

GARY DAUPHIN

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ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

Kellie Jones's fluid, unexpected study, *South of Pico: African American Artists in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s* (Duke University Press), considers that story from the standpoint of one very particular set of migrants: To borrow a Hollywoodism, the book reveals Jones, a 2016 MacArthur Fellowship recipient, as a triple threat, nestling agile theoretical exegesis cheek-by-jowl with rigorous historical excavation and supple descriptions of artists and art.

FULL TEXT

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Since 1965, greater Los Angeles has been one of America's reigning destinations for immigrants; by 2000, more foreign-born people were choosing to settle there than in any other region. Raw numbers and unique forms of migratory aspiration, risk, and synthesis allowed S°Cal to capture that era's predicaments and possibilities in ways other metropolises didn't.

Kellie Jones's fluid, unexpected study, *South of Pico: African American Artists in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s* (Duke University Press), considers that story from the standpoint of one very particular set of migrants: African American artists. The city of Los Angeles's black population is currently shrinking, but in the past century a daring creative community flourished south of Pico Boulevard, fed by great waves of arrivals pegged to the World Wars. That cohort-whose members include Charles White, Betye Saar, Noah Purifoy, John Outterbridge, David Hammons, Senga Nengudi, Melvin Edwards, and Houston Conwill, as well as corporate persons such as the Brockman Gallery and the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company-either came west in search of upgrades to life, liberty, and happiness, or were born there to parents in pursuit of same. In Jones's multilayered retelling, their responses to rapidly changing circumstance don't just illuminate their own moment but offer tantalizing hints as to how we might intervene in our own.

South of Pico builds on Jones's groundbreaking exhibition "Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles, 1960-1980," which she organized for the Hammer Museum in 2011. To borrow a Hollywoodism, the book reveals Jones, a 2016 MacArthur Fellowship recipient, as a triple threat, nestling agile theoretical exegesis cheek-by-jowl with rigorous historical excavation and supple descriptions of artists and art. As catastrophic weather batters Americans from Northern California to the Gulf and a good half of the remaining citizenry feverdreams of regress and hermetic seals, Jones's book is a timely reminder that the United States has seen massive internal displacement within living memory and could again. But, more important, it's also a credible affirmation that from such sudden, painful movements something new and whole might yet be made.

GARY DAUPHIN WRITES AND BUILDS WEBSITES. HE MIGRATED TO LOS ANGELES IN 2005.

DETAILS

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