

Explorations in Sights and Sounds

appropriation into contemporary art world artifacts." Of course the exhibit did not focus exclusively on women but on the aesthetics of perhaps the newest in the long historical chain of "New Souths." The art texts, including sculpture, painting, installations, etc., are rich with what Piper calls "an alternative art-historical progression that narrates a history of prejudice, repression, and exclusion, and looks, not backward, but forward to a more optimistic future." The range of what Richard Powell calls "found objects" and stereotypical pop culture images interwoven into complex aesthetic works indicate what he refers to as a "cultural recollection of assemblage" that urges artistry in "a very specific African American way." Cultural critics like Piper are acutely important to a project like this to defray the customary detachment from the aesthetic experience that we (as Piper might recognize) have come to expect.

A recent *60 Minutes* segment covered the troubles of African American artists in the South who have lately experienced great interest from the art world without receiving concomitant financial remuneration. In short, they are being "ripped off." It is thus vital that such a document as *Next Generation* exists with accompanying essays to elaborate the historicity of the items displayed in the exhibit. Filling a void in contemporary African American art scholarship and representation—and one of only a handful of extant overviews of African American art—*Next Generation* is significant.

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David Levering Lewis. *W.E.B. DuBois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993).

In a stunning exhibition of biographical craftsmanship, David Levering Lewis narrates, for the years between 1868 and 1919, both the spectacular achievements—and their import for intellectual life in our own times—and the equally significant failings of one of the most important American intellectuals of the twentieth century. Lewis's erudite tome supercedes all of the previous biographical treatments of DuBois and will doubtlessly require an equally Herculean effort to match this phenomenal work. Indeed, the awesome task of concluding the latter part of DuBois's long, controversial, and complex life will be exhaustively challenging. Since any exhaustive review of Lewis's work would require much greater space, I will confine my comments to an adumbration of the import of DuBois's

thought for ethnicity and gender theories.

Born into a poor, female-headed household in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Lewis notes astutely that for the egotistical DuBois, "the promise for salvation would lie in the social sciences, not the Bible" (49-50). At both Harvard and in the sojourn in Germany (in which the lack of funding prevented him from receiving a prestigious German doctorate), DuBois thought the pursuit of social scientific truths would guide the path to the creation of a colorblind egalitarian society in America. Yet, DuBois's assimilationist impulses were counterbalanced by Hegel's philosophy from which "he borrowed more or less intact notions of distinct, hierarchical racial attributes" (139). Furthermore, adeptly drawing on Wilson J. Moses's pioneering yet fecund studies of Alexander Crummell, Lewis demonstrates how and why Crummell, who has been designated the leading African American intellectual of the nineteenth century, not only reinforced DuBois's beliefs in "distinct, hierarchical racial attributes," but also influenced significantly his instinctive elitism. The tensions which resulted between assimilationism and cultural pluralism would plague DuBois throughout his writing and life during this early period. As a consequence, he was often caught between attempting to initiate and strengthen Black institutions and involved in internecine battles with white assimilationists, all the while denouncing Jim Crow.

Yet, perhaps DuBois's greatest failing did not lie in his inability to resolve the "ethnicity paradox," but rather his refusal to provide his first wife and daughter with essential emotional (not to say financial) support. Preoccupied with his own work and exhaustive schedule, indulging himself in numerous and varied affairs, DuBois, after the death of his infant son, was totally insensitive to his wife and daughter's emotional welfare. "Daughter Yolande," Lewis graphically puts it, "was to be sacrificed time and again to the cruelest of double standards" (451).

Put succinctly, Lewis succeeds in depicting and analyzing not only the intellect, but also the personality of a complex individual, who will be the subject of controversy for many years. I recommend, without hesitation or equivocation, a close reading of this biography.

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