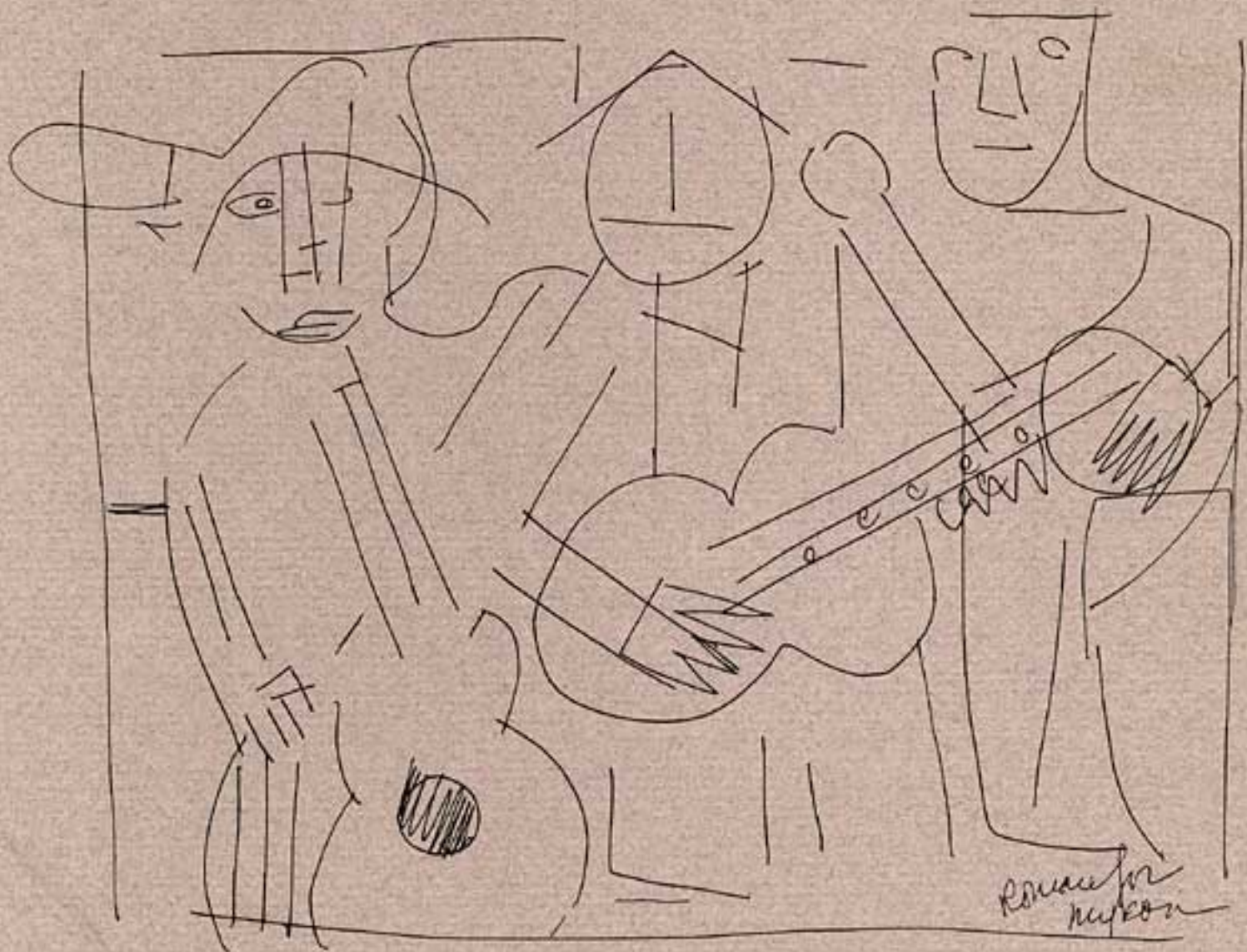


Baruch College Gallery

Romare Bearden: Work with Paper



Baruch College/The City University of New York, 135 East 22 Street, New York City

Foreword

The Baruch College Gallery is honored to exhibit the work of Romare Bearden, one of the most eminent American artists of the 20th century. We are also proud to celebrate the publication of *Romare Bearden: His Life and Art* by Baruch Professor Myron Schwartzman.

At The City University of New York, Bearden's work has been prized for many years. In 1967, the University in cooperation with the Harlem Cultural Council and the New York Urban League exhibited *The Evolution of Afro-American Artists: 1800-1950* in The Great Hall of City College. Romare Bearden, as co-director with Carroll Greene, Jr., organized this landmark exhibition which presented an historical survey of African-American art beginning with examples of African sculpture. The exhibition included Bearden's collage *Mysteries* and was documented by a catalogue with an essay by Carroll Greene, Jr.

The City University of New York is also proud to own work by Romare Bearden. Bearden's collage, *School Bell Time*, is part of the collection of Kingsborough Community College and is included in the Baruch Gallery exhibition. Another work by Bearden, a large mosaic mural, is installed at the Borough of Manhattan Community College.

Romare Bearden: Work with Paper was curated by Julia Hotton. Her extensive experience as head of the Arts, Prints and Photographs section of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library and as Assistant Director at The Brooklyn Museum has been an invaluable resource in organizing this exhibition.

We would like to acknowledge the support of Marilyn Mikulsky, Director of Campus Planning and Facilities at Baruch College, who produced the exhibition catalogue. In 1967, she worked with Romare Bearden as the coordinator of *The Evolution of Afro-American Artists: 1800-1950* at City College.

The Baruch College Gallery is especially grateful to the lenders to the exhibition. Their cooperation and generosity made this exhibition possible. We would like to thank Harry N. Abrams, publisher and Eric D. Robertson, New York for providing photographs for the catalogue. Funding for the exhibition was provided by The Baruch College Fund and the Jane Globus Fund.

Sandra Kraskin
Director
Baruch College Gallery



Romare Bearden: A World Retold in Art

"Every man carries within himself a world made up of all that he has seen and loved, and it is to this world that he returns incessantly."

Chateaubriand

Romare Bearden was born on September 2, 1911 at his great-grandfather's home in Charlotte, North Carolina, the only child of Howard and Bessye Bearden. Though his parents took him to live in New York City by the time he was no more than three years old, Bearden's earliest memories were of locomotives steaming over the railroad trestle down the street and through nearby cotton fields; the morning hum of machinery starting up in the block-long Magnolia cotton mill; the fluttering of roosters and hens in his great-grandfather's backyard coop; the weekday morning schoolbells and Sunday church bells; and the country bands that jammed on streetcorners during holidays.

These early impressions would find their way into the oeuvre of one of the most extraordinary artists America has produced in this century. In an autobiographical statement for the Archives of American Art, Bearden wrote that one of his earliest visual recollections was of a beautiful tan, orange, and brown tiger lily he saw in his great-grandfather's garden when he returned to visit as a boy of nine or ten: "Each day I would go and look at that flower; but one Sunday I found it gone, and only a green stem trembling in the air like a small garter snake. My [great-] grandfather saw my concern. He told me that my [great-] grandmother had worn it to church. Then he said, 'Don't worry, this is good soil and next year your tiger lily will be back once again.'" The recollection is a window on Bearden's art: the childhood entrancement with a beautiful object, its seeming destruction, and his urgent desire to retrieve it. Many of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg County collages which established Bearden's

national reputation depict the idiomatic particularity of a world wrested, by the sheer act of creative imagination, from time and change.

With the Bearden family settled in an apartment at West 140th Street on Lenox Avenue by 1917, Romare was enrolled at P.S. 5 nearby. He went on to P.S. 139 and DeWitt Clinton High School in New York, completing the last two years of High School in Pittsburgh, where he stayed with his maternal grandmother, Carrie Banks. Bearden had first spent a year during fourth grade in a steel-mill area of Pittsburgh called Lawrenceville, where his grandmother ran a boarding house. From the windows, Bearden could see the flames and smoke, hear the screaming factory whistles and the constant bass roar of the gigantic blast furnaces. "When the furnace doors opened," Bearden recalled, "that flame would lick out like a burning snake's tongue and hit 'em. They were always getting scorched."² His grandmother would rub the men down with cocoa butter at the end of their shift.

These Pittsburgh memories, first of Lawrenceville and then of East Liberty, were a second great source of subject matter for Bearden. He evoked the milieu, for example, in a 1978 collage for which his friend Albert Murray, the critically acclaimed novelist and essayist, suggested the title: *Mill Hand's Lunch Bucket*. In an interior framed by rectangles, a family surrounds a dining table. The eye is drawn, however, to the outsized hand of a young mill worker wearing an asbestos coat and hat. He reaches for a lunch bucket perched on a table as he descends the stairs. To the right, a window looks out on a fiery red steel-mill landscape behind a row of slate-gray shanties: railroad tracks, chimneys, and a cloud of smoke emerging from a gigantic furnace fill the scene. Albert Murray's narrative, written on the gallery wall when the collage was first exhibited at the Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery in New York read, "The mills went 24 hours a day with three 8-hour shifts."³

During the late 1920s, the years of the Harlem Renaissance, Bessye Bearden became a force in Harlem political and social life. After two years of undergraduate work at Boston University, Bearden returned home to complete his college years as a mathematics major at New

York University, and found that the household had become a hub of activity. Despite the privations which accompanied life during the 1930s, the Bearden apartment, now situated across the street from the stage door entrance to the Lafayette Theatre, was regularly visited by Duke Ellington, Fats Waller and his lyricist Andy Razaf, Paul Robeson, and a diverse group of journalists, socialites, playwrights, and politicians.

Bessye Bearden wanted her son to become a physician, but his own predilection was for art. At N.Y.U., Bearden had become Art Editor of *The New York University Medley*, a humor magazine whose format closely resembled that of *The New Yorker*. After graduation in 1935, he drew strong editorial cartoons for *The Baltimore Afro-American* over a two-year period and studied at the Art Students League with George Grosz, a master of draftsmanship by way of corrosive political satire. Bearden joined "306", a free-wheeling group of artists, writers, musicians and theater people who met under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration/ Federal Arts Project at 306 West 141st Street. The studio was run by Charles Alston, a painter, sculptor, and teacher who, himself born in Charlotte, North Carolina, was Bearden's cousin by marriage. The group included such artists as Augusta Savage, Jacob Lawrence, and Norman Lewis; and such writers as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, and Ralph Ellison.

In 1938, Bearden became a full-time caseworker for the New York City Department of Welfare, assigned to the men's division of the Harlem office. This position, which he held for three decades until he retired in 1967, had many consequences. It disqualified him for WPA Arts Project work; forced him to "moonlight" as a painter during the afternoons and evenings; gave him an independent income which allowed him to maintain his own studio over the years; shut out the possibility of combining painting with university teaching, which many of his friends eventually came to do; and later exposed him to a special and particularly sensitive segment of the welfare population, the Gypsies of New York City, who constituted his case load for many years.

In the evenings, to unwind, Bearden joined his friends listening to jazz at the Savoy Ballroom, where Charles

Buchanan, the manager, let the artists in free. It was the right time in the right place. The house band was led by the drummer Chick Webb, with a very young Ella Fitzgerald singing "A Tiskit, A Tasket." Not long afterward, Lester Young in his porkpie hat, soloing with Count Basie's band, stole the scene with a sound like no other horn in the world, and a way of laying back just behind the beat that could rip right through you.

Later, in the 1940s, Bearden became a good friend and informal student of Stuart Davis, the great American modernist who gave Bearden a special feeling for the relationship of color and musical form in painting. Bearden recalled Davis telling him "You've got to look at varying things. Say you've got people walking—you have to consider these things as musical beats." As Bearden put it, "Davis had a marvelous analytical mind. He was able to compose out of the dynamics of color . . . I think that with Matisse, and with Stuart, that color becomes form, space, direction, volume—all conceived first out of the coloration. It can't be changed."

In the latter 1940s, Bearden created four important series in oils and watercolors, all derived from mythic and literary themes. Then, to find a new direction, Bearden set about relearning the entire tradition in painting from the Renaissance forward, and he concentrated on Rembrandt's drawings. A particular anecdote of which Bearden was especially fond is revelatory: that Rembrandt would walk into the street, find the homeliest, ragged beggar, and invite him into the studio. "Come with me," Rembrandt would say. "I will make you a king!" And so, in Bearden's retelling, the master did. He dressed the beggar in king's robes and created a masterpiece. But if you looked carefully at the face, you could see the lines produced by a life of suffering and hardship. Beggar and king coexisted in the same face.

To understand Bearden's development is to begin to appreciate how all of this finally coalesced in his art. After a decade of deep searching in the 1950s, when he painted the most lyrical of abstractions in oil, Bearden (now a mature painter of fifty) turned to collage, reinventing the medium. He returned to his earliest memories of Charlotte, North Carolina, his youth in the steel-mill neighborhoods of Pittsburgh, and his young manhood in Harlem in series after

series throughout the following decades. As Bearden was fond of putting it, "Art celebrates the victory." It is a victory, one might say, over the circumstances that give rise to it.

Myron Schwartzman
Baruch College, CUNY

Notes

1. Romare Bearden Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, roll 3196. Romare Bearden, interview with Henri Ghent, June 29, 1968, transcript pp. 5-6.
2. This and subsequent quotations are excerpted from author's interviews with Romare Bearden.
3. *Mill Hand's Lunch Bucket*. 1978. From the *Profile/Part I: The Twenties* series (Pittsburgh Memories). Collage on board, 13 3/4" x 18 1/8".

The Legacy of Romare Bearden

The process of surveying the long and productive life of artist Romare Bearden has provided more than a few revelations regarding the artist's contributions to American art and culture. Above all, it is his deep interest in and commitment to all of the arts, which formed the basis for an equally valuable heritage—that of Bearden as scholar, philosopher and universal creative artist. For him, the worlds of music, literature, philosophy and the performing arts were an integral part of the creative process. He made use of various media in the thematic development of his paintings as well as in the approach to his work.

Bearden's attraction to literature in some of its more classic forms is reflected in many of his earlier works such as the *Passion of Christ*, a theme taken from the Bible. This series of paintings was created in 1945 soon after his discharge from the Army. Inspired by Garcia Lorca's poetry, he created *Lament for a Bullfighter: Ignacio Sanchez Mejias* in 1946. He went on to produce *Rabelais* and *The Iliad* variations. During this period Bearden worked in oil and watercolor using both media in each group of paintings. The Bullfight series consisted of nine watercolors and twelve oil paintings.

Bearden, whose work began to impress a few important people in the art world, was invited to join the Kootz Gallery in Manhattan where many of the above mentioned works were exhibited. There, he was in the company of other up and coming young artists such as Carl Holty, Byron Browne, William Baziotis and Robert Motherwell. It was also at the Kootz Gallery that his work began to receive favorable recognition from established art critics in *The New York Times*, *Art Digest*, *The New Yorker* and *Newsweek*, among others. Some early purchasers of his work from the Gallery included: Duke Ellington, Samuel Lewison, Roy Neuberger and Ben Wolf of *Art Digest*. The gallery often brought all of

its artists together for group shows. One such exhibition in which Bearden participated was called *Homage to Jazz* in December of 1946. It too received positive notices and Bearden's works, two watercolors and oils, were often noted in the reviews. Myron Schwartzman suggests, in his book *Romare Bearden: His Life and Art*, that *Homage to Jazz* was "The most significant of these shows for Bearden, in that it was prophetic of the substance and spirit of much that was to come later . . ."1

In 1950, Bearden, like many other American veterans of World War II took advantage of the GI Bill that provided funds for higher education. Having completed his undergraduate work at New York University prior to the war, he chose to pursue graduate study at the Sorbonne in Paris. Although Bearden applied for and was admitted to a program of philosophy at the Sorbonne, his abiding interest continued to be art.

After a period of adjustment, Bearden became fascinated with Paris and all that it had to offer culturally. He opened himself up to the intellectual and artistic life of the city and enjoyed the camaraderie of a number of American writers, painters and intellectuals, among them the poets Myron O'Higgins and Samuel Allen; the novelist/critics James Baldwin and Albert Murray; the painters Paul Keene, William Rivers and Herbert Gentry; the engineer Jim Moseley; and the photographer Marvin Smith.² He had letters of introduction from Samuel Kootz to Picasso, Braque, Brancusi and Matisse. Carl Holty gave him letters to the painters Jean Hélion and Hans Reichel. He became friendly with sculptor Constantin Brancusi and Jean Hélion, who was married to Peggy Guggenheim's daughter. He saw French films, attended the opera and often frequented the Louvre as well as all the other Paris museums and galleries. For Bearden, "Paris was a thing of dreams."³ He thrived on the late night discussions with artists in the bistros and cafes, listening to some of America's best known jazz musicians in clubs like that of Herbert Gentry, where one might rub shoulders with the likes of Larry Rivers, Eartha Kitt, Orson Welles, Jean Louis Barrault and Marcel Marceau. This was his real education, a practical introduction to scholarship, philosophy, arts

and letters. His curious and agile mind soaked it up like a sponge. These experiences, like so many others, helped to shape the development of a remarkable artistic career.

After being in Paris for nine months, Bearden was led to believe that he was to receive a Fulbright grant that would enable him to go back to Paris as a full-time student at the *Ecole des Arts Decoratifs*. Bearden returned to New York only to learn that he was an alternate and would only receive a grant if one was turned down. At the same time, he found that Samuel Kootz had closed his gallery. When the gallery was reopened later, Bearden was not included among the artists represented. These disappointments were perhaps responsible for his temporary drift away from art. It is also possible that he was suffering from culture shock and that it was as necessary for him to readjust to New York as it was for him to adjust to Paris when he arrived there. After a brief illness that may have resulted from his anxiety about returning to Paris, he resolved, in a letter to Carl Holty, "to do nothing but paint . . . Creative work never leaves you with the kind of tension I had built up. So I hope to be healthier even if Paris is a little further off."⁴

Once he committed himself to art, his life began to improve. He met his future wife, Nanette Rohan, and returned to the Department of Social Services in the job he had prior to his stay in Paris. The job provided a steady income and enough time for his art. He now felt back on track.

Bearden and Nanette Rohan were married in 1954 and moved into their Canal Street loft in 1956. His work was going so well that he was asked to join another gallery in 1960. The Michel Warren Gallery gave him his first one man show in five years in January of 1960. Soon after Arne Ekstrom, who had sponsored Michel Warren's Gallery, established the partnership of Cordier and Ekstrom, which became Bearden's Gallery from its beginnings in the early 1960's until Bearden's death in 1988.

The 1960s not only brought greater recognition and fame to Bearden, it also brought the Civil Rights Movement. Romare

Bearden, was the son of Bessye Bearden whose absolute refusal to tolerate racial bigotry was reflected in many of her social and political activities. Acutely aware of the myriad of problems that beset Black people in this country, Bessye Bearden had a fierce pride in her race that was not missing in her son.

In response to the social and political upheaval of the time, Bearden and a group of Black artists came together to discuss what was happening and what they might do to help in the struggle for equality. The group became known as the Spiral Group and had as its members: Norman Lewis, Hale Woodruff, Charles Alston, James Yeargans, Emma Amos, Calvin Douglas, Perry Ferguson, Reginald Gammon, Alvin Holingsworth, Felrath Hines, William Majors, Richard Mayhew, Earl Miller and Merton Simpson. Bearden's work with collage resulted from an idea he had for a Spiral Group project. Emma Amos remembers Bearden having collected "an enormous picture file, all cut out shapes and stuffed in a bag. He brought it into the Spiral meeting space on Christopher Street and spread it all out on the floor, suggesting we make a collaborative piece."⁵ When the group did not join him in the endeavor, he went ahead on his own, using the cut-up picture pieces to create small photomontages documenting aspects of the Black experience in America. He may have hoped that these images would raise the consciousness of the wider public. At the suggestion of Reginald Gammon, Bearden enlarged five or six of the small photomontages photostatically to three by four feet, or six by eight feet. To Bearden's surprise, Arne Ekstrom became intrigued with them and suggested that he produce more for an exhibition at the Gallery. His successful attempt to address a political and social problem launched him on an entirely new phase of his career. His approach to the problem prompted Ralph Ellison to write: ". . . Romare Bearden has faced these questions for himself, and since he is an artist whose social consciousness is no less intense than his dedication to art, his example is of utmost importance for all who are concerned with grasping something of the complex interrelations between race, culture and the individual artist as they exist in the United States."⁶

An exhibition entitled *Projections* was mounted at the Cordier and Ekstrom Gallery in October, 1964. It was shown at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. in October, 1965. The work was greeted enthusiastically by the critics and the public. Bearden had entered a new stage in his career. His work was being widely collected. The 1967 show of his work at Cordier and Ekstrom sold out. He was now able to completely retire from the New York City Department of Social Service and devote himself totally to his art. There were many requests to show his work at museums and galleries around the country.

Throughout the remainder of the sixties, Bearden continued to work with collage and to refine the technique. He began to use paint along with the cut paper. Later, he would combine paper and paint so effectively that it was often difficult to determine where the paper stopped and the paint began.

With more time, he was able to work on some of his own special projects. A book which he had worked on for twenty years with Carl Holty, *The Painters Mind* was completed. Bearden, Norman Lewis and Ernest Crichlow founded the Cinque Gallery, a non-profit gallery to give young emerging artists a showcase for their work. One of the highlights of his career took place in 1971, when The Museum of Modern Art mounted a retrospective exhibition of his work entitled: *Romare Bearden, 1940-1970: The Prevalence of Ritual*. In 1972, he was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

Throughout his career, Bearden's subjects seemed to consist of those things which were closest to him. Music was, of course, paramount to his existence. His ability to include it in every aspect of his life may be best explained by its constant presence in some form from his earliest childhood. While in North Carolina as a small child, he was exposed to the spirituals, hymns and gospel music of the church he attended with his great-grandparents. During his teen and young adult years in Harlem, such celebrated stride-time piano players as James P. Johnson, Willie "the Lion" Smith and Lucky Roberts, among others, were not only everyday figures on the sidewalks of Bearden's neighborhood, but in most cases instantly identifiable by the personal nuances that were their

signatures as artists. Fats Waller was a close friend of the Bearden family . . . Performers working in such celebrated Broadway revues of the period as *Shuffle Along*, *Chocolate Dandies*, *Hot Chocolate*, and *Lew Leslie's Blackbirds* were inseparable parts of the musical life of the neighborhood.⁷ His *The Blues* (1975) and *The Blues: Second Chorus* (1976), were historically and personally relevant. Some of the pieces consisted of combined paint and collage, others were monoprints—all very painterly and reminiscent of his earlier styles.

In 1973, the Beardens built a house and studio in French St. Martin where they spent a part of each year thereafter. As if to underscore the effect of the Caribbean on his work, Bearden created twenty collages in 1973, almost all of which captured the vibrant color and light of the islands.⁸ The place seems to have had an extraordinary effect on his use of color. His work was not only bright and sunny as the island must be, but his colors became jewel-like; they are exquisite to behold.

"You won't find Negro artists in most histories of American art," Bearden told a reporter from *The New York Times* in 1967. "As a matter of fact, until quite recently there were only a few U.S. art schools they could go to. They've really been consigned to obscurity and oblivion."⁹ It is a measure of Bearden's artistic legacy that his own work has been invaluable in helping to bring the Black artist into the mainstream.

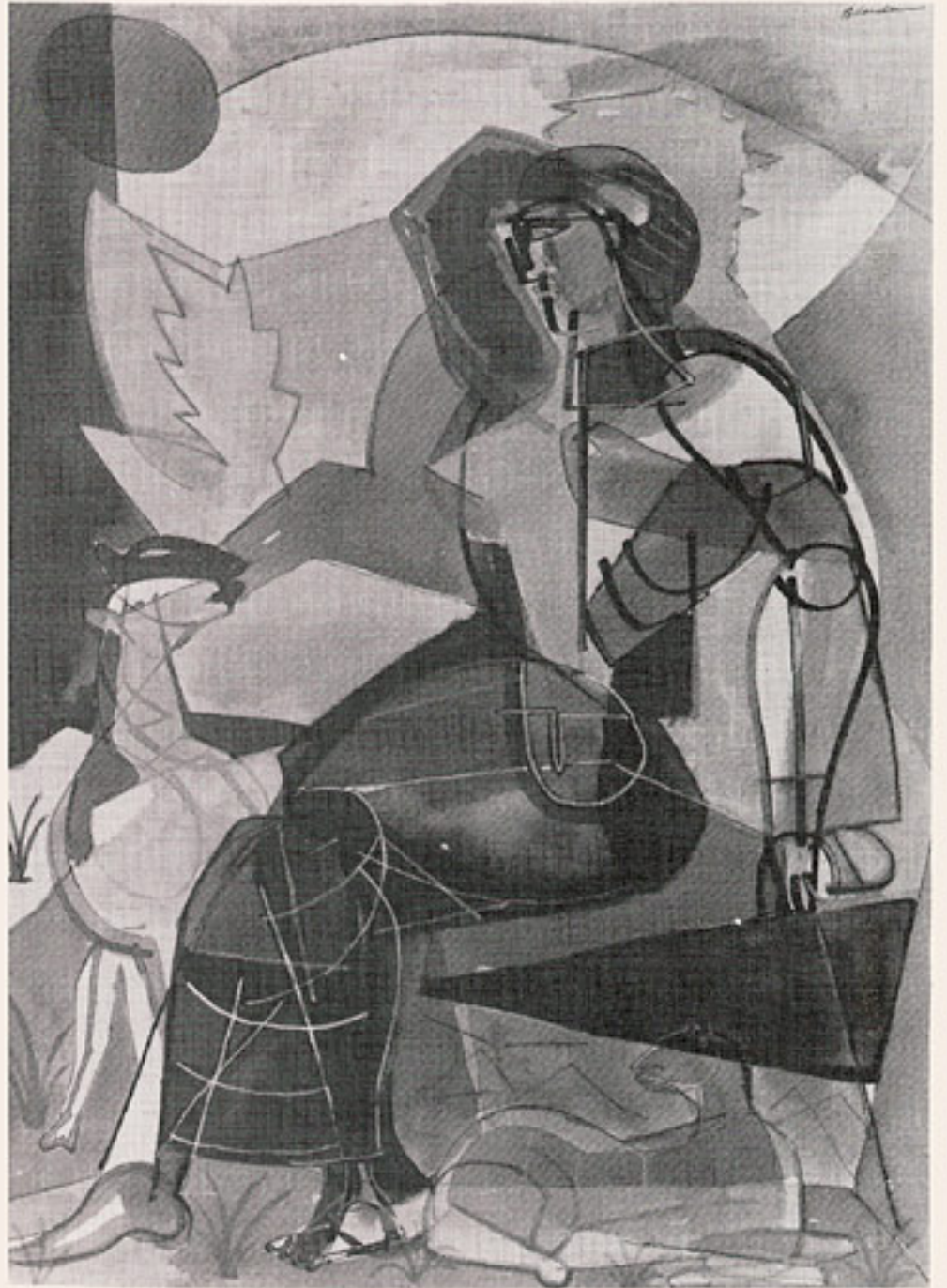
Julia Hotton

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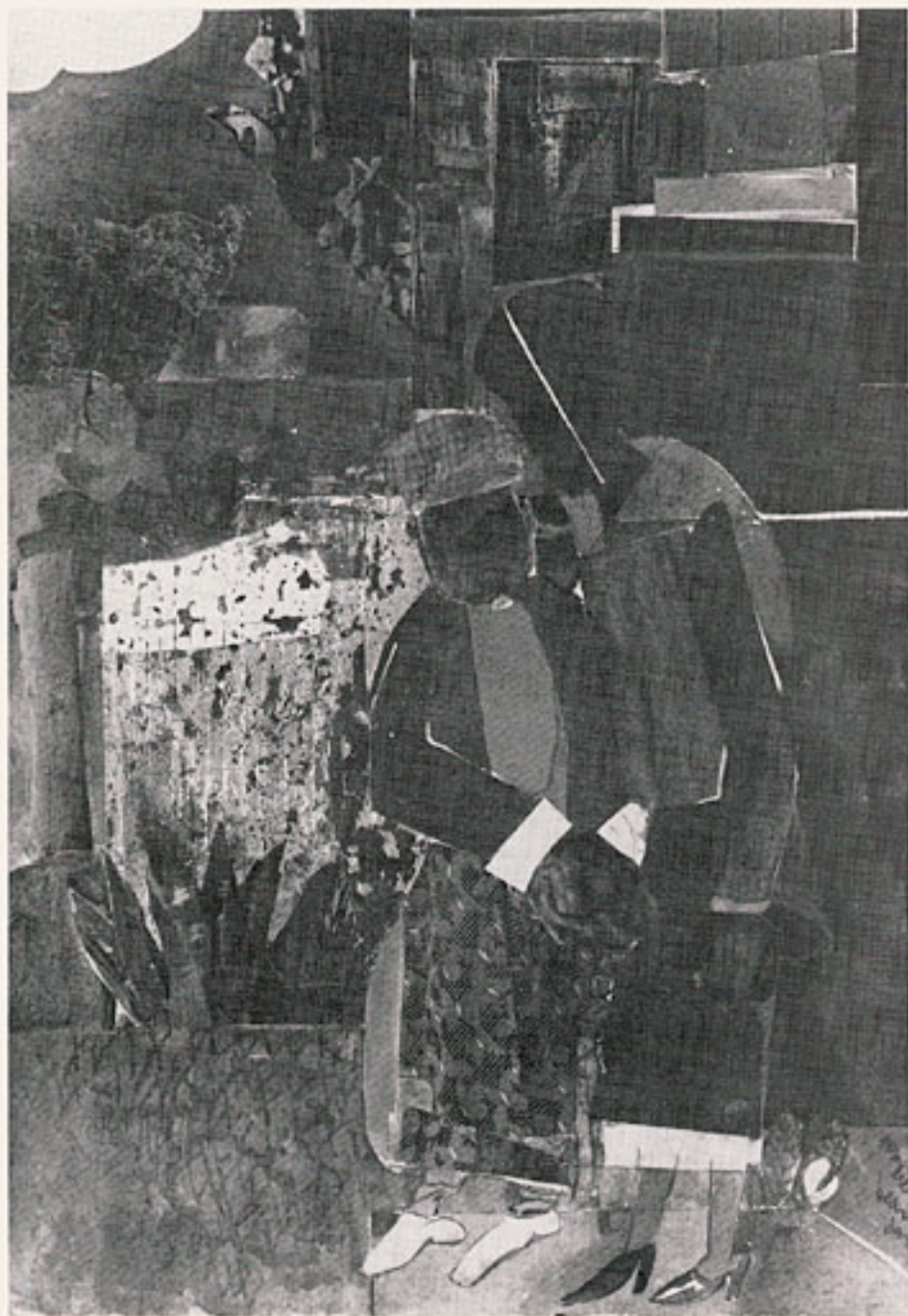
1. Myron Schwartzman, *Romare Bearden: His Life and Art*, p.145.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 167. 3. *Ibid.*, p. 163. 4. *Ibid.*, p. 176. 5. *Ibid.*, p. 210.
6. Ralph Ellison, *Introduction to Romare Bearden: Paintings and Projections*, Art Gallery of The State University of New York at Albany, November 25 to December 22, 1968.
7. Albert Murray, "The Visual Equivalent of the Blues," from the exhibition catalogue *Romare Bearden: 1970-1980*. Organized by the Mint Museum, Charlotte, N.C.
8. Schwartzman, p. 230.
9. Grace Glueck, "Negro Art from 1800 to 1950 is on display at City College," *New York Times*, October 16, 1967, p. 47.



1. *Untitled (Street Scene)*, 1930s
Gouache and ink on paper, 24" x 33 1/2"
Collection Mr. Leonard Bates



4. *The Shepherdess*, 1946
Pencil, watercolor and ink on paper,
24" x 17 1/2"
Private Collection



18. *Carolina Reunion*, 1975
Collage on board, 21" x 15 1/2"
Collection Mr. Eric D. Robertson



23. *Miss Mamie Singleton's Quilt*, 1978
Collage on board, 29" x 40"
Collection Addie J. Guttag

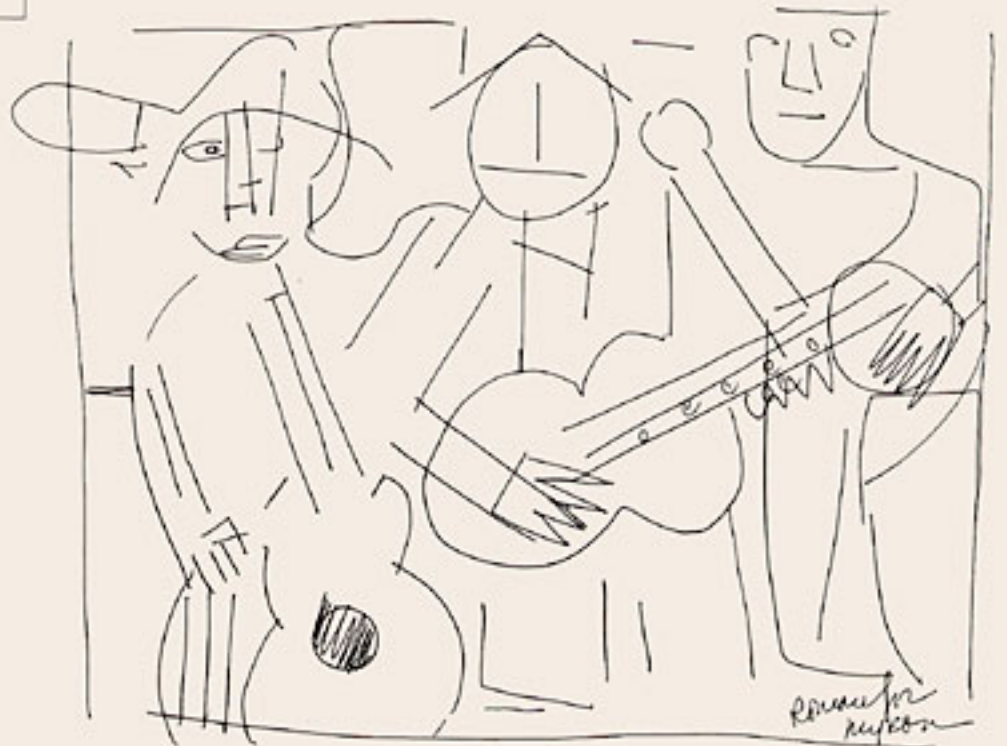


24. *School Bell Time*, 1978
Collage on board, 29 1/4" x 41"
Collection Kingsborough Community College/
The City University of New York



33. *Maquette for silkscreen of
The Piano Lesson, c. 1984*
Ink on tracing paper, 19 1/2" x 14"
Private Collection

35. *Drawing based on 1967
Three Folk Musicians, 1985*
Pen on paper, 10 1/2" x 13 1/2"
Collection Myron Schwartzman



Catalog Of The Exhibition

1. *Untitled (Street Scene)*, 1930s
Gouache and ink on paper, 24" x 33 1/2"
Collection Mr. Leonard Bates
2. *Untitled*, 1940s
Watercolor, 26" x 20"
Collection Morgan and Marvin Smith
3. *Untitled*, 1940s
Watercolor, 26" x 20"
Collection Morgan and Marvin Smith
4. *The Shepherdess*, 1946
Pencil, watercolor and ink on paper, 24" x 17 1/2"
Private Collection
5. *Untitled*, 1946-1947
Watercolor, 26" x 20"
Collection Morgan and Marvin Smith
6. *Drawing after Iliad Variations*, c. 1947
Brush and ink on paper, 25" x 19"
Collection Michael and Leslie Kapon
7. *#2 Drawing after Iliad Variations*, c. 1947
Brush and ink on paper, 19" x 25"
Collection Michael and Leslie Kapon
8. *The Parting Cup*, c. 1948
#3 From The Series *The Iliad*
Watercolor and ink on paper, 24" x 18"
Private Collection
9. *Mother and Child*, 1959
Collage and mixed media, 13 3/4" x 8 5/8"
Collection Mr. and Mrs. John A. Williams
10. *Untitled*, 1964
Collage on board, 7" x 11 1/4"
Private Collection
11. *Two Gossips*, c. 1967
Collage on board, 8" x 4 1/2"
Collection Marilyn Mikulsky
12. *Summertime*, 1967
Collage on board, 56" x 44"
Collection Toby and Jesse Shanok

13. *A Tree More Ancient Than Any Eden*, 1970s
Collage on board, 24" x 19"
Collection Young-Mallin
14. *The Visitor*, 1970s
Watercolor and pencil, 12" x 14"
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Gentry
15. *In Black America*, 1971
Silkscreen, 35 ¾" x 25"
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Harold Freeman, Jr.
16. *Untitled*, c. 1973
Watercolor on paper, 28" x 38"
Collection Meredith Sirmans and Gail Wright-Sirmans
17. *The Rain Forest*, 1973
Collage on board, 24" x 18"
Collection Gerhard and Irma Lowy
18. *Carolina Reunion*, 1975
Collage on board, 21" x 15 ½"
Collection Mr. Eric D. Robertson
19. *Duke*, mid-1970s
Gouache on paper, 40" x 30"
Private Collection
20. *Allegheny Morning Sky*, 1978
Collage on board, 10 ⅛" x 14 ½"
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Martin Gutner
21. *Miss Bertha and Mr. Seth*, 1978
Collage on board, 25 ½" x 18 ½"
Collection Susan and Reuven Merker
22. *Sunset—Moonrise with Maudell Sleet*, 1978
Collage on board, 41" x 29"
Private Collection
23. *Miss Mamie Singleton's Quilt*, 1978
Collage on board, 29" x 40"
Collection Addie J. Guttag
24. *School Bell Time*, 1978
Collage on board, 29 ¼" x 41"
Collection Kingsborough Community College/
The City University of New York
25. *Liza in High Cotton*, 1978
Collage on board, 17 ½" x 33 ¾"
Private Collection
26. *Morning*, 1978
Collage on board, 10 ¾" x 7"
Private Collection
27. *Susanah in Harlem*, 1980
Collage on board, 40" x 30"
Private Collection
28. *Quiet Evening from the Mecklenburg Series*, 1982
Collage with mixed media, 12" x 8 ¾"
Collection Meredith Sirmans and Gail Wright-Sirmans
29. *Mecklenburg Autumn: Morning*, 1983
Collage with oil, 40" x 30"
Private Collection
30. *Mecklenburg Autumn: China Lamp*, 1983
Oil and collage on paper, 40" x 31"
Collection Mr. Rick Johnson
31. *Mrs. Blanton's October Table*, 1983
Oil with collage on board, 40" x 30"
Private Collection
32. *The Three Obeahs*, 1984
Watercolor on paper, 30 ⅛" x 22 ⅛"
Collection June and Walter Christmas
33. *Maquette for silkscreen of The Piano Lesson*, c. 1984
Ink on tracing paper, 19 ½" x 14"
Private Collection
34. *Piano Lesson*, 1984
Lithograph, 29 ¼" x 20 ¼"
Private Collection
35. *Drawing based on 1967 Three Folk Musicians*, 1985
Pen on paper, 10 ½" x 13 ½"
Collection Myron Schwartzman
36. *All The Things You Are*, 1987
Collage on board, 36" x 24"
Collection Mr. Rick Johnson
37. *At Low Tide*, 1988
Collage on board, 20" x 16"
Collection Mr. André Thibault/Teabo

All dimensions are given in inches, with height preceding width.

Chronology

1911

September 2. Romare Howard Bearden born in Charlotte, North Carolina, to Richard Howard and Bessye Johnson Bearden.

1914-15

Howard and Bessye Bearden relocate to New York City.

1917

Enrolls at P.S. 5, New York, New York. Later transfers to P.S. 139, New York.

1919-20

Bearden family spends a year in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada.

1920-21

Romare Bearden spends a year in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

1925

Graduates from P.S. 139, New York, New York.

1925-27

Attends DeWitt Clinton High School, New York, New York.

1929

Graduates from Peabody High School, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

1935

Receives B.S. degree from New York University. Works as a cartoonist.

1936-37

Studies life-drawing and painting with George Grosz at the Art Students League, New York.

1938

Enters New York City Department of Social Services as case worker.

1940

Begins painting in tempera on brown paper, primarily Southern scenes. Takes a studio on 125th Street in building also occupied by Jacob Lawrence and Claude McKay.

May 4-11. First one-man exhibition at studio of Ad Bates in Harlem. Twenty-four early student works shown.

July 4-September 2. Included in "The Art of the American Negro (1851 to 1940)," Tanner Art Galleries, Chicago.

1942

April. Begins service in U.S. Army, 372nd Infantry Division.

1944

May 4-31. Included in "New Names in American Art" at The Baltimore Museum of Art.

1945

May. Discharged from army as sergeant.

October 8-27. First one-man exhibition in New York gallery; twenty-four works from "The Passion of Christ" series shown at Samuel M. Kootz Gallery.

October 19-November 21. Two-man exhibition, with Pietro Lazzari, at Galerie John Devoluy in Paris.

November 27-January 10 (1946). "Madonna and Child" included in "Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting" at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

December 17. "He is Arisen" (1945) acquired by The Museum of Modern Art, New York; first work to be purchased by a museum.

1946

Resumes duties as case worker for New York City Department of Social Services.

April 15-May 4. Included in "Modern American Paintings from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger" at Samuel M. Kootz Gallery, New York.

December 10-January 16 (1947). "Some Drink! Some Drink!" included in "Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting" at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

1947

November 6-January 11 (1948). Included in "Abstract and Surrealist American Art," at the Art Institute of Chicago.

1948

November 9-25. One-man exhibition, "The Iliad," at Niveau Gallery, New York. Sixteen works shown.

1950

Goes to Paris on the G.I. Bill to study at the Sorbonne. Becomes acquainted with Constantin Brancusi, Georges Braque, Jean Helion, Hans Reichel, and many Americans then living in Paris; poet Samuel Allen, novelists James Baldwin and Albert Murray, painters William Rivers and Paul Keene.

December 8-February 25 (1951). "Woman with a Bird" included in exhibition "American Painting Today — 1950" at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

1951

Returns to New York from Paris. Paints intermittently but concentrates on song writing; joins ASCAP and has many songs published.

1952

Resumes work for New York City Department of Social Services.

1954

September 4. Marries Nanette Rohan. Returns to painting, working in an increasingly abstract style.

1955

November 9-January 8 (1956). Included in "Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting" at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

1956

Moves into studio/living space on Canal Street, New York.

1958

Paintings now almost exclusively non-objective.

1960

January 20-February 19. One-man exhibition at Michel

Warren Gallery, New York; non-figurative paintings shown.

1961

Begins to reintroduce figurative elements in paintings.

April 6-25. One-man exhibition, "Bearden," at Cordier & Warren Gallery, New York; continues to show non-objective paintings.

October 27-January 7 (1962). Included in "The 1961 Pittsburgh International Exhibition of Contemporary Paintings and Sculpture" at The Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

1963

July. Spiral group formed, meeting initially in Bearden's studio; group later opens a gallery. Founded before the Civil Rights March on Washington, it is concerned with the problems of Negro artists. Group considers working on a complete project, for which Bearden suggests a collage on Negro themes. He begins to create collages, although group effort does not materialize.

1964

June. Collages seen by Arne Ekstrom, who encourages Bearden to make a series for fall exhibition. Bearden spends summer working on them.

October 6-24. One-man exhibition, "Romare Bearden Projections," at Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York.

1965

October 1-31. One-man exhibition, "Projections," at Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

1966

May 25. Receives Grant in Art from The National Institute of Arts and Letters; on occasion of grant ten collages shown in "Exhibition of Work by Newly Elected Members and Recipients of Honors and Awards," May 25-June 26, The American Academy of Arts and Letters and The National Institute of Arts and Letters, Academy Art Gallery, New York.

Official retirement from New York City Department of Social Services; Bearden continues to do some work into 1967.

1967

October 10-November 4. One-man exhibition, "Romare Bearden," at Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York.

October 16-November 5. Co-directs with Carroll Greene, Jr., "The Evolution of Afro-American Artists: 1800-1950," sponsored by The City University of New York, The Harlem Cultural Council, and The New York Urban League, in The Great Hall of City College, New York.

November 8-30. One-man exhibition, "Romare Bearden: Collages," at The J.L. Hudson Gallery, Detroit.

1968

Included in Eleventh International Poster Biennial, Warsaw, Poland.

Included in International Exhibition of Posters, Sofia, Bulgaria.

April. One-man exhibition at Spellman College, Atlanta, Georgia.

October 31-November 3. "Soul Three" (1968) included in exhibition "In Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.," at The Museum of Modern Art.

November 25-February 9 (1969). One-man exhibition, "Romare Bearden: Paintings and Projections," at The Art Gallery, State University of New York at Albany; catalogue introduction by Ralph Ellison.

Two works included in exhibition, "Social Comment in America," 1968-1969, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Exhibition circulated.

1969

May 15-June 22. Included in "Recent Acquisitions May 15, 1968-April 18, 1969" exhibition at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

June. Co-author with Carl Holty, *The Painter's Mind* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc.).

June 18-October 5. "The Silent Valley of Sunrise" (1959) is included in "The New American Painting and Sculpture: The First Generation" at The Museum of Modern Art.

October. Included in "Black Arts Festival" at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania.

November 19-January 5 (1970). One work included in

exhibition, "Invisible Americans: Black Artists of the 30s," The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

December. First exhibition at Cinque Gallery in The New York Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street, New York. Bearden, Norman Lewis, and Ernest Crichlow organize gallery to exhibit work of younger black artists. Malcolm Bailey the first artist to be exhibited.

December 3-31. "Mauritius," his only sculpture, included in "Blocked Metaphors" exhibition at Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York.

December 16-February 1 (1970). Included in "1969 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting" at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

1970

January. Teaches for five weeks at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

February 11-March 7. One-man exhibition, "Romare Bearden: Recent Collages," at Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York.

May 19-June 23. Included in "Afro-American Artists, New York and Boston" exhibition at The Museum of Contemporary Arts, Boston, Massachusetts.

June. Recives grant from Guggenheim Foundation to write a book on the history of Afro-American Art.

1971

March 23-June 9. Major one-man retrospective exhibition, "Romare Bearden: The Prevalence of Ritual," organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Exhibition circulates to six museums.

June 12-September 5. Included in exhibition, "Artistes Afro-Américains," Musée Rath, Geneva, Switzerland.

1972

Co-author with Harry Henderson, *Six Black Masters of American Art* (New York: Doubleday & Co.).

Elected to The National Institute of Arts and Letters.

1973

Abrams Publishers releases *The Art of Romare Bearden: The Prevalence of Ritual* by M. Bunch Washington (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.).

Begins summering on the Island of St. Martin in the Caribbean.

1974

March 28-April 28. One-man exhibition, "Romare Bearden: The Prevalence of Ritual, Martinique and Rain Forest," at Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York. Twenty-four works shown.

Portfolio of five silkscreens, "Prevalence of Ritual," published by Ives-Stillman.

1975

Designs mural for Atlanta County Council Building, Atlanta, Georgia.

February 14-March 15. One-man exhibition "Romare Bearden: Of The Blues," at Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York. Nineteen works shown.

May 21-June 7. First one-man exhibition in Paris: "Romare Bearden: Collages," at the Galerie Albert Loeb.

September 5-October 26. One-man exhibition, "Mysteries: Women in the Art of Romare Bearden," at The Everson Museum of Art of Syracuse and Onondaga County, Syracuse, New York.

1976

January 14-February 7. One-man exhibition, "Romare Bearden," at Graphis Gallery, Toronto, Canada.

February 11-March 13. One-man exhibition, "Of the Blues (Second Chorus)," at Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York.

November 21-December 18. One-man exhibition, "Romare Bearden: Recent Collages," at The Sheldon Ross Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan. Seventeen collages and one print shown.

1977

Designs sets and costumes for "Ancestral Voices" performed by the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, New York.

April 13-May 7. One-man exhibition, "Romare Bearden,"

at Graphis Gallery, Toronto, Canada.

April 27-May 28. One-man exhibition, "Romare Bearden: Odysseus Collages," at Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York. Twenty works shown.

1978

November 8-December 16. One-man exhibition, "Romare Bearden: Profile/Part I: The Twenties," at Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York. Twenty-eight works shown.

November 18-December 30. Twenty-three works included in exhibition "Twelve Americans: Masters of Collage," Andrew Crispo Gallery, New York.

1980

Executes thirty watercolors for opening sequences in *Gloria*, a Columbia Pictures film.

May 16-June 15. First one-man exhibition on the West Coast, "Romare Bearden: Collages and Watercolors," at The Art Garden in Venice, California. Twenty-eight works shown.

October 12-January 4 (1981). "Romare Bearden: 1970-1980," a ten-year retrospective organized by The Mint Museum in Bearden's home town of Charlotte, North Carolina.

1981

October 1-November 7. One-man exhibition "In 4/4 Time: Oil and Collage on Paper," Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York.

1982

Designs scrim, "The Bridge," for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ballet, "The Stack Up."

1983

Illustrates *Poems of the Caribbean* by Derek Walcott (Limited Editions Club, 1983).

Designs Baltimore Metro Line Mural, Laurens Street Subway Station. Baltimore, Maryland.

Designs Borough of Manhattan Community College Mural, New York, New York.

November 12-December 17. One-man exhibition "Mecklenburg Autumn: Oil Paintings with Collage," Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York. Twelve works included.

1984

Designs Pittsburgh Transit System mural, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

August 30-September 22. One-man exhibition "Watercolors from St. Martin," Sheldon Ross Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan. Three collages and twenty-seven watercolors shown.

November 14-December 15. One-man exhibition "Rituals of the Obeah," Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York. Eighteen watercolors shown.

1986

September 16-November 16. One-man exhibition "Romare Bearden: Origins and Progressions," The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan. Major retrospective including fifty-seven works in various media.

September 23-November 1. One-man exhibition "Mecklenburg: Morning & Evening," Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc., New York. Eighteen watercolors with collage shown.

1988

January 23-April 3. One-man exhibition "Riffs and Takes: Music in the Art of Romare Bearden," North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina.

March 11. Bearden dies, following some months' illness with bone cancer.

1989

May 11-June 10. "Romare Bearden: A Memorial Exhibition" held at ACA Galleries, New York.

Romare Bearden: Work with Paper
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