

THE THEME OF OMOWALE

Omowale creates a unique visual experience through the use of typical African and Afro-American artistic/social manifestations of past and present/future heritages. It does not emphasize the personal or particular experiences but rather the broader accumulation of experiences that Afro-Americans, as a pheno-typical unit, recognize as a basic common denominator. The mural is a thematic appreciation of origin in a specific geographical locality outside the Northern Hemisphere; a knowledge of a traditional past unified in its diversity of life-styles and disrupted by the alien oppressive forces of a European "conquerer". It is a visualization of the memory of forced relocation of Africans for European capitalistic survival. It is the tragic incarceration of Africans in North America and the consequent advent of the first generation of Afro-Americans. Finally Omowale is the reemption of Black Spiritualism in the New World.

Despite the ramifications inherent in his North American survival, the Afro-American has demonstrated his ability to construct a culture to ensure his continual development in this New World. This is the general theme of the double panel mural Omowale. The mural is divided into two segments with the northern panel a visually interpretive allegory of Africal experiences and the eastern panel a systematic continuation of those experiences as the African evolves into the Afro-American.

The beginning of the northern panel is the chaos of the unorganized elements for the "world". Rising from them are the first "Man" and "Woman". To complete this creation myth a "Child", fire, is the product of the fertile union of man and woman. Next the mythical person who introduced agriculture to some human beings is seen in the double antelope "Chi Wari" figure.

The "Trees" and "human/tree" forms represent the "African's" ability to live within nature. They also represent the communal aspects of Traditional African life. The four-legged multi-colored "beasts" attacking the "human/tree" forms are the visualization of the oppressive European forces that disrupted the traditional patterns of African life.

Above these "Beasts" is a royal figure, "Woot", throwing a "Bud" of African life into the eastern panel. At the same time one "Beast" carries a chained "human/tree" form off the northern panel into the New World.

Across the bottom of both panels is a plexus of interweaving roots. They are the "Archtypical Roots" connecting African and Afro-American Blood and Cultural lines.

An image of entrapment is the visual introduction to the eastern panel of the mural Omowale. It is the "Tree" of human faces and forms surrounded by chains. But the pervasiveness of the Black Spirituality is there in the struggling root of the uprooted "Tree" as it reaches into the soil of the "Bud" form and reaffirms the "Archetypical Roots" of the Afro-American.

The "Bud" has become a "woman"; a "man" has been freed from the "Tree" and thrown into the environment of the "Cities". Both the "Man" and the "Woman" are blue. They are the blues of the Afro-American songs, "Blue Monday", "Black and Blue", "Blue Monk", and "Mood Indigo." The "Archetypical Roots" are shimmering and undulating in a red spectrum of colors. The "Egg" that sat so softly behind the "Woman" is the "Bird of Freedom and Liberation." It is He who has quelled the "Beasts" as the "Roots" pierced their bodies.

The next major element of the panel is the "Honeycomb of Harmony and Unification." It is the end point of this panel. It is the cumulative statement of the mural. Afro-Americans began as an harmonic people and within the context of Omowale have ended as such.

(Refer: Medgar Evers Pool)