

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE THROUGH ROMARE BEARDEN'S EYES

Romare Bearden is most known for seamlessly integrating African American subjects into his powerful art collages, such as African American life, people, traditions, religion, history, literature, and jazz during the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance was a critical period lasting from 1917-1935 in Harlem, NY that celebrated black culture, music, art, and social activism. During this time, Harlem was known as a cultural mecca that allowed black artists to flourish and flee the discrimination, and overall oppression of the South. Black artists, and people alike, used this crucial time period to push for equal rights for Black people, while further advancing themselves as individuals in a prejudiced America. Some influential artists during this time period include Augusta Savage, Jacob Lawrence, Aaron Douglas, and Lois Mailou Jones. Each of these black artists represent talent, success, creativity, and power, showcasing true black talent within the art world.

A Walk Through Harlem by Riley Herendeen pays tribute to critical black artists during the Harlem Renaissance art movement, such as Augusta Savage, Jacob Lawrence, Aaron Douglas, and Lois Mailou Jones. Using Romare Bearden's collage techniques, Herendeen utilizes mixed media to print, paint, and digitally alter black and white images of Savage, Lawrence, Douglas, and Jones. Collecting black and white images, Herendeen printed, cut, and scanned the images of these influential black artists onto her computer, where she then used digital software to recreate a collage that directly pulled art elements from Bearden's work. Herendeen utilizes similar colors, collage techniques, and textured elements, in order to recreate Bearden's most powerful collage art work. Throughout the art process, Herendeen learned to appreciate the true, physical form of collaging that Bearden used throughout his collage work. She also enjoyed exploring the Harlem Renaissance and the artists that flourished during that time period. Herendeen demonstrates both an appreciation and a celebration of black artists during the Harlem Renaissance, recognizing their important, and lack of acknowledgment within the western art canon.