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**AFRICAN AMERICAN MASTER AT CAC --
COLLAGES & PRINTS BY ROMARE BEARDEN**

Douglasville, Georgia – The Cultural Arts Council of Douglasville/Douglas County presents 18 works on paper by master collagist Romare Bearden (1911-1988) from the permanent collection of Hammonds House Galleries and Resource Center in its annual Black History and Cultural Month exhibition, organized by the Douglas County Connection with the support of the Fulton County Arts Council. The exhibit opens Thursday, February 5th and will be on view through February 27th. The exhibition reception will be held on Saturday, February 7th, from 6 until 9 p.m. Kevin Sipp, Curator of Hammonds House Galleries and Resource Center, will present a gallery talk on Sunday, February 8th, at 3 p.m. Both events are free and open to the general public.

Born in Charlotte, North Carolina, and raised in New York City, Romare Bearden became one of the finest collagists of the 20th century and “the most distinguished black visual artist America has produced so far,” according to critic Robert Hughes. His family moved north at the height of the Harlem Renaissance, and he grew up surrounded by its leading artists, poets, writers and musicians. His mother was a prominent social activist, serving as the national treasurer of the Council of Negro Women. Bearden graduated from New York University in 1935 with a degree in mathematics and earned a master’s degree in social work from Columbia University. He was a social worker for the New York City Department of Social Services from 1952 until 1966 when he finally chose to concentrate on his painting and the visual arts. He married Nanette Rohan in 1954; she was his lifelong companion and they established a second household in her ancestral home of St. Martin during the early 1970s. A prolific artist, Bearden had many interests: he played professional baseball in Boston one summer, joined a jazz band, wrote some twenty songs including the famous Sea Breeze (recorded by Bill Epstein and Tito Puente), was a cartoonist for the Baltimore Afro American, designed sets for the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, and co-authoring several books about art including A History of African American Artists: From 1792 to the Present (written with Harry Henderson and published posthumously in 1991).

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BEARDEN/COLLAGES & PRINTS

Bearden actually began to paint in 1935, studying at the Art Students League with German artist George Grosz who encouraged him to incorporate political and social commentary in his paintings. After serving in the military during World War II, he returned to New York where he had three solo exhibits between 1945 and 1947 at the prestigious Samuel Kootz Gallery. During this period he began an intense study of Old Masters paintings and later through the GI Bill of Rights studied philosophy in Paris in 1950. Bearden achieved artistic success and found his direction as a mature artist when he set aside abstract oil painting and began to work in collage in 1964. The same year he was appointed the first art director of the Harlem Cultural Council. He was also elected to the American Academy of Design and to National Institute of Arts and Letters. His 1971 retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art acknowledged his artistic achievement and gave him widespread recognition. Bearden was active in the founding of the Studio Museum in Harlem and with artists Norman Lewis and Ernest Crichlow he founded Cinque Gallery to support younger minority artists. Bearden received the National Medal of Arts from President Ronald Reagan in 1987, one year before his death in 1988.

The works on display at the Cultural Arts Center in Douglasville – lithographs, watercolors, collages and serigraphs -- date from the late seventies when they were acquired by the late O.T. Hammonds, Atlanta...trade;s most well known African American art collector whose home in the West End now houses the collection, which is owned by the Fulton County Arts Council. Several are inscribed to Dr. Hammonds from the artist. Among the highlights of Romare Bearden...trade;s pieces in the exhibition are five serigraphs from his Odyssey series, which explores the universality of Homer...trade;s epic poem by quoting Egyptian mythology and North African sculptural motifs, while referencing Cubist techniques, in particular Matisse...trade;s cut-outs and collages, as well as Italian Renaissance compositions. One untitled print was inspired by dancer Judith Jameson; others, like the lithographs Quilting Time, Girl in the Garden and Country Cousins, are informed by Bearden...trade;s charming observances of rural life. All remain fresh and topical, although none perhaps as clearly as his poster, Brown vs. Board of Education, in the 50th anniversary year of that judicial decision.

The mission of the Cultural Arts Council of Douglasville/Douglas County is to nurture, guide and stimulate the enjoyment of and participation in the arts among Douglas County residents by providing an atmosphere conducive to the arts, broadening the spectrum of quality exhibits and performances available to the community, and fostering individual interactions with the arts through a wide range of satellite groups. The Cultural Arts Council and its exhibitions at the Cultural Arts Center are supported in part by the City of Douglasville, the Douglas County Commission, and the Georgia Council for the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Cultural Arts Council of Douglasville/Douglas County is located at 8652 Campbellton Street in historic downtown Douglasville, Georgia. Hours of operation are Mondays through Fridays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sundays, 1 until 5 p.m. For directions and more information, please contact the Cultural Arts Council at 770/949-2787.