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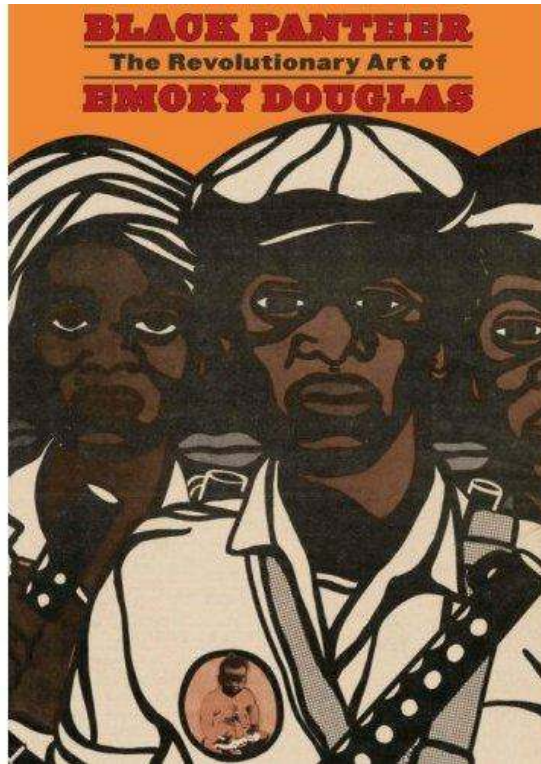
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- 1 In 1840, French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, “If ever America undergoes great revolutions, they will be brought about by the presence of the black race on the soil of the United States—that is to say, they will owe their origin, not to the equality, but to the inequality, of (their social) conditions” (p.717). Leafing through the last Rizzoli publication on the Black Panther Party, one gets the feeling that there was some truth in Tocqueville’s words.
- 2 Emerging in Oakland, California, in 1966, the Black Panther Party was created by two African-American youths, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. Initially struggling against police brutality toward African-Americans, the Party soon grew more militaristic and expanded its claims and influence, demanding full equality and employment for African-Americans and an end to oppression, US imperialism and capitalism.
- 3 *Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas*, edited by Sam Durant, is an introduction to the work and career of Emory Douglas, the BPP’s Minister of Culture and Revolutionary Artist who drew and edited most of the visual art and content of *The Black Panther Community News Service*, the official publication of the Panthers. This newspaper, with a circulation of 400,000 at its peak, was one of the most important underground publications in the late 60s and early 70s, spreading the word of revolution, militancy and empowerment to like-minded activists within the United States and abroad.
- 4 Starting as a stage designer for the Black Arts Movement in the mid-60s alongside LeRoi Jones (later Amiri Baraka), Ed Bullins and Marvin X, Emory Douglas soon began to apply the graphic design and commercial art skills he learned at San Francisco City College to the political activism of the Black Panthers and Black Student Unions that was blooming in the Bay Area.
- 5 When drafted as the Party’s Minister of Culture, Douglas became the visual translator of the BPP’s message. His defiant and uncompromising drawings, cartoons, illustrations, photomontages and collages appeared weekly in *The Black Panther* and on all the Party’s

other propaganda paraphernalia (posters, buttons, stickers, banners, LP covers, etc.). Douglas created an empowering iconography, revisiting blackness, redefining black masculinity and embodying defiance and radical militancy. His anthropomorphic representations of capitalists as vultures, politicians as rats and policemen and FBI agents as pigs became legendary visualizations of the frustration many African-Americans felt at that time.

- 6 *Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas* represents a lasting tribute and celebration of Emory Douglas' contribution as a graphic artist. It is worth mentioning that this volume came out as a retrospective organized at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles ("*Black Panther: the Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas*" from October 10, 2007 to February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008). This exhibition established the institutional recognition of Douglas as a legitimate artist who would attract more academic studies to his very fruitful career inside and outside the BPP. His promotion of protest art and his influence on young artists until today is starting to be assessed.
- 7 This monograph opens with a preface by actor and activist Danny Glover and is followed by a foreword by Bobby Seale. It includes an extremely varied and interesting selection of contributors, like former BPP Communications Secretary Kathleen Cleaver, artist and Professor Colette Gaiter, cultural activist and former I Wor Kuen member Greg Jung Morozumi, poet and founder of the Black Arts Movement Amiri Baraka, and an interview of Emory Douglas by documentary filmmaker St. Clair Bourne. All the essays are interspersed with Douglas' most significant art highlighting the different phases of the BPP from its advocacy of self-defense, its promotion of community programs and its eventual return to electoral politics.
- 8 Kathleen Cleaver's "A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words" recounts memories of her close contact with Douglas during the heyday of the BPP. In diary format, she provides a personal account of Douglas' involvement with the BPP, of the 1968 presidential campaign, the Free Huey Movement and especially of his participation in the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers in 1969 where Douglas joined Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver, who were exiled in Algeria at the time.
- 9 The essay "What Revolution Looks Like: The Work of Black Panther Artist Emory Douglas" by Colette Gaiter offers yet another personal testimony. Gaiter gives stimulating insight as an artist into Douglas' techniques and influence on contemporary artists, like Rigo 23. She particularly pinpoints a few examples of Douglas' depictions of black folks in their everyday lives, resilient and dignified images of ordinary people overcoming dire poverty, drug addiction and police raids in rat-infested ghetto apartments, as well as hopeful and triumphant images celebrating the spirit of self-determination and the pride in the struggle for freedom and survival of African-Americans. These examples allow us to explore a less known aspect of Douglas' work, one that carries us away from the fiery and flamboyant rhetoric of the BPP that has tended to survive in the collective memory.
- 10 "*Emory Douglas and the Third World Cultural Revolution*," written by Greg Jung Morozumi, includes an introductory essay placing Emory Douglas' work back in its historical and social context. The 50s and 60s were an era when a strong spirit of self-determination and decolonization swept Africa, Asia and South America. Intellectuals provided the tools for Third World revolutionary groups to emerge, even in the United States; Malcolm X, Robert F. Williams and especially Franz Fanon articulated the frustration and aspirations of oppressed minorities. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon developed the notion of domestic colonialism and theorized about the necessity of violence involved in the fight

against oppressive colonial forces. A former I Wor Kuen, an Asian equivalent of the BPP, Greg Jung Morozumi introduces the other primary militant forces present in the US at the time; the Young Lords organized the American Puerto Rican barrios, the Brown Berets worked within the Chicano community while the Red Guard and I Wor Kuen worked in the San Francisco and New York Chinatowns. Facing the same frustrations, similar forms of social and political domination, these American minorities drew their empowerment from the Panthers. Interestingly, Morozumi focuses our attention on Douglas' visual impact on the militancy and graphics of some of these groups by showing us examples of their collaboration and mutual inspiration.

- 11 Amiri Baraka's contribution, "Emory Douglas: A 'Good Brother,' 'a Bad Artist,'" details the different artistic initiatives which gave birth to the Black Arts Movements, focusing on theatre since Douglas designed sets prior to joining the BPP. Beyond the divisions within the black liberation movement triggered by the Panthers' cross-alliances with white militants, which was against the *modus operandi* of most black nationalist groups, Baraka insists on the fundamental position of Douglas as one of the main denunciators of the African-American experience. Each week, Douglas' drawings managed to gather most militants around his "pig" pictures or the famous slogans: "All Power to the People", "Seize the Time", "Off the Pigs!" or "Revolution in our Lifetime."
- 12 St. Clair Bourne's interview with the artist, "An Artist for the People" closes the volume with Douglas' more obscure work dating from the 70s. Douglas clarifies his role as an artist in a revolutionary movement, the different phases the BPP underwent and the evolution of his graphics in accordance with the ideology of the Party. He also offers remarkable first-hand insight into the role of culture and art in the vision and message of a revolutionary organization.
- 13 In conclusion, in accordance with Emory Douglas' intent to produce popular art, art that anybody could grasp, this volume is intended for a wide audience. Though some might have wished the contributions to be longer or the bibliography to be more substantial, these shortcomings are swept away by the variety of Douglas' thought-provoking artwork. All the essays provide different and complementary perspectives on Douglas as an artist and an activist. This much-anticipated volume is a valuable contribution to the fields of African-American art and Black Power studies and a well-deserved reward for an artist who has been laboring tirelessly for decades without recognition from the world of academia and art criticism.

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