

Cunningham Creek Elementary
Meet the Artist

Bearden, Romare- Summertime & **Seurat, Georges-** Sunday on LA Grande Jatte



ARTIST: BEARDEN, ROMARE (1912-1988)

PRINT: *SUMMERTIME* 20th Century American

SHANOK COLLECTION Date: 1967

NEW YORK Size: 56" x 44"

Medium: Collage on Paper and Synthetic Polymer paint, on Composition Board

ARTIST - Romare Bearden was born in Charlotte, North Carolina and grew up in New York and Pittsburgh. He was educated at New York University, the Art Students' League and the Sorbonne in Paris. His art is the blending of his two passions - telling about the Black culture and giving his viewpoint using new and challenging art forms. Black artists who ignored their own feelings, circumstances and heritage in their work disturbed him. He wrote, "I am trying to find out what there is in me that is common to, or touches, other men." He explored many techniques to achieve his goals. At one point he limited his palette to black and white. Later he stopped painting realistically to study structure and form. He explored Cubism and Surrealism and the medium of collage. His success as an American artist is supported by the many honors and awards he has received, including five honorary Doctorates. He died from bone cancer.

PRINT - *Summertime* is done in a technique known as collage. The word collage comes from the French word 'coller' which means to glue or to paste. Bearden uses pieces of paper, photographs, cloth and other materials combined with painting to achieve his final work. In this collage, Bearden combines several images to show his feelings and experiences in the city during the summer. Figures and objects are treated as flat geometric shapes - taken apart and reassembled in the Cubist style. Notice the open windows with Black faces behind them and the two figures in the street area in the foreground. These images combined with the textures and patterns of the city add to give his unbalanced compositions a sense of balance.

PRINT: Sunday on LA Grande Jatte

Pointillism

Date: 1884, 1884/86

Size: 81 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 121 $\frac{1}{4}$ in

Medium: Oil on Canvas

ARTIST - Georges Seurat was born in Paris. When he was seventeen, he studied sculpture. Afterward, he was admitted to the École des Beaux-Arts to study painting. He received a very academic training that included copying the masters. Seurat became interested in scientific theories on the use and effects of color and light. After much study and application, he developed a specific color wheel based on the fragmentation of light. He worked out careful compositions that fused design and color. Seurat completed over four hundred drawings, six sketchbooks, and about sixty canvases. He died from a septic sore throat in 1891. His theories of construction influenced many future artists.

PRINT- In his best-known and largest painting, Georges Seurat depicted people relaxing in a suburban park on an island in the Seine River called La Grande Jatte. The artist worked on the painting in several campaigns, beginning in 1884 with a layer of small horizontal brushstrokes of complementary colors. He later added small dots, also in complementary colors, that appear as solid and luminous forms when seen from a distance.

Seurat's use of this highly systematic and "scientific" technique, subsequently called Pointillism, distinguished his art from the more intuitive approach to painting used by the Impressionists. Although Seurat embraced the subject matter of modern life preferred by artists such as Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, he went beyond their concern for capturing the accidental and instantaneous qualities of light in nature. Seurat sought to evoke permanence by recalling the art of the past, especially Egyptian and Greek sculpture and even Italian Renaissance frescoes. As he explained to the French poet Gustave Kahn, "The Panathenaeans of Phidias formed a procession. I want to make modern people, in their essential traits, move about as they do on those friezes, and place them on canvases organized by harmonies of color." Some contemporary critics, however, found his figures to be less a nod to earlier art history than a commentary on the posturing and artificiality of modern Parisian society. Seurat made the final changes to *La Grande Jatte* in 1889. He restretched the canvas in order to add a painted border of red, orange, and blue dots that provides a visual transition between the interior of the painting and his specially designed white frame.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is happening in each picture?
2. What do you think the weather is like in each picture? What time of year is it?
3. What do you think is the central idea in each picture? Explain.
4. What do you see in the summertime? How does that compare to these pictures?
5. Can you find different materials (photos, cloth) in Bearden's picture?
6. Can you find far away objects or people in one picture?
7. Can you find shapes in each picture?

RELATED ACTIVITIES

1. Draw a picture of yourself doing something you like to do in the summer. You may add other people, objects and details to your picture.
2. Find pictures in a magazine about something you like. Cut them out and paste them on your paper. Use paint to add some people or objects to your paper.