

OCT 21, 2007–JAN 20, 2008 / MOCA PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER

BLACK PANTHER

The Revolutionary Art of

EMORY DOUGLAS



Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas offers a compelling model of how art may be used to provoke a new political consciousness and function as a catalyst for social change. As the Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party, which he joined in 1967 at the age of 22, Emory Douglas established an iconic visual style that communicated the organization's commitment to activism and social justice and created a powerful identifiable aesthetic that played a significant role in mobilizing a community.

Inspired by Malcolm X's call to resist violence and brutality by any means necessary, the Black Panther Party was among the most radical and significant American activist groups of the 20th century. Founded in 1966 by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton in Oakland, California, the party's mission to attain justice and autonomy for all oppressed people was accompanied by an equal desire to improve their quality of life through economic, political, and social empowerment. The ideals and aspirations of the party were communicated to a global audience through *The Black Panther* newspaper, for which Douglas served as art director until its discontinuation in the early 1980s. Trained as a commercial artist at City College of San Francisco and ideologically aligned with

the growing black liberation struggle, he contributed hundreds of provocative drawings that brought the radical spirit of the party to life.

Employing a style that is boldly confrontational and conceptually efficient, Douglas transformed an impressive range of materials—including the newspaper’s tabloid-size back-page poster—into revolutionary tools through the inclusion of images that were highly political and often subversive. Together, these works provide a poignant visual record of the history of the Black Panther Party and the development of its evolving mission. Earlier drawings provide a sense of empowerment to the oppressed, with representations of social protest manifested through figures of gun-toting men and women and trademark ironic caricatures of racist oppressors. The pig, which functioned as the predominant avatar for authority, is among the most indelible of Douglas’s mordant motifs. As Bobby Seale wrote, “It was largely Emory’s images that communicated and helped the average protester and grassroots organizer define the phenomenon of who and what our oppressors were.” Later drawings feature humanistic representations of community pride, economic development, and the party’s many social programs.

While Douglas’s work focuses on the plight of African Americans in the social and political systems of the United States, it can also be considered within the context of the larger worldwide

struggle against oppression—particularly in terms of the message and style of the protest graphics of Cuba, Vietnam, and Africa. Like the Black Panther Party, which supported the efforts of analogous national and international groups, Douglas’s work provides a visual link to global efforts for political and social reform. It can also be associated with the anti-establishment attitude and satirical traditions that characterize earlier political artistic movements such as Dada and the Russian avant-garde.

Douglas has dedicated his life to the struggle for social justice and is perhaps the most prolific graphic agitator of the black liberation movement. Through the efficacy and immediacy of his extraordinary images, the illustration of the conditions that generated a revolutionary response, and the collective empowerment they have inspired, Douglas has not only exemplified how art can facilitate and support revolution, he has also shown how art can change the world.

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication *Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas*, edited by Sam Durant and published in February 2007 by Rizzoli.

A special web initiative at moca.org will present an up-close look at the art of Emory Douglas and provide a context for discussion about how the Black Panthers’ politically charged works continue to resonate today.

MY SUFFERING, MY BITTERNESS, MY LONELINESS; I'M NOT GOING TO LET IT
GET ME DOWN, I'M NOT GOING TO LET IT TURN ME AROUND



MEDIA: PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLAGE

FRONT COVER: Poster from The Black Panther, March 9, 1969, offset lithograph, collection of Alden and Mary Kimbrough, Los Angeles.
© Emory Douglas; ABOVE: Poster from The Black Panther, August 23, 1972, offset lithograph, collection of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles, © Emory Douglas

RELATED EVENTS

PUBLIC RECEPTION

SATURDAY, OCT 20, 6-8pm

MOCA PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER

All are welcome to join MOCA for a special opening reception celebrating Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas.

FREE

MOCA ART TALKS PRESENTED BY GALLERY C

These informal discussions—**FREE** with museum admission and open to the public—take place in the exhibition's galleries unless otherwise noted.

INFO 213/621-1745 or education@moca.org

SUNDAY, OCT 21, 3pm

PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER, BLUE CONFERENCE CENTER

In conjunction with MOCA's exhibition Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas, **Emory Douglas** will discuss the graphic art that he created for the Black Panther Party during the late 1960s through the early '80s. Following his talk, Douglas will sign copies of the accompanying publication across the Design Plaza at MOCA Pacific Design Center, where his exhibition is on view upstairs.

SUNDAY, NOV 4, 3pm

MOCA PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER

Exhibition curator **Sam Durant** will lead a walkthrough of Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas.

MOCA Art Talks Presented by Gallery C is made possible by The Times Mirror Foundation Endowment and Gallery C.

POLITICAL POSTER-MAKING WORKSHOP

SATURDAY, DEC 1, 10am-4pm

MOCA PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER

In conjunction with Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas, MOCA offers a hands-on workshop examining the art of political posters. After an exhibition tour and demonstration, participants will have the opportunity to create their own posters, giving visual shape to political messages through a variety of graphic techniques, such as silk screening and collage.

Instructors: Britt and Amanda Brown, co-founders of not not fun records

Advance registration required; no refunds
INFO 213/621-1745 or education@moca.org
\$50 MOCA members; \$65 nonmembers

For additional programs, please visit moca.org.

Education programs at MOCA are supported by The James Irvine Foundation; the William Randolph Hearst Endowment for Education Programs; Jean and Lewis Wolff and Family; the Weingart Foundation; The Lura Gard Newhouse Charitable Lead Trust; The Annenberg Foundation; the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission; Wells Fargo; The Green Foundation; the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles; and David Hockney.

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MOCA PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER 8687 MELROSE AVE., WEST HOLLYWOOD INFO 213/626-6222 moca.org

