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## Book Review: Behold the Land: The Black Arts Movement in the South

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Off the SHELF

**Behold the Land: The Black Arts Movement in the South** by James Smethurst (University of North Carolina Press, 2021: ISBN 9781469663043, \$29.95)

Many people have been taught about the Harlem Renaissance and its influence on Black culture during the 1920s and 1930s. However, few people may be aware of the Black Arts Movement in the South. In the book *Behold the Land: The Black Arts Movement in the South*, the author James Smethurst provides readers with an in-depth look at the Black Arts Movement, which took place from the 1960s to the 1980s.

The author begins by providing readers with a historical background for the Black Arts Movement before 1964 and the Civil Rights Act. This foundation gives the reader context and a sense of what was happening in and around the world prior to the rise of the Black Arts Movement. Those who enjoy learning about history will greatly appreciate this chapter. The book is well researched and gives readers a thorough introduction to the movement's historical context that should be read from beginning to end. Cities in the South such as Atlanta, Durham, and New Orleans were pivotal in the Black Arts Movement as highlighted throughout the book. Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and campus organizations also played a major role in the development of civil rights activism and the rise of Black studies. The establishment of a community-based Black

Arts Network in the South, the early Black Arts Movement in Atlanta, and Southern Black Arts feminism are just a few of the significant themes that can be found in the book.

In addition, the extension of Black Arts projects into the community is one of Smethurst's key areas of focus. Of these projects, some would recognize the establishment of the Hammonds House Museum, located in Atlanta's historic

West End, and the City of South Fulton Southwest Arts Center, among others. The Hammonds House Museum exhibits a permanent collection of artwork by several artists of African descent. Programming is also held at Hammonds House, which includes but is not limited to artist talks, book readings, and concerts. The Southwest Arts Center promotes arts in the community by offering various related programs such as dance and theater. The community is also allowed to use the facilities for related meetings and gatherings.

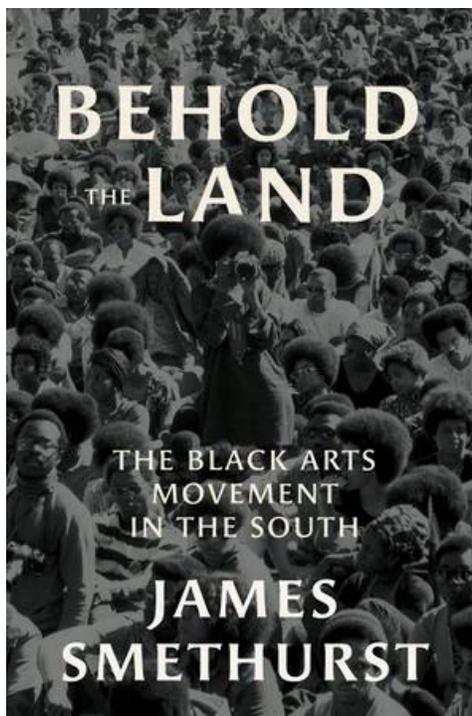


Image from the publisher

The conclusion of the book shares the decline of the Black Arts Movement. Because this book is steeped in historical research, everyone will learn something, whether they are knowledgeable about the Black Arts Movement or not. A small photo gallery is also included in the book, which could be expanded. *Behold the Land* is a suitable title to add to any library collection.

*Angiah Davis is Director of Library Services at Gordon State College*