

Bearden & Company



The Rites of Spring, 1941, Gouache on Cardboard, 31 ½ x 48 in.

Thursday, February 27th through Saturday, April 11th, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York City – Bill Hodges Gallery is pleased to announce the inaugural exhibition *Bearden & Company* at our newest Chelsea location. The show will feature work by Romare Bearden (1911-1988), Edward Clark (1926-2019), Roy DeCarava (1919-2009), Sam Gilliam (1933), Norman Lewis (1909-1979), Al Loving (1935-2005), Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859-1937) and Charles Sebree (1914-1985); a selection of artists who have greatly contributed to the canon of African-American art history. This dynamic group show is not only a tribute to the artists and friends that first inspired Billy Hodges to open Bill Hodges Gallery in 1979 but it is the ushering in of a new decade of art; with hopes to rouse collectors, old and new, and to hearten a fresh generation of artists and art-enthusiasts.

Bearden & Company is the first in a series of regularly scheduled exhibitions highlighting established contemporary and modern artists who are African-American or of African descent. This show offers only a taste of the wealth of African-American art: collages, watercolors, photography, a textile art and even the historical *Prince Cinque*, 1976 banner by Romare Bearden, which was commissioned by the Hirshhorn Museum for 1976 Bicentennial.

Al Loving's hexagonal geometric abstraction painting *Untitled*, 1966-68 in conversation with Henry O. Tanner's *Moise Dans Les Joncs*, 1921 in the exhibition shows the matchless variety found within the gallery's collection. Additionally, one of the largest known Charles Sebree portraits, *Woman in White Turban*, 1939 (previously owned by the artist and philanthropist, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney) is paired thoughtfully in

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contrast with a rare monoprint by Romare Bearden, *Introduction for a Blues Queen (Uptown at Savoy)* from his 1979 *Jazz* series. This work is the original maquette used to print the entirety of the sequence, as documented en verso. *Bearden & Co.* features three additional works by the eponymous artist that detail his practice and capture some of his greatest overarching themes. *Prince Cinque*, 1976, *Sunset (Mysterious Woman)*, 1981 and *Saturday Evening*, 1975, are other works from the latter part of Bearden's career where he was almost exclusively making collages but the dramatic scale, selective pigmentation and quilting of various features, notably hands and a recurring green leaf-like motif, spark a similarity with those of his characters in *Rite of Spring*, 1941-42, made several decades before.

The show also features a pair of Norman Lewis paintings. Bill Hodges has been a diligent champion of Lewis' work and over the years he has gifted works to The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia and Clark Atlanta University. Similarly to Romare Bearden, who was Lewis' close friend and Spiral group co-founder, Norman Lewis experienced a dramatic evolution in his work. *Title Unknown*, 1945 is a vibrant, gridded portrait, reminiscent of cubism that marks a pivotal time in Lewis' career - his shift from a figurative artist into an abstractionist, with a focus on abstract expressionism, as shown in his work on paper *Untitled*, 1970.

In the spirit of color and abstraction, notable Washington color school artist Sam Gilliam is represented in *Bearden & Co.* by a massively majestic wall sculpture *Renaissance I*, 1975. Also shown is the similarly large and colorful *New York Ice Cream*, 2003 by Ed Clark. Clark and Gilliam, abstract artists known for their fervent use of vibrant colors and pioneers of the shaped canvas exemplify yet another dimension of the limitlessness of African American artists. With Edward Clark's passing in 2019, *Bearden & Co.* continues to celebrate Clark and his legacy alongside the incredible breadth of talent found in works of his friends, peers and fellow creatives.

For any queries or additional information, please contact info@billhodgesgallery.com

Bill Hodges Gallery is located at 529 W. 20th Street, suite #10E, between 10th Avenue and 11th Avenue. Our closest subway stations are 14th St. & 8th Ave. (A-C-E-L) and 23rd St. & 8th Ave. (C-E). The Gallery is open Tuesday to Friday 10am – 6pm and Saturday 12:30pm – 5:30pm. For more information or to arrange a private viewing, please contact Bill or Navindren Hodges at (212) 333-2640 or at info@billhodgesgallery.com

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