

Media Information:

'Black Panther: Emory Douglas and the Art of Revolution' at Urbis, Manchester

The first exhibition by the campaigning US artist Emory Douglas in the UK, pays tribute to an unsung hero of the modern civil rights movement.

The Black Panther salute is an unflinching reminder of the mood of the late 1960s, and a community defending itself against racial injustice in the USA. Emory Douglas, official artist of the Black Panther Party and its first and only Minister of Culture, created a compelling, motivational graphic style. His art from this period, documents growing civil unrest and rapid change. Previously unseen in the UK, Douglas's work from this period, including posters, cartoons and campaign pamphlets will appear in a provocative new exhibition at Urbis in Manchester, from 30th October 2008 to April 2009.

'Black Panther' will show how Douglas's visual messages helped to encourage a largely illiterate community to challenge the police brutality, economic inequality and social injustice they were experiencing, against a backdrop of growing civil disobedience and the assassinations of Malcom X and Martin Luther King Jr. Working alongside Urbis, Manchester, and with support of lender and Black Panther historian, Billy X Jennings, Emory Douglas has helped to select the materials to relive the story for British audiences.

Douglas turned the Black Panther salute into a powerful emblem of equality that has dogged politicians ever since. At the 1968 Olympics in Mexico, two black American athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, used the black-power salute on the Olympic podium, turning an entire nation against them, and cutting short their own sporting careers. With civil rights high on the agenda for the forthcoming Beijing Olympics, Smith and Carlos have encouraged fellow athletes to make a similar stand.

Emory Douglas became an active member of the Black Panther Party in 1967. He quickly became involved in the Black Community News Service, a paper founded by Bobby Seale and at its peak, distributing 400,000 copies each week. His cover art,

drawings and cartoons, referenced recent events and news, including the killing of Little Bobby Hutton, the campaign to free Huey Newton, and satirical treatments of politicians including a pig-like President Lyndon B Johnson, languishing on his toilet in the final months before his White House term ended, an image that should chime with critics of the Bush administration, due to end in January 2009.

Influenced by the propagandist art emerging from Vietnam, Cuba and China, Douglas paved the way for contemporary artists like Banksy, dub-poet Linton Kwezi Johnson and other vocal defenders of civil liberties. His slogans, 'All Power to the People', 'Revolution in our Lifetime', and his use of pigs and rats for the first time, to represent police and politicians, have become part of everyday language. Coinciding with Barak Obama's historic White House challenge, the exhibition in Manchester is a timely reminder of just how much the political and social climate has changed since 1968.

His style, although bearing other influences, is clearly his own; haunting images of black women carrying both babies and guns show just how vulnerable and under attack the community was at that time. Though often remembered for their militant stance, the Black Panthers were far ahead of the state in providing welfare and education to poor local families, and their passion to educate and empower is demonstrated by the slogan 'Each One Teach One' and a preference for giving books, not weapons, to new party members.

Vaughan Allen, Chief Executive at Urbis commented: 'Emory Douglas's work is of its time, but is still as pertinent today, in Manchester and around the world. The 'Black Panther' exhibition at Urbis will relive some of the pivotal moments in the civil rights movement, through the work of this uncompromising socially-driven artist. It's a real honour to host Emory Douglas and his work in Manchester, offering British audiences a first chance to share his talent, his tenacity and meet the great man himself during a rare visit to Manchester'.

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For more information, images or to interview Emory Douglas, please contact Anita Morris Associates: Fran Graham or Jo Franks on 01943 603311 or email fran@anitamorrisassociates.co.uk or jo@anitamorrisassociates.co.uk

Editors Notes

1. Urbis examines, explains and celebrates city life through the experiences and cultures of the people living there. It is about city lives, city voices and city people. With four floors of evolving displays, dedicated to the modern and future city, and an ambitious events programme, Urbis is about covering what's new, original, and interesting about city life, and covering it first.
2. The £30m construction and development of Urbis was managed by Manchester City Council Special Projects Team and funded as part of the £42m Manchester Millennium Quarter by the Millennium Commission, the European Regional Development Fund, Manchester City Council and the Department of Local Government, Transport and the Regions (DLTR) and the Northwest Regional Development Agency.
3. Urbis, Cathedral Gardens, Manchester M4 3BG
Open daily 10am-6pm and from July 10-8pm Thursday-Saturday
Entry to Urbis is free.
0161 605 8200/www.urbis.org.uk/info@urbis.co.uk
4. Winner Large Visitor Attraction 2007, Manchester Tourism Awards
5. Emory Douglas was jailed as a teenager at the Youth Training School in Ontario, California where he worked in the prison print shop. He went on to study commercial art at San Francisco City College.
6. The Black Panther Party was founded in Oakland, California by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in October 1966. Originally named the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, the movement began in response to Malcolm X's death and called on the community to protect itself by 'any means possible'. The party was active through the 1960s and 1970s.
7. The Black Panthers established a Ten-Point Programme that called for 'Land, Bread, Housing, Education, Clothing, Justice And Peace'. Originally a voice of black nationalism, the party later rejected this ethos as 'black racism'.
8. In 1968, four years after being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.
9. In 1968 in the UK, Enoch Powell delivered his famous 'Rivers of Blood' speech about immigration.