20 years of African-American art at WCMA

By John Seven
North Adams Transcript

WILLIAMSTOWN—A new exhibition at the Williamstown College Museum of Art offers a 20-year retrospective of African American art from a close-knit Los Angeles community. The exhibit examines the ways African Americans responded to issues like civil rights and how those responses changed over time.

The show, "Now Dig This," opens at the Williams College Museum of Art on Friday.

The show’s curator, Columbia University professor of art and African American studies Karen C. Jones, oversaw the creation of four sections that organize the art and artists not only chronologically, but also spatially, in terms of the kind of work being done that reflects the time in which it was being created.

The first section covers the front runners in the movement — early work by the artists who were the backbone for what the artistic community would become, such as Charles White, Samella Lewis and Melvin Edwards, who rose to prominence in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

"The second section is about assemblages," Jones said, "that way of making art was also centered around community and protest and assemblages as people are assembling garbage or things from the streets to make art. That’s the term between those two words and what I imagine was happening in terms of both the how the work was made but also how people connected to each other.

"Los Angeles Snapshots" is the title of the third section of the show, and it also includes work by other Los Angeles artists beyond African American artists. It’s an effort by Jones to acknowledge that the black art scene was more of a multi-cultural one.

A different section highlighting this is that it’s not a "black" show, where it’s only African-American artists in there, Jones said. There are some non-African-American artists in the show because I wanted to talk about community to be included in the work that we know is always the case and was the case in the 50s, and also how art crosses racial lines.

"It’s a way to start thinking about the real histories of whatever; the way we write these histories, so many people are left out on either side. It’s the reason to write single histories because they’re focused, they’re easier.

"Sometimes in the case of African-American art, it’s too much of a multicultural history that leaves black people out with their contribu-

Living the blues

By John Seven
North Adams Transcript

Books
"Legends of the Blues" by William Stray (Abrams) If you care about blue music and its history, it’s a must read. If you don’t know much about the blues, it’s also a great place to start.

The Kiosk

It’s not their fault, but it’s not the university’s fault. It’s the university’s fault that the students are not getting enough attention from their professors.

this volume means you get to know more about legends like twice-married lesbian who wrote a nursing career that lasted two Billie Holiday, but are also up from being a maid in a introduced to some other memphistop and hacked a