

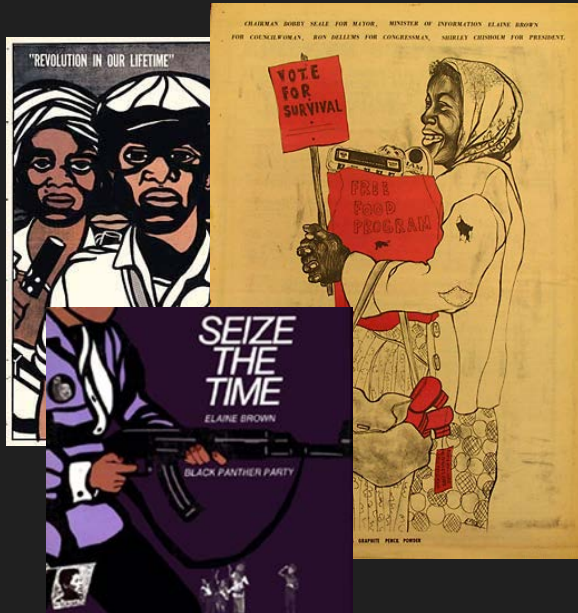
THE BLACK PANTHER NEWSPAPER

EXAMINING THE WORK OF EMORY DOUGLAS

By Raka Sarkar

EMORY DOUGLAS, raised in the Oakland area, was drawn to political activism from a young age—joining his College’s Black Students Union while studying commercial art. In 1967, he became Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party. In a way, his bold use of image and layout, paired with the dissemination of the paper far and wide, gave the party a “branded” visual culture.

His work is remembered today as brutal and unapologetic as well as deeply humanizing. However, his more widespread images are vastly different from his output at the height of the circulation of the Black Panther Newspaper, a publication for which he oversaw all creative direction. My goal while working with these papers has been to examine Douglas’ creation of an aesthetic for the paper, and how his work in various media sought to further his goal: uplifting the black community through creative expression and calls to resistance.



Responsible for the layout of each edition of the Black Panther Paper, Douglas’ training in commercial art is visible not only in his provocative, acclaimed illustrations, but also in the organization of the text itself. With bold splashes of color, strategic blocks of text, and innovative uses of negative space, he sought to push the medium to be as eye-catching as possible. In some cases, his pieces serve as visual metaphors for their cover stories.

