

RICHMOND

Touring art exhibit showcases black Bay Area artists

By Jason B. Johnson
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

A show featuring paintings, sculptures and photographs by a mix of new and established Bay Area black artists will soon be making its way through several local art houses.

After premiering at the Richmond Art Center today and Sunday, the "Art of Living Black" exhibit will tour studios in Berkeley, Oakland, Pinole and other cities through March 20. In its ninth year, the exhibit is larger than it has ever been, featuring more than 100 regional artists.

The show's goal is to expose the public to different perspectives from artists who represent the full spectrum of black life in the United States.

"I didn't know about black artists all through elementary school and high school," said Rae Louise-Hayward, the show's co-founder. "This show provides an opportunity for people to learn about black arts. It will inspire."

Students from several Richmond-area schools have scheduled field trips to the center.

"For a lot of the artists, this is their first time having their work shown," said Louise-Hayward. "It (the show) opens up opportunities for a lot of artists here in the Bay Area."

Alix Magloire, whose artwork is included in the exhibit, also practices medicine at the Oakland Veterans Administration Clinic.

When asked if he is a doctor who happens to be an artist or an artist who happens to be a doctor, Magloire paused.

"That's a tough one," he said.

Magloire, 51, of Pittsburg got interested in art after finishing a fellowship in endocrinology at UC Davis in 1985. What began as a hobby gradually expanded to watercolors and acrylics.

"I wanted to do something besides medicine, something I could enjoy," said Magloire.

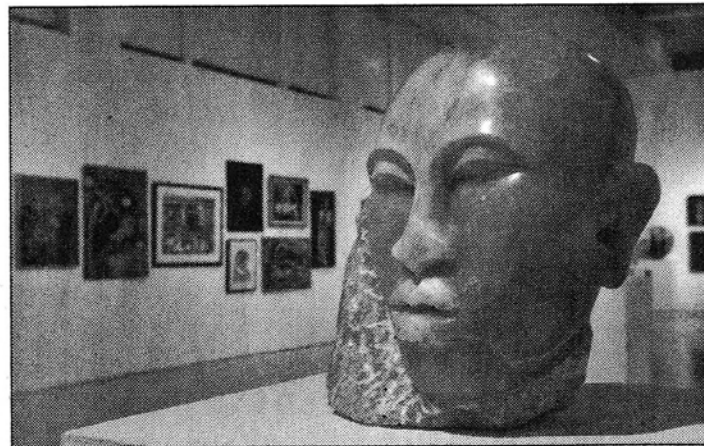
Last year, he entered a mask sculpture in the Art of Living Black exhibit.

"When I discovered the beauty of art, I found my niche," said Magloire. "Not only do I do it for pleasure, I do it for stress management."



Photos by DEANNE FITZMAURICE / The Chronicle

Susan Wehrle, who teaches art in El Cerrito, looks at a piece by Amana Brembry Johnson.



A sculpture by Amana Brembry Johnson is one of the artworks that will soon be on tour as part of "Art of Living Black."

The first Bay Area exhibit featured the work of 35 artists. Event organizers were originally inspired by a similar exhibit of black artists held in Los Angeles.

Each artist gives an individual message. One silver-framed painting is of a young black woman with a large afro giving a black power salute.

Several pieces evoke exotic African landscapes, while others resemble ancient tribal art masks. One photo entry shows everyday

life in Cuba, where the artist lived.

There are also more familiar settings, such as a painting of a packed BART train car and a pair of paintings of the late singer Ray Charles.

"It's whatever comes from that person's soul and that person's experience," said Louise-Hayward.

As a young man growing up in the Virgin Islands, photographer James Weeks, 45, worked as a journalist for local newspapers and would often take pictures to

If you go

The "Art of Living Black" exhibit will be shown from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Richmond Art Center, located at 2540 Barrett Ave. For information and a directory of participating artists and locations, go online to the art center's Web site at www.therichmondartcenter.org, or call (510) 620-6772.

go along with his written work.

Weeks, who lives in Oakland, has since become an award-winning photographer. This is the second year his work has been part of the exhibit.

Weeks said he strives to capture true images. Two of his pictures in the exhibit were of people in Nigeria clad in colorful native dress. He also has a picture of a family enjoying San Francisco's Carnival.

"For me, it's sort of like a spiritual experience," Weeks said.

A second showing featuring 50 of the artists will be held March 5 and 6 at the Richmond Convention Center, located next door to the art center.

E-mail Jason B. Johnson at jbjohnson@sfnchronicle.com.