

Background / Art History:

Romare Bearden, United States, (1911-1988)

collage artist, painter

Romare Bearden was an African-American who is internationally recognized for his lifelong work as a collage artist. His work told many captivating and inspiring stories to draw attention to social realism and to celebrate the African-American experience. During the 1960's he becharmed a type of art we call collage. Collage comes from the French word *coller*, "to gum or stick something together." His work was created by gluing fragments of paper, fabric, scraps, photographs, drawings, and images in magazines and newspapers to a flat surface. In addition, he used watercolors, oil paints, and inks to make his collages. He enjoyed many art forms and styles including African, Asian and European art.

Romare Bearden was born in Charlotte, North Carolina. He moved to Harlem in New York City when he was a young child and grew up there in the midst of the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance (1919-1929), was a period in American cultural history when Black artists felt a need to contribute their African heritage and pride in a positive way to the visual, performing and literary arts. Harlem became the center of this artistic rebirth period during the 1920's when Romare Bearden was a young artist. Many visits were made to the Bearden household by family friend and poet, Langston Hughes, and musicians, Fats Waller and Duke Ellington. From the 1940's through the 1980's, Romare Bearden became a presence in American art. He has had many successful exhibitions at premier art galleries throughout the United States.

Romare Bearden captured many wonderful images from his childhood memories and images of the people and places throughout his life. His work is rich with narrative details about black community life-public and private. It is apparent that Romare Bearden had an amazing ability to unify the mixed media of his work through experimentation to communicate universal themes with profound artistic value.