



caption



Romare Bearden's

Studio: A Lesson in Collage

Eileen Shaloum

When artist Romare Bearden's retrospective was in New York City at the Whitney Museum, I was lucky to be part of a tour of it for art teachers. In his work, Bearden depicted the rituals and overall nature of African-American life. His subjects were closely linked to his experiences and surroundings throughout his life. I was especially taken with his collage of himself in his studio, *Artist with Painting and Model-1981*. I thought that this would be a great inspiration piece to use in my third-grade classes.

Lesson Objectives

- Students will:
- recognize and gain appreciation for the work of Romare Bearden.
 - explore collage and photomontage in art-making.
 - create an effective collage based on Romare Bearden's approach.

Introducing the Artist

As part of the tour, we received a book about Bearden and several slides and transparencies. I showed these to my students to give them an understanding of his subject matter and collage techniques. We discussed the way he altered the faces and bodies of his subjects to create a comical and surrealistic tone. In his work, Bearden used many disparate elements to form either a figure or part of a background. So, true to his spirit, we set off to do the same.

Building a Collage

We set out to build our collages from the bottom up. First I gave students three cardboard templates to represent the left wall, back wall, and floor of the studio. The left wall and back wall templates were traced on wallpaper sample books; the floor template was traced on a matching piece of colored paper. Students

glued the three parts on 15 x 18" (38 x 46 cm) white paper to represent a room in three dimensions. The next step was to create a collage on 6 x 9" (15 x 23 cm) paper using a variety of colored papers depicting a place or something special to each student. Students placed the finished mini-collage on black paper cut to look like an easel.

A humorous combination of collage and photomontage showed that the children understood Bearden's process of making art.

I distributed digital photos of students that I had previously taken in class and directed students to alter their faces any way they wanted. I suggested that they could cut them out and trade with a friend and/or add features cut from magazines that could be of different sizes. Some added hats, others hair, or other features. Then students rummaged through magazines to find a

variety of mismatched body parts so that the end result was a surrealistic and comical representation.

Students glued their easels with the mini-collage onto the back wall and their bodies on the left. We used old art catalogs to find pictures of paintbrushes and home and garden magazines for furniture, fixtures, and accessories; fabric samples became rugs.

Some children wanted to mimic Bearden's sketch on the floor of his studio with a little sketch of their own. The end result was a humorous combination of collage and photomontage that showed that the children understood Bearden's process of making art. And we had so much fun in the process! ☺

Resources

- Greenberg, Jan *Romare Bearden: Collage of Memories*. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2003.
- The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York Memory and Metaphor *The Art of Romare Bearden 1940-1987*. Oxford University Press, 1991.

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places.

WEB LINK

www.beardenfoundation.org