

The Museum of Modern Art

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ADVANCE FACT SHEET

ROMARE BEARDEN: THE PREVALENCE OF RITUAL

" 'Art celebrates a victory,' says Bearden. 'I look for all those elements in which life expresses that victory.' In America's technological society, increasing numbers of people feel that man is becoming dehumanized. Bearden holds that the life style of the Black in America is 'perhaps the richest because it is the one life style that is talking about life and about the continuation of life...and through all of the anguish--the joy of life.' "

"The ritual is the choreography of daily life in black America, vibrant in movement and in the myriad shades of feeling and emotion common to humanity, it is nurtured by his knowledge of and experience in black America."

Dates: March 25 - June 7, 1971

Director: Carroll Greene, Guest Director (all quotes are his). *Project*
Former Curator of the Afro-American Cultural History *Department*
at the Smithsonian Institution. He is now writing an historical survey of Black American Artists for Praeger Publications.

Contents: 56 works, including 6 photo-enlargements of key 1964 collages and an 18' long collage mural, The Block, with sound created especially for the exhibition.

Six of the early works on brown paper of 1940-42 are included in the exhibition. They demonstrate the primal power of Bearden's imagery which reappears in his collages of 1964 to today with heightened intensity. The intervening years, a long digression into pure abstraction, are not represented. It was the artist's intention when he created the almost monochromatic small collages of 1964 that they be photographically enlarged to proportions approximating life-size. This idea has been carried out in the exhibition with huge photo-enlargements of six pivotal 1964 collages. These works, which marked a breakthrough in his art, and those subsequent to them, are laced "with allusions to both American and African origins that include spirituals and jazz, card-playing nights and church-going Sundays, family meals and blue Mondays, set against lush Southern landscapes and bleak Northern slums."

Having worked exclusively in the collage medium for the past six years,

(more)

Bearden's works have become increasingly more sophisticated in color, design and technique. Such masterful works of 1970 as Patchwork Quilt (recently acquired by The Museum of Modern Art) and Mississippi Monday (Shorewood Publishers) demonstrate Bearden's unique ability to utilize this medium to express his particular cultural heritage in a universal art.

Tour: The exhibition will be shown also at the National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C. in the summer of 1971 and at the University of California Art Museum in Berkeley, California, during the fall of 1971.

Publication: "Romare Bearden: The Prevalence of Ritual," essay by Carroll Greene, 24 pages, 16 illustrations (4 in color), bibliography, chronology, checklist of exhibition, \$2.50, published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Additional material, including black and white photographs and color transparencies available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Telephone: (212) 956-7501.
