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Review of *Experiments in a Jazz Aesthetic: Art, Activism, Academia, and the Austin Project* edited by Omi Osun Joni L. Jones, Lisa L. Moore, and Sharon Bridgforth

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Austin in 2002. Consisting almost exclusively of women of color and produced by Omi Osun Joni Jones, tAP created opportunities for artists, amateur and professional, to collaborate, improvise with one another, and develop a variety of spoken word performances reflecting their subjectivity and experiences. *Experiments in Jazz Aesthetic* functions as both a sourcebook, containing representative fragments of writings developed by tAP between 2002 and 2006, and as an anthology of new works by prominent performance artists Sharon Bridgforth, Robbie McCauley, and Laurie Carlos, among others.

The lasting value of this edited collection anchors itself in the editors' careful documentation of their process, which could prove useful to readers with an interest in establishing arts initiatives wherever they live. In addition, the centering of the experiences of women of color, the majority of whom are African American, makes a significant intervention within a local and regional arts scene in which women of color, when present, are a distinct minority. Although tAP membership was exclusively female and mostly women of color, two male guest artists participated as workshop facilitators. As Jones notes in her introduction, the few white women participants and, perhaps by extension, the male facilitators, "learn[ed] to earn the right to be there, they learn[ed] that being there in that circle with women of color is a privilege."

The "jazz aesthetic" referred in the title is less a system of artistic production and more a metaphor to describe the ways in which various participants conceptualize their work. Jones, in a footnote, offers the most useful definition in relation to the project: "because jazz continues to evoke ideas of opposition, spontaneity, and Blackness, the term suits the politically conscious, Black, feminist, anti-racist work of the Austin Project well."

It is likely that the "Call and Response" section, consisting of brief essays followed by the written work of poets, playwrights, performance artists Laurie Carlos, Daniel Alexander Jones, Carl Hancock Rux, Maiana Minahal, and Robbie McCauley, will be the most useful part of the book to scholars and students. Although the majority of these pieces were written before the artists began working with tAP, they demonstrate a style and a creative approach that

*Experiments in a Jazz Aesthetic: Art, Activism, Academia, and the Austin Project.* Edited by Omi Osun Joni L. Jones, Lisa L. Moore, and Sharon Bridgforth. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. xiii + 376 pp. Photograph, notes, index. \$60.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

The Austin Project (tAP) is a performing arts initiative that began at the University of Texas at

the participants, whose own writings are published within the book, attempt to emulate.

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