
Descriptive Summary

Title: Compton Communicative Arts Academy collection

Dates: 1970-1976

Collection number: Consult library

Collector: California State University, Los Angeles. Library

Collection Size: 200 images 194 online items

Repository: California State University, Los Angeles John F. Kennedy Memorial Library
Los Angeles, CA 90032-8300

Abstract: The Compton Communicative Arts Academy (CCAA) Archive is a multi-year project to preserve and provide access to a collection of images of national significance that document African American art and culture, community-based art making, and art-based community making in Los Angeles during the early 1970s. The 200 items in this digital collection were selected from an unorganized collection of over 4,100 photographs, negatives, slides and ephemera by faculty members from the Library and the Liberal Studies department. The criteria for selection were images that illustrate buildings and places; the Academy's programming, artwork, and performances; artists, artwork, important people and events; and Willie Ford as a photographer. This phase of the project was part of the California Local History Digital Resources Project supported by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English
Selected digitized images from this collection.

Access

Collection open for research.

Preferred Citation

Compton Communicative Arts Academy collection. Consult library.]Institution Name], [City, State].

Acquisition Information

Gift of Willie Ford, 2007.

Project Information

The Compton Communicative Arts Academy (CCAA) Archive is a multi-year project to preserve and provide access to a collection of images of national significance that document African American art and culture, community-based art making, and art-based community making in Los Angeles during the early 1970s. The 200 items in this digital collection were selected from an unorganized collection of over 4,100 photographs, negatives, slides and ephemera by two faculty members; from the Library and the Liberal Studies department. The criteria for selection were images that illustrate buildings and places; the Academy's programming, artwork, and performances; artists, artwork, important people and events; and Willie Ford as a photographer. This phase of the project was part of the California Local History Digital Resources Project supported by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

The documentary history contained in the CCAA Archive is intended to be a resource, not just for scholars and researchers, as many special collections are, but for teaching and engaging Cal State Los Angeles' undergraduate and graduate students. Many faculty on campus have already expressed an interest in utilizing this collection in their courses for classes including Art, History, English, Liberal Studies, Pan-African Studies, and even Social Work. In a larger context, access to the CCAA Archive becomes an in depth window into a chapter of Los Angeles' African American history that will in turn become a resource for the students, community historians and activists, and anyone interested in the historical record of the Black Arts Movement.

The preservation and digitization of these materials will preserve one of a very few collections, indeed it may be the only collection, that visually documents both the history of the artifacts (art and performances that no longer exist) of postwar African American culture relating to the Black Arts Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the day-to-day social relations and organization of work processes among artists, youth, and other community members from which those artifacts originated. The Compton Communicative Arts Academy was an important community arts center that offered programming in visual arts (painting, murals, photography), dramatic arts (theater, fashion modeling), music (jazz orchestra), poetry, and sports for youth and practicing artists. Indeed, this emphasis on the relationship between art and its community context is one of the hallmarks of postwar African American art. This emphasis created connections between art

production, Civil Rights social movement politics, and solutions to urban unrest of the late 1960s and early 1970s. That this collection documents African American art, culture and politics in Los Angeles expands Black Arts Movement scholarship that has most often focused on other cities and regions New York and Chicago in the case of art, and the South in the case of Civil Rights social movements.

Biography

Willie Ford was the photographer for the Compton Communicative Arts Academy from approximately 1970 to 1976. The Academy grew out of the Compton Willowbrook Community Action Council, a War on Poverty agency funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Scope and Content of Collection

This digital collection includes 200 images selected from a larger collection of over 4,100 photographs, negatives, slides and ephemera which document the Compton Communicative Arts Academy (CCAA). This collection of images documents African American art and culture, community-based art making, and art-based community making in Los Angeles during the early 1970s. They include images of art works that no longer exist by prominent African American artists, such as John Outterbridge and Elliott Pinkney, as well as musical and theatrical performances, and community events. The criteria for selection were images that illustrate buildings and places; the Academy programming, artwork, and performances; artists, artwork, important people and events; and Willie Ford as a photographer.

The mostly black and white images by CCAA photographer Willie Ford which cover the years 1970 to 1976 are significant for many reasons. As historical documents, within the documentary tradition of photography, they record the history of a successful War on Poverty organization that used art for community development and to provide youth with social capital. They constitute a major archive for the history of African Americans in Los Angeles, one of the most important, yet understudied postwar African American cities.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection.

Names and Places

Compton Communicative Arts Academy

Ford, Willie

Outterbridge, John, 1933-

Pinkney, Elliott

Compton (Calif.)

Topics

Black Arts movement

Communication in art

African American art

Artists and Community--California--Angeles

Photography--Negatives

Genres and Forms of Materials

Photographs

Slides (Photography)