

Romare Bearden

Born 1911, Charlotte, North Carolina U.S.; died New York, New York, U.S., 1988



Romare Bearden created paintings, collages, murals, album covers, book illustrations, and stage sets. Born in North Carolina, he moved to New York at a young age, and grew up in the vibrant cultural scene of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s.

During the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, Bearden began to explore themes of African American life in his work. He portrayed childhood memories, scenes of daily life, and images drawn from religion and folklore. His technique was influenced by other art and craft forms, such as cubist collage, quilting, and jazz music. He also promoted other artists of color and wrote frequently about art and the social issues of his time.



This work shows three men standing shoulder to shoulder, and is one of the largest collages Bearden made. In his collages, Bearden used bits of magazines and posters, fabric, photographs, foil, and other materials the way other artists use paint. We don't know the identities of the three men, but we do know Bearden created collages of actual people, such as family members, jazz musicians, and other people from his Harlem community.

Romare Bearden, *Three Men*, 1966–67

Explore

What do you notice about this work? Describe the lines, shapes, and colors that you see. What problems might Bearden have faced when making this large collage?

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How would you describe the mood of this collage? What would this collage sound like if it was a piece of music? What kind of rhythm or beat would it have?

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Think of a title for this work that is based on its colors, shapes, textures, materials, and mood. Do you prefer your title to the actual title of *Three Men*? Why?

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Fun Fact!

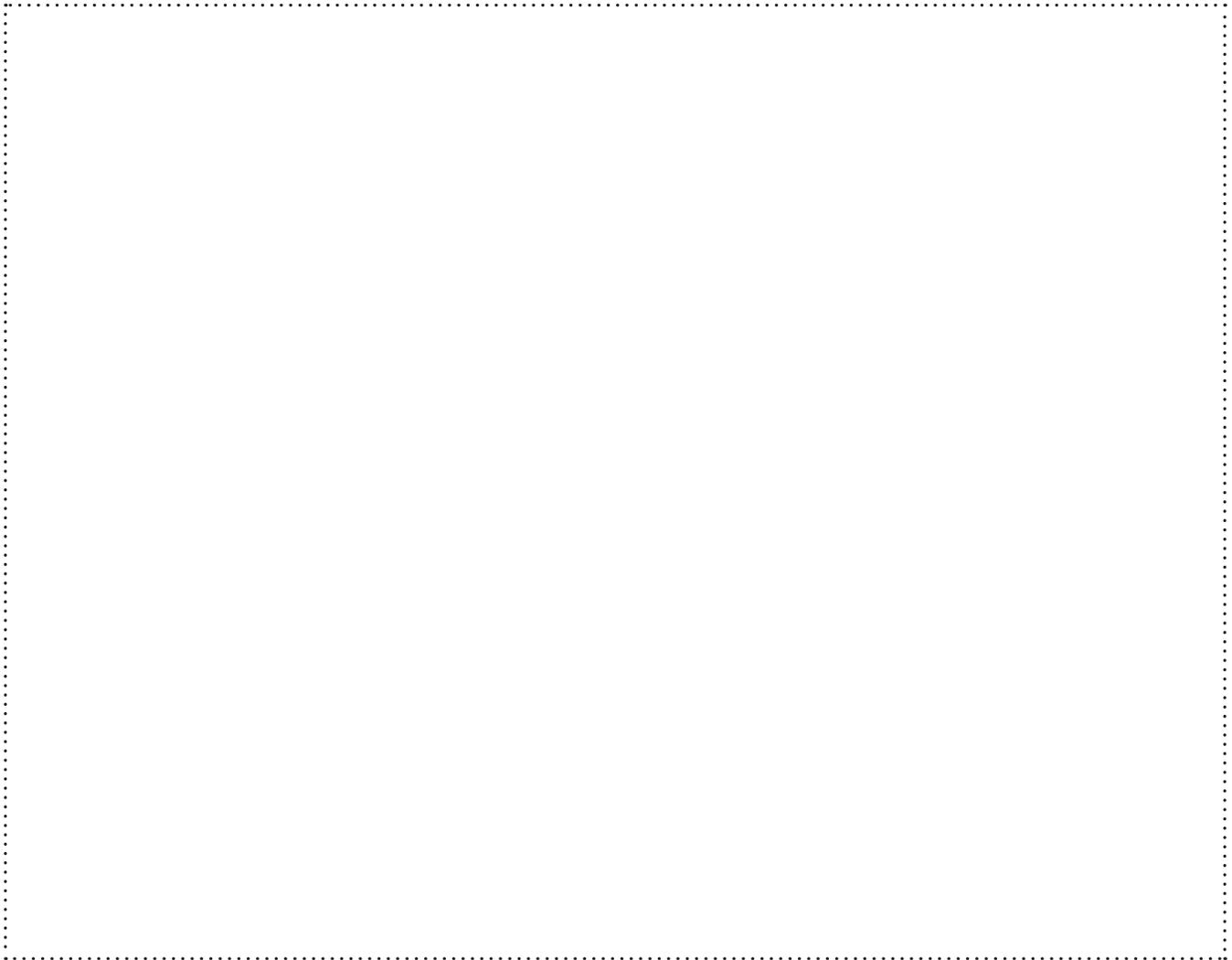
Bearden had four cats: Gypo, Tuttle (named after the famous Egyptian boy king Tutankhamun), Rusty (named after the Persian hero Rostam), and Mikie (named after the artist Michelangelo).

Create

Think about a friend, a family member, or someone you admire. This person will be the subject of your own collage.

Cut out bits of images from magazines, newspapers, greeting cards, posters, and painted or colored pieces of paper. Look for colors, textures, shapes, and images that remind you of your subject. Think about how this person makes you feel, and what mood or rhythm they remind you of.

Create a picture of the person by arranging and gluing your images into the frame below. You may want to play some music, as Bearden did, while you work. When you're done, give your work a title.



Front cover image: Romare Bearden, *Three Men*, 1966–67 (detail); collection SFMOMA, purchase, by exchange, through an anonymous gift; © 2021 Romare Bearden Foundation / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

For more information about this work, check out sfmoma.org/artwork/2012.189.



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