

## **The Black History Month Emporium 2022**

### **Curator's Statement**

This is a project that I started in 2017 that expanded from a 2014 BHME window-display from my studio. It is designed to present an art-centered focus on African American history and cultural for the MN community of North Minneapolis.

The Black History Month Emporium 2022 (BHME2022) gives community members including youth the opportunity to contact elements of Black history and culture in their own neighborhoods at a time of needed national focus on the subject. It gives artists and performers a centralized forum to present their artistry and cultural perspectives as well as showcase their North-side connections to a diverse audience. The BHME22 is a counter-narrative to critique of so-called Critical Race Theory (CRT). The project gives me an opportunity to intersect both as artist and educator. I take those opportunities to contribute and increase conversations about African American art, history, and culture as a curator. I have been experimenting with rebinding and repurposing books physically to reflect implications relevant to their narratives and histories. I transform books into 3-D illustration or objects relative to title, content, or both. Physically adding or subtracting material accomplishes this. The conclusion is that with my exploration over half-a-century with a variety of forms, African elements are essential to the American Story.

All project activities will be at the Homewood Studios centered in North Minneapolis. I have been a resident artist there for 16 years. The established Homewood Studios location is community-accessible for this project. The project will be listed on the Homewood Studios calendar for February 2022. I proposed and assisted in the development of a 'Window' exhibition series there using the 500'sqft East-West & North-South windows during the COVID-19 mandates in 2021. The initial exhibition was the self-curated BHME2021. It was presented as a '24-hour-a-day walk-up or drive-by' venue with a library system for getting displayed books and films while observing CDC guidelines.

The core of the project in its current form is an exhibition of visual art by both established and emerging African American artists, many whom work and live in North Minneapolis. I have commitments from several artists. I intend to contract with an assistant to curate and administrate elements of the program. There will be a lending library of African American literature and films chronicling all aspects of African American history and culture in addition to publicly displayed visual and performance artwork. Many of the books and films are from my collection spanning 50 years. Community-and-artists forums will be scheduled during the month, including hands-on art making activities for area youth. I have expanded this project since 2014 and would like to continue by extending the 2022 model to include a BHME studio art class in the spring of 2022. This component will be a weekend 'Intensive' art making activity over 2-3 days.

The primary beneficiaries of the Black History Month Emporium series continue to be the residents, workers, and commuters in North Minneapolis. The building that houses my studio and the Homewood Gallery is located in 1 of 2 of the last restored markets dating to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both were constructed to access passing traffic. There has been a recent traffic and road design update on Plymouth Avenue N. adding a bike path near the corner lot the gallery enhancing its accessibility. There are 500 sq ft of windows within the building at street level. It is 100 ft from the MTC bus line and lighted inside and outside 24 hours a day to accommodate access. The area continues to be a welcoming area for a variety of immigrant communities both historic and recent.

My unique location within the building allows me to observe the flow of the neighborhood, its occupants, and characters. My work is reflective of my experience as an American artist of African

descent. The inside workings and my art is viewable to pedestrians passing on the streets looking inside the studio. Many of the people are of African decent including those recently immigrated. There are also long-time residents representing many ethnic groups. I hope to impact all with the variation presented in the Black History Month Emporium 2022 through this specific venue. There is an excellent repository of African American culture 2 blocks away on Penn N. and Plymouth, but Homewood is accessible 24 hours a day at Street level.

In the past the BHME has exhibited 5-10 artists. They have been primarily women spanning three generations. There have been Master level artists and students who have participated in the invitational exhibit. All have had some connection to North Minneapolis as a resident, worker, student or teacher, many from North Minneapolis schools. I hope to contract with one individual as an assistant curator and three artists to lead workshops during the month of February and into the spring of 2022. Contracts will include studio presentations and history context.

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FEBRUARY 2022