

College Prof's Artistry Glows in All Directions

Ben Jones is a successful artist despite the fact that he hasn't compromised his work, but the Jersey City State College assistant professor of art is the first to admit his fame is fairly limited.

"I guess I am considered one of the major black artists in this country, thanks to black art critics, but because I haven't followed Western traditions in my work, my success has been limited," Jones explained. "Nevertheless, I consider myself an artist and since I am black, I get my ideas from the black culture. I think it's very natural."

Jones, a resident of Newark,



believes that doors are opening a little for black artists, but in general they're having a hard time. "Black artists who draw from African culture generally do not meet with the success of those who fit into the traditional mold," he said.

Noted for his multi-media work, Jones mixes sculpture, painting, silk-screening and photographs to achieve his desired effects. He spent the 1974-75 school year on sabbatical leave while on a one-year fellowship awarded him by the National Endowment for Artists to work on his visual arts medium.

As part of his work, he traveled to the Caribbean, South America and to African coun-

tries to study foreign art forms. He also has been to France and has studied at the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana.

In addition to teaching at Jersey City State, where he also is an adviser to the Black Dance Club and on the advisory board of the African/Afro-American Studies Program, Jones is a member of the Chuck Davis Dance Co. and the group's costume designer.

"It's a well-known black dance group, but I only dance with them when they perform on the East Coast," he said. "I have to stay behind when they're on tour."

His works have been featured in several books, including "Contemporary Black Artists," "Afro-American Artists," which featured his works on the cover,

and "New Black Perspectives." Many magazines, including Ebony, Jet, Newsweek and various art periodicals also have featured Jones and his art.

Jones, who has had dozens of shows and exhibitions, will serve as a panelist and exhibit some of his works at the National Conference of Artists in Jackson, Miss., March 17-20. He is preparing works for spring exhibitions in San Jose, Calif., Fisk University in Nashville, Tenn., and for a bicentennial show in New York.

"I've also started to prepare some new works for the Second World Festival of Black Artists to be held in January 1977 in Nigeria," Jones said. "I am one of the representatives in this country for the festival and have been invited to exhibit there, too."

Jones said the festival will bring together major black artists from throughout the world. The first such festival was held in Dakar, Senegal, in 1967.

Jones also has tentative plans to return to Brazil this summer to continue his work.

A graduate of William Paterson College, Jones earned his master's degree from New York University and has studied at Pratt Institute and the School of Visual Arts.

"Art is my whole life," he said.