

Updated: August 2003

## MOST COMPREHENSIVE SHOW EVER OF ART BY ROMARE BEARDEN PREMIERES AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, SEPTEMBER 14, 2003 - JANUARY 4, 2004; NATIONAL TOUR INCLUDES FIVE U.S. CITIES



Romare Bearden

*Piano Lesson, 1983*

collage of various papers with paint, ink, and graphite on fiberboard, 73.7 x 55.9 cm (29 x 22)

The Walter O. Evans Foundation for Art and Literature

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**Washington, DC - The Art of Romare Bearden**, the most comprehensive retrospective ever assembled of the large and diverse body of work by one of America's preeminent 20th-century artists, will be presented by the National Gallery of Art in its East Building, September 14, 2003 - January 4, 2004. Approximately 130 works will explore the complexity and scope of the artist's evolution and will feature

many rarely exhibited and/or never before reproduced works from private collections.

Paintings; drawings and watercolors; monotypes and edition prints; collages of diverse materials, including fabrics; photographs; wood sculpture; designs for record albums, costumes, and stage sets; and book illustrations reveal the places where Bearden lived and worked: the rural south; northern cities, principally Pittsburgh and New York's Harlem; and the Caribbean island of St. Martin. They also reflect his wide range of interests and explore often overlapping themes of religion, ritual practice, everyday life, jazz clubs, brothels, history, mythology, and literature.

Organized by the National Gallery of Art, the exhibition will also be seen with slight variation at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, February 7 - May 16, 2004; the Dallas Museum of Art, June 20 - September 5, 2004; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, October 14, 2004 - January 9, 2005; and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, January 29 - April 24, 2005.

"This exhibition will be a wonderful opportunity to view the full range of Romare Bearden's artistic genius," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are grateful for the generosity of AT&T and the many private and public lenders, as well as for the invaluable assistance of the Romare Bearden Foundation."

The exhibition is made possible with generous support from AT&T.

"As the world's networking company, AT&T is committed to satisfying customers and serving society. Because we live by our values in good times and bad, AT&T has become one of the world's most-trusted corporate citizens," said AT&T Chairman and CEO Dave Dorman. "It is in this spirit that we are delighted to sponsor **The Art of Romare Bearden** at the National Gallery of Art, as well as its national tour."

"As the most experimental African-American artist of his generation, Romare Bearden incorporated the broader social and artistic currents of his time into his extraordinary art," Dorman added. "With this exhibition, we all will learn something new about the power of art and communication to connect people, places and ideas."

The exhibition is sponsored in part by Chevy Chase Bank.

## **The Exhibition**

Romare Bearden's oeuvre of more than 2,000 known works in many media reveals the diverse influences of earlier Western masters ranging from Duccio, Giotto, and de Hooch to Cézanne, Picasso, and Matisse, as well as his fascination with African art (particularly sculpture, masks, and textiles), Byzantine mosaics, Japanese prints, and Chinese paintings.

The sections of the exhibition are *Origins*, *Circa 1964*, *Mecklenburg Memories*, *The City and Its Music*, *Stories*, *Women*, *Monotypes*, *Collaborations*, and *Late Work*.

Highlights include *Berkeley-The City and Its People* (1973), which measures 10 x 16 feet and will be seen here for the first time outside of the Berkeley City Council chambers where it was installed in 1974; *The Block II* (1972), an unusual multipanel piece depicting the varied indoor and outdoor life of Harlem; and *Mauritius* (1969), his only known work of sculpture, which alludes to a martyred Roman soldier, an African recruited from upper Egypt. Also in the show are three illustrations (never before exhibited or reproduced) for a book, *Li'l Dan, the Drummer Boy: A Civil War Story*, for which Bearden also wrote the text. It has just been published by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

Among the many private collectors lending to the National Gallery of Art exhibition who knew Bearden personally are artist and art historian Professor David C. Driskell and Mrs. Driskell; musician and educator Wynton Marsalis; and Marion B. Javits, widow of the late Senator Jacob Javits.

## **The Artist**

Romare Bearden was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, the seat of Mecklenburg County, on September 2, 1911. About 1914, his family joined in the Great Migration north, settling in New York City, which remained Bearden's base for the rest of his life. He became a prolific artist whose works were exhibited throughout the United States and Europe. He was also a respected writer and an eloquent spokesman on artistic and social issues of the day. His many awards and honors include the National Medal of Arts he received from President Ronald Reagan in 1987, one year before he died in

1988.

### **Related Activities, Catalogue, and Resources**

A wide range of films, brochures, concerts, lectures, tours, and family and school programs for all ages will be offered free of charge throughout the run of the exhibition. A fully illustrated exhibition catalogue and other exhibition-related books and items will be sold in the Gallery Shops and there will be special restaurant offerings, including a weekend jazz brunch. The audio tour, which will be available for rent, will feature Gallery director Powell, exhibition curator Ruth Fine, David C. Driskell, and Wynton Marsalis. A video documentary on Bearden produced by the Gallery will be shown continuously in a theater adjacent to the exhibition in a 12-minute format; a 30-minute version will also be available for viewing in the East Building auditorium and for sale in the Gallery Shops. For more information, visit [www.nga.gov/press](http://www.nga.gov/press) (<http://www.nga.gov/home.htm>) .

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## General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit [www.nga.gov/renovation](http://www.nga.gov/renovation) (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/ngadc](http://twitter.com/ngadc).

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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