts of sculpture and painting, are the object of controversy among the intellectuals. It is these two, especially painting, that I want us to examine as far as the African scene is concerned.

Sculpture is accepted by all as a relevant form of art in Africa. Painting is only now being tolerated. If it is admired, it is only for itself. Some people think it is not an indigenous art and should therefore not be practised by Africans. This wish is wrong because:

- (1) Art is a universal language;
- (2) Painting is not new in Africa. Africa has had traditions of painting: Several areas of cave painting abound in all four corners of Africa. Moreover, wall decoration with colour can be seen in different parts of Africa. Many African artists are today expressing themselves eloquently, truthfully and beautifully in paint, and so should we ask them to change their medium of expression?

Knowledge about the modern art of Africa is limited, scattered and sparse, because:

- (1) Traditional Art is only now being understood. Being overwhelmed by its magic most foreigners want to see nothing else. Some Africans trying to retrieve or retain their cultural heritage would only practice what their grandfathers did.
- (2) Ideas and opinions about art in Africa are varied and growing, but not yet settled. Africa is too vast and is moving too fast for scholars interested in research to cover in a few years.
- (3) Some people think nothing good can come out of an African that has only too readily "embraced" foreign cultures.
- (4) Apart from sponsorship by bodies like the African - American Institute, the Society for African Culture, the Harmon Foundation, the British Council and the United States Information Services; as well as periodicals like the African Arts and Transition (now known as Ch'indaba) there is no efficient information medium for bringing really outstanding Black African Artists before the world.

But this does not mean that nothing is happening. Beneath the silent surface waters runs a dynamic current of virile artists for whom art is a formidable tool for contact, a means of intellectual, individual and social survival.

There are many different types of artists in Africa today, We can, however, place them under four main headings.

Traditionalists, Revolutionaries, those who strive after a synthesis, and those who practise the old and the new side by side.

All are necessarily influenced by modern living. Instead of going into minute detail to talk about each type of artist I would like a few of the better known ones to speak to us about themselves and about art. This, I think, is a good change, since

the traditional artist has been so anonymous, often forgotten, and unheard except in the frozen music of his work.

Ethiopian artists Aferwerk Tekle and Kristos Desta have much in common. They were both born in 1932. Both are famous at home. They studied abroad and won the Haile Selassie Award for the Arts, and they now live and work at home.

But as artist they are quite different.

Tekle says: "I paint realistically". He goes abstract when this is necessary. "Lines help to break up colours, to give a sense of composition and rhythm and to define certain general movement."

Tekle sometimes paints in the Stained glass technique which gives a certain solemnity to his work. There is a general "spiritual" character in his paintings.

The abstraction of Kristos makes him popular abroad and controversial at home. He experiments with sand, tin cans, ropes and of course with paints. He says:

"It's really funny that some people who know nothing about the history of art attach importance to the art of their country... .." He says Picasso owes much to Africa; Matisse to Islam, and Gauguin to Tahiti. We owe to the West our new technological developments; highways, ultra-modern architecture, and many other things. "Why in the world", he asks, "should art be any different?" He goes on: "Ethiopian Church art ..... regarded as an important part of our cultural heritage ..... this supposedly indigenous art is actually Byzantine in style." It is now a synthesis of the indigenous and the foreign.

The Modern Nigerian traditionalist Jamidi O. Fakeye says "I feel part of my history." He is faithful to the old style which he has refined to a high degree, and uses it for a new



Christian art. Fakeye does not condemn the new styles.

Mozambique artist Valente Malangatana's work in bold, wild and powerful. It is eloquent, full of imagery and often, stories.

The Sudanese painter Ibrahim Salahi is greatly influenced by Islamic writing, and earlier also by African masks. His paintings include writing and sometimes faces, half human, half bull, with a stubborn stare. He tells us that words come to him as he works, and some of these appear on his work. "I find I've done them without realising it. Some of it is prayer mostly. Some.... .. is poetry; some from the Koran..... some of it is..... meaningless....."

The late Selby Mvusi of South Africa was an eminent educator, painter, sculptor, ceramist and graphic designer. He was, indeed, one of Africa's finest painters. His death in the mid-sixties in an automobile accident in East Africa was a great loss to Black Arts. Mvusi, who was on the panel for the Boston meetings of the U.S. Commission to U.N.E.S.C.O. in 1961 (,) was said to have made a very laudable contribution there.

In a speech given at the FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF AFRICAN CULTURE in Salisbury, August 1 to September 30, 1962, Mvusi said:

"Emerging from the colonial years the African is walking four square into the world of international man. It would however be naive to suppose or assume that the Art of Africa now stands identified with Euro-American Art sharing common resource and purpose .....The Africa artist's encounter with the Art of the Western world is only beginning....."

With a giant brain in a giant frame, Mvusi is referred to, by Frank McEwen, as standing "solemnly like an old master." He praises his "learned talent,.....his authority, and "his contempt for adversity....."

Another loss to the art world (1974) was Vicent Akwete Kofi of Ghana, whose work was rich in imagery and steeped in monumentality. Some of his wood carvings can be seen at the Kof-Hag Art Mart at the Teshie-Nungua Estate in Accra, Ghana. The big man with a big humour who carved big forms and had a big laugh, was intense in every way. He wrote in his "Sculpture in Ghana".

"Outside influence do not constitute a danger to a virile tradition. But while we accept outside influence as inevitable ..  
.....no virile tradition will commit cultural suicide by brain-washing itself and rejecting its past completely ..... No Art is produced in a vacuum."

While some Africans, like Malangatana and Twins Seven-Seven, have made names with their naive and mythological work, others, like 'Skunder' Bhogossian, Seth Anku, Ato Delaquis, Gustav Ntiforo, E. Tetteh and Ablade Glover, would like to explore on a wider horizon. Meanwhile, they are not looking down on their heritage.

Iba N'daye of Senegal, also a painter, says: " I don't want people to say that my painting represents African painting, because African painting is still in bud. It is still a sort of hybrid thing, searching for its own way and developing as Africans become aware of their originality which, I think, cannot be discovered only to be a reference to the past.....I have no desire to be fashionable. Certain Europeans, seeking exotic thrills, expect me to serve them folk-lore. I refuse to do it - otherwise I would exist only as a function of their segregationist ideas of the African artist. These ideas confine the artists to the domain of the naive, the insolate, the sur-real and the art du bizzare.....For me, painting is an internal necessity, a need to express myself while trying to be clear about my intentions concerning subjects that have affected me - to commit myself concerning vital problems,

the problems of our existence. Above all, painting for me is not an art of leisure, but rather a means of combat, a way of expressing my conception of the world."

Iba N'daye speaks for many of us. The challenge of tradition is that the artist should study and try to understand it, and to master it; not to be dominated by it. Africa must be commended by her great past and be inspired by it, not condemned or relegated to the past. Her artist should learn from the traditional artist's attitude to his society and his work. The two were related. The modern African artist should not imitate his predecessor, but he must emulate him in this sincere relationship, this oneness, this relevance with his place and time. If in the process he is able to recapture that old spirituality in a new light, he will have achieved something of lasting value. He should be a good specialist of his art by understanding the other arts; this is what the old men did. Some of them were even versatile in several arts, and this increased their prowess in their special field.

There is no need to regard the vanishing traditions of indigenous African life as a tragedy and outside influence as abominable. Africa should have museums; It should not be one. The world is getting smaller and moving ahead.

However, a true African is true everywhere, any time. After all, one can not even in one's indigenous surroundings, and produce stale, insipid work.

Art lies within the man, and whatever his environment, if he maintains his integrity he can achieve merit, beauty and truth anywhere.

The Spirit of Africa lived on in the blacks who were shipped to America. Whenever they had the chance they got together and sang and entertained themselves. Sometimes they amused their masters.

They evolved new kinds of music, notably the spiritual, the blues, the jazz. Minstrels later roamed the land, and, with their hard-won freedom they sang, danced and acted out their emotions, and have done to this day.

Thus Africa gave rhythm and flexibility to the music of the New World, which owes to her the influence of the popular dances - the cha-cha-cha, tango, machiche, samba, cake-walk, mambo, charleston, meringue, and the rock'n-roll.

Many modern composers of note have been influenced by Negro music: notably, jazz composers like Stravinsky, Ravel, Darius Miland, Kindermoth, George Gerghwin and Stephen Foste, "America's most beloved composer,"

To testify to the talent and prowess of black musicians in the slave days we remember that advertisements sent out for runaway slaves or slaves for sale told of the skill of some of them. Sy Gilliat, slave of Lord Boterourt was a violinist at state balls.

A free negro, Robert Scott, with his wife and three sons played for Jefferson and for LaFayette. Black singers were very popular with Union Army in the Civil war, while in New England there were famous Black teachers of Whites.

The greatest musical miracle of all time was Thomas Bethune (1848-1908). He was untaught, but he extertained crowds in America and Britain, improvising and playing correctly on the piano, difficult pieces from memory - even pieces he had jsut heard. He could play two different tunes with both hands at once while singing a third one in a different key.

Bethune could also give recitations in Greek, Latin, French, German and Spanish, and he could imitate any sound he could hear.

In one commentary it was noted: "History affords no parallel to Blind Tom.

Scores of names of famous Black musicians in Europe, Africa and America appear in authentic records. A few of them are: Coleridge-Taylor, the Afro-British composer, James Bland, composer of "Carry me back to Ole Virginny"; and Harry T. Burleigh, to many people the greatest American Song writer of his time.

Ella Fitzgerald, Mahalia Jackson, Dinah Washington, Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, Ray Charles, Duke Ellington, are only a very, very few of the great names in the field of musical performance.

Recently issue of the Ebony Magazine published the names of the latest Hall of Fame success, Topping the list were Julian Aderley and Miles Davis - for Jazz; the Temptations, Smokey Robinson for popular rhythm and blues; Jimmy Witherspoon and Aaron Walker in the blues, and for Gospel singing, the Original Five Blind Boys and the Rev. G.L. Franklin, famous father of famous soul Queen Aretha Franklin.

Some great Black singers who have been at least equally famous in films are: Harry Belafonte, Ertha Kitt, Dorothy Dandridge and Paul Robeson.

The Black Man has really come into his own now in films. The days are gone when whites had to paint themselves black to act black aristocrats and black were made to play only the role of servants. Ranking with the best of all time, are, to mention a few, Sidney Poitier, Pam Grier, and ex-football stars Jim Brown, Fred Williamson, and Woody Strode.

In short, the Blacks have not the front rank in all the performing arts. It would not be right to fail to mention even names of athletes and sportsmen, like Jesse Owens, Rafer Johnson, Jack Johnson, Joe Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson, Archie Moore and Mohammed Ali for sport in art.

Black poets have also sprung up among people of Africa descent. Notable among the old ones were Phyllis Wheatley and W.E.B. Du Bois.

In the plastic arts, the Blacks have not lagged behind. The earliest named black painter was Scipio Moorhead.

Edward Bannister (1828-1901) won a gold medal for his painting at the centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, in 1876.

Joshua Johnson, the earliest black portrait painter of note, is represented in Frick Gallery, New York City. He lived during the Revolution.

Eugene Warburg (1825-1861) was a leading sculptor of New Orleans, and sculpted for Cathedrals in Louisiana and Europe.

Today, man like Earl Swesting and John Biggars and less known but sincerer painters like L.E. Mitchell, Jr., and Henry King are performing in style, and have been to Mother Africa for inspiration, and have in turn inspired several African Youths in art.

Notable among African musicians are the ageless Miriam Makeba of South Africa, Sir Victor Uwaifo and Fela Ransome-Kuti, Nigerian innovators; Bella Bello, Koo Nimo E.T. Mensah, the High-life king, and Nana Ampadu with his African Brothers of Ghana - all in the popular field, Kofi Ghanaba (Guy Warren) and his son in jazz.

In Ghana, we cannot talk about music without bringing in the name of Philip Gbeho, composer of the National Anthem, and his work for education, for Achimota School and the National Orchestra and Choir which he founded.

Nor can we forget composer - conductor and performer Zinzendorf Nayo and giants like Otto Boateng, Composer and performer, J.H.Kwabena Nketia, and the immortal Ephraim Amu, unparalleled in the combined simplicity and complexity and solemn nature of his songs. This is the man who, more than any other, has won cultural freedom for the Ghanaian artist.

Today, Saka Acquaye, sculptor, dramatist and musician, has given the theatres a new and virile flavour in his folk operas.

Civilization is not the acquisition of wealth or power; it is what one does with it. It is not the possession of sophisticated weapons and space ships; but their use to achieve peace. It lies in true education, and in education through art.

Civilization is an attitude of mind.

Black civilization is going through a very difficult, most exciting, and certainly a hopeful transition, and the rate at which the Black Man is developing and the effort with which he is untying both mind and body, are a warning to destructive adventurers and a happy prophesy to the civilized.

The Black Man is not just saying that Black is Beautiful. Despite obvious mistakes, which he shares with the rest of mankind, he can still prove that he is "black and handsome", not 'black but handsome'!