

Call for Art Submissions:
The Fire Every Time: Reframing Black Power across the Twentieth Century and
Beyond

A Juried Art Exhibition and Poster Art Competition
August–September, 2011
Hosted by
The College of Charleston’s Avery Research Center
for African American History and Culture

In his 1963 collection of essays, *The Fire Next Time*, James Baldwin reflected on the expulsion of African Americans from the “American Dream” of economic opportunity, political equality, and social belonging. Rather than being daunted by what he called “the center of this dreadful storm, this vast confusion,” Baldwin connects the present and future struggles of Black people to their past: “I know that what I’m asking is impossible. But in our time, as in every time, the impossible is the [*sic*] least that one can demand—and one is, after all, emboldened by the spectacle of human history in general, and American Negro history in particular, for it testifies to nothing less than the perpetual achievement of the impossible.” In our contemporary age where some have claimed the nation has achieved the “impossible” through the election of Barack Obama, the nation’s first African-American president, we ask scholars, activists, and artists to reconceptualize the twentieth century through the lens of past, present, and future struggles for Black Power, which, according to Baldwin, spread as a “fire” every time.

On September 21st & 22nd, 2012, the College of Charleston’s Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture will host a public history symposium and community event on the topic of “The Fire Every Time: Reframing Black Power across the Twentieth Century and Beyond”. Over the past decade, historians have employed the concept of the “long Civil Rights Movement” to rethink who is included as part of the civil rights revolution, where the civil rights revolution occurred beyond traditional narratives of the American South, and to re-conceptualize the Civil Rights Movement’s typical periodization to include struggles for civil rights before 1954 and well beyond 1968.

Popular narrative conventions, on the other hand, generally typecast The “Black Power” tradition as radical, violent, and ultimately self-defeating. Despite years of scholarship proving otherwise, too often the public views Black Power as an aberration of the “Long Civil Rights Movement”, a destructive interruption and a politically ineffectual movement that derailed the civil rights agenda resulting in

white backlash, conservative retrenchment, urban unrest, and lost “dreams” for activists and communities of marginalized peoples.

The Avery Research Center seeks art submissions for a juried art competition that investigates the meaning of “Black Power” in the broader context of American, African-American, and Pan-African history at the local, national, and international levels and across the twentieth century. Truly, the Black Power movement played an important role in the development and ideological frameworks of the Black Arts movement vis-à-vis Black cinema i.e., Black exploitation films, the Los Angeles Rebellion, and AfriCOBRA, and the Chicago Black Arts Movement. Thus, the works associated with this salient art movement reflect the complexity and volatile nature of the political and socioeconomic landscape of this distinct period within the African-American twentieth century, as well as the fluidity of Black creative expression. At the center, then, is the work of the artist in the struggle for Black agency and collective self-determination. To be sure, many African-American artists associated with the Black Arts Movement used their respective media to define/highlight/expose/investigate/re-interpret Blackness, Black beauty, and the role of the Black artist within the American landscape. We seek art submissions that consider the Movement’s innovation and international influence on the Black aesthetic, Black popular culture, and address depictions of Blackness and Black identity in mainstream art, film, and the media.

The first-place winner of the juried art competition will receive \$1000 and his/her piece will be featured as the poster art for the symposium. Additionally, the first-place winner will be featured in an exhibition at The Avery Research Center in 2013. There will also be a second-place prize of \$350 and a third-place prize of \$250. Winners will be announced at the opening symposium plenary session.

Artists may submit work in the following categories:

- Painting/Drawing
- Sculpture
- Fiber Art
- Mixed Media
- Photography

Important Dates and Guidelines to remember:

- Submission Format and Deadline: Jpeg images must be received by May 31, 2012
- Submission Fees: \$25 for 1 image; and \$15 for each subsequent image up to 5 total
- Artists notified of selection status by June 15, 2012
- Art shipped or hand-delivered to The Avery Research Center by August 3, 2012
- Exhibition runs September 1, 2012–December 14, 2012
- Artists must secure return shipping for all artwork accepted into the competition

Please send all submissions to Curtis Franks, Curator, at franksc@cofc.edu, and carbon copy (cc) Savannah Frierson at friersons@cofc.edu with your name, institution, title, email address, submission title and format, along with an artist's statement, and recent CV. Please put "Black Power Proposal" in your subject line.

Artists are responsible for getting their work to the Avery Research Center, as well as the return for all accepted pieces.

Information regarding registration, lodging, and symposium schedule will be available on the Avery Research Center's Web site beginning in May 2012.

Contact information:

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