



Cite this article: Jacqueline Francis, “Romare Bearden’s *Mauritius* (1969): Wars, Nations, and Everything Else,” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2018), <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1630>.

Romare Bearden’s Mauritius (1969): Wars, Nations, and Everything Else

Jacqueline Francis, Associate Professor, Graduate Program in Visual and Critical Studies, California College of the Arts



Fig. 1. Romare Bearden, *Mauritius*, 1969. Various woods, paint, stain, nails, screws, and staples, 19 7/16 x 18 x 18 in. Image courtesy of Department of Image Collections, National Gallery of Art Library Washington, DC. Art ©Romare Bearden Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Current whereabouts unknown

In 1969, Romare Bearden (1911–1988) participated in *Blocked Metaphors*, a group exhibition mounted at the New York gallery Cordier & Ekstrom.¹ Like the other invited artists, Bearden was given a hat block with which to work; this millinery industry form was the basis for each project made for *Blocked Metaphors*. Bearden set his wooden hat block precariously atop a few staging elements: a painted blue cube measuring almost a foot in height and a couple of placemat-shaped pieces of wood. He titled the construction *Mauritius* (fig.1), which undoubtedly referenced the saint represented in Christian iconography. Considering the era of its making—the decade of the Vietnam War and resistance to it in many national capitals, anti-government protests across the globe, and both nonviolent and armed uprisings against institutional discrimination and social inequity—*Mauritius* provokes questions about human conflicts, their histories, and their costs. Yet the assemblage offers no answers. Instead, it exists as an austere statement of abstract figural forms—some dramatically simplified, others emphatically exaggerated, and all creatively brought together in a manner that announces

that it is made of parts that do not entirely comprise a whole. This essay takes on the structure of collage, too. It consists of juxtaposed parts, including the reported facts about the *Blocked Metaphors* exhibition and the suppositions generated by the title and form of *Mauritius*, a project about which we have found no commentary from the artist, and whose current ownership is unknown.

Twenty-five artists exhibited in *Blocked Metaphors*, a showing of contemporary art. Cordier & Ekstrom was known for its support of School of Paris modernists and of artists whose

careers took off after World War II. To wit, Bearden’s watercolor and ink drawing *He is Arisen* (1945) was acquired by The Museum of Modern Art in the year of its making, and Bearden secured gallery representation with Kootz Gallery during that decade as well. Still, *Blocked Metaphors* participants include artists—senior and junior to Bearden—with higher profiles: Arman, William Copley, Nancy Grossman, Robert Indiana, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Richard Lindner, Man Ray, Marisol, Louise Nevelson, Alphonso Ossorio, James Rosenquist, Saul Steinberg, and Andy Warhol. In 1969, Bearden would have been seen as a reemerging artist, one who resurrected his career earlier in the decade. He did so in part with the collages and photomontages that he exhibited in group exhibitions, those that he curated of black artists’ work and those organized by venues such as Cordier & Ekstrom, which generally showed the work of white male artists of European descent. Arne Ekstrom and his business partner, Daniel Cordier, a Paris-based gallerist, also backed younger talent who, unlike those listed above, are nearly forgotten figures today. Their names are not represented in current art history surveys and accounts of New York avant-gardism in the 1960s. Among them are the abstract painters Alfred Jensen and Regina Bogat, who were husband and wife; assemblage and mixed-media artists Varujan Boghosian and Suki Sivilax; Pop artist Nicholas Krushenick; and realist illustrators, graphic designers, and printmakers Martin Carey, Cliff Condak, Peter Dechar, and Bernard Pfriem. The *Blocked Metaphor* roster is a testament to the Cordier & Ekstrom mission of engaging different generations of transatlantic twentieth-century artists who were developing fresh, postmodernist practices.

Bearden was one of them. He first met Cordier, and then his business partner Michael Warren, in November 1959. Two months later, they gave Bearden a solo exhibition at New York’s Michael Warren Gallery, featuring his large abstract paintings. By 1961, Bearden had come to an agreement with the newly formed gallery of Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc. Enthusiastic about the small collages Bearden was making, Ekstrom encouraged him to make photostatic enlargements of them. In 1964 these works, called “Projections,” were shown in a Bearden exhibition bearing this title at Cordier & Ekstrom, and it brought great attention to his unique practice: modernist collage put in the service of postmodern figuration of mostly people of African descent, contemporary and of a *volkisch* past, in urban and rural settings. Prior to the opening of *Projections*, Ekstrom, impressed by the work’s power, had started planning to send the show to Europe.² While this tour never came to pass, its ideation is a good illustration of the Cordier & Ekstrom vision for marketing their artists’ works.

Journalists viewed Cordier & Ekstrom as a place where such distinctively idiosyncratic experimentation was regularly on display. In the *New York Times*, Grace Glueck launched a glowing feature on *Blocked Metaphors* with a caveat: “It’s not given to everyone to spot the art potential in hat blocks. . . . But dealer Arne Ekstrom has long admired them as sculpture in-the-raw. *Et voila!* . . . a bang-up extravaganza starring a hat block flock.”³ *Financial Times* writer Don McDonagh started his column with a compliment, too: “If you have hundred spare hatmakers’ blocks on hand and happen to be a gallery owner besides, the most logical thing to do is ask artists you know to make something worthwhile out of it.”⁴ McDonagh added: “In New York’s super-heated and gimmick-laden world of artistic wheeling and dealing, Ekstrom’s idea was one of the few in recent seasons which brought out the imaginative best in some of the artists and not merely a reflex and bored response.”⁵ As McDonagh had, John Canaday of the *New York Times* took a swipe at the trends of the city galleries, and yet he concluded his evaluation with undisguised admiration for Ekstrom:

"Art dealers, for reasons I have never wasted any time wondering about, never ask me for advice. It seems they are right. . . . How lucky Mr. Ekstrom was in an idea that could have gone so wrong. . . . The show might be described as a serious stunt. Whatever it is, it is both highly entertaining and esthetically rewarding."⁶ An unnamed critic for *New York Magazine* similarly deemed the exhibition superb and credited its theme to Ekstrom, stating that he had been inspired by Ossorio's collection of wooden hat blocks from France.⁷ The *Time* magazine journalist agreed that Ossorio was the provider of the hat blocks and offered that Pfriem had worked with them before. Still, here as well, Ekstrom was the one with the "notion."⁸



Fig. 2. Page 3 from the *Financial Times*, Feb. 27, 1970, illustrated by Romare Bearden's *Mauritius* (1969) in the review, "Hats Off—New York Art" by Don McDonagh

There was another consistency among these interpretations of *Blocked Metaphors*: the works the press called out into discussion. The *New York Magazine* list is a roll call long and short on details: in it, the output of Arman, Boghosian, Carey, Copley, Grossman, Indiana, Jensen, Johns, Krushenick, Lichtenstein, Lindner, Man Ray, Ossorio, and Steinberg were “fabulous.” In contrast, Man Ray’s *L’Imposteur*, with its mortarboard and sunglasses, was reproduced in two publications and noted for its send-up of the blockheaded intellectual. Reviews also cited the contributions of Johns, Steinberg, and Warhol, and the mention of the asking prices—\$9,000, \$5,000, and five cents, respectively—which demonstrated the authors’ incredulity about the market for assemblage, a format that they so clearly believed was not as skillfully wrought as the best in conventional painting and sculpture. Perhaps too racy for *Time*’s middle-class national audience, Grossman’s work was one the newspaper journalists took pains to describe. For Glueck, it was “a needle-toothed monster” and Canaday called it “a sinister mask.” McDonagh’s assessment was more vivid: “Nancy Grossman, who normally works with leather helmets fitted on to plaster busts, inserted a glowering set of animal’s teeth in the front of her mask-enclosed block to create a wolfish motorcyclist.”⁹ The *New York Magazine* comment was similarly designed to this artist’s provocative practice: “Grossman, best known for her heads swathed in black leather with bikers’ chains and grommets, took two blocks and combined them into her snarling *Tasmanian Meanmouth*.”¹⁰ This written appraisal was accompanied by Alix Jaffrey’s photograph of Grossman’s assemblage and three more from *Blocked Metaphors*, identified by captions: Carey’s *Owl’s Head*, Man Ray’s *L’Imposteur*, and one identified as “the pure hat block” that was featured in the show as a didactic example of the archetypal form. Canaday proposed that the last work—“unadorned and unchanged” from its purposeful state, was the best, for it looked “very much like a Brancusi.”¹¹ It was the sole illustration for the *Times* review, and Ossorio posed with it and two other hat blocks for the *Time* feature.

Bearden earned a single mention in the contemporaneous response to *Blocked Metaphors*, and it was from McDonagh, who lumped *Mauritius* in with Johns’s untitled work because of their similar form: “The helmet motif suggested itself to Jasper Johns who encrusted his block with a dull sculptmetal [*sic*] finish and Romare Bearden placed his black-painted head on an open plain of yellow-painted wood.”¹² And though for McDonagh “the unquestioned star of the show was a motorcyclist by Suki Sivilax,” *Mauritius* was the only illustration for his full-page review, and it took up more than a third of the space (fig. 2). It was a curious choice by the *Financial Times* editors, to reproduce this colorful work on the broadsheet newspaper’s signature salmon pink pages.

Color, most evidently, is a critical visual element of *Mauritius*. Its browns and tans are natural and naturalistic shades associated not only with the organic material of wood and the application of stain to it, but also the skin tones of tanned bodies and people of color. Bearden’s other chromatic decisions are the choices of a figural abstractionist. Yellow complements blue and simultaneously forges an analogous color relationship with the wedge-like nose and horizontal slit that signifies a mouth. The ultramarine cube acts like the trunk and legs of a standing body. The *Financial Times* photograph of *Mauritius*, probably taken at the *Blocked Metaphors* exhibition, shows that the blue cube was positioned on a pedestal, making the assemblage insistently vertical. Even so, the blue hue of *Mauritius* pulls and pushes our perceptions in different directions. The cool color of the block—a heavy and unmoving form—makes the overall work appear to recede and move away from the observer, like ebbing and flowing tides.

Blue was a fount of symbols and associations that Bearden knew and likely sought to invoke. During Bearden’s lifetime, the French painter Yves Klein strategically used monochrome blue in paintings, sculptures, and performances, developing what he named International Klein Blue. Bearden might have seen Klein’s work in France, which he visited several times, including in 1961—the height of the French artist’s career. Bearden also may have seen Klein’s work in New York, where black Trinidadian curator Kynaston McShine organized the critically acclaimed retrospective *Yves Klein* at The Jewish Museum in 1967. Rhetorically high-minded in the pursuit of immateriality and utopianism, Klein’s ambitions also were expressed with irreverence—a tenor Bearden’s never strike—and they were meant to question the value and uniqueness of the art object, interrogations that Bearden never articulated. Instead, Bearden’s *Mauritius* and the majority of his mature paintings, collages, and prints are utterly sincere. Figurative and abstract, Bearden’s work—in image and in title—are tied to what he believed were universal narratives and human experience. Therefore, the blue in *Mauritius* may reference not only Klein’s project but also the portrayal of the Virgin Mary. The figure of Mary is rendered in blue garments in Bearden’s painting *The Visitation* (1941; Museum of Modern Art): Bearden followed the traditional depiction, established during the Italian Renaissance, and the conveyed association with purity, peace, humility, and calm. Blue has been used to signify divinity and celestial space in Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic art traditions. Since the mid-twentieth century, Americans have read blue as the color of masculinity, a connection that Bearden likely hoped audiences would make. A more arcane matter, but probably known to Bearden, was that blue pigment was manufactured in the ancient world by the Egyptian forebears of Maurice.

Bearden’s decisions about shapes and lines also configure the body and attributes of the warrior Maurice. The bright yellow triangle suggests the spear tip and the arrow head, and the pointy outline of the medieval European kite and heater shields all often represented attributes in paintings and statues of St. Maurice. In *Mauritius*, the strong contour lines of the hat block are reminiscent of the outsized human heads presented in Bearden’s expressionistic paintings and drawings of the late 1930s and 1940s, among them *He Is Arisen* (1945; Museum of Modern Art) and *The Visitation*. Bearden’s strategy of deconstructing heads and hands was prominent in his breakthrough mixed-media works of the 1960s, such as *Prevalence of Ritual: Baptism* (1964; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution) and *Conjur Woman* (1964; Museum of Modern Art). Hands are expressive features in *Mauritius*, just as they are in Bearden’s prints, paintings, and murals.¹³ In this 1969 assemblage, hands are rendered flatly. Bluntly hewn and lath-like, they are firmly affixed to the board on which the hat block directly sits and are weighted down by it—a much heavier and darker form. That Bearden juxtaposed the cephalic hat block with these strange hands, situating the former at the vertex of the latter, is of course provocative. Nothing lays between the hands—instruments and receptors—and the head, where the brain directs the body. What do these hands, splayed in a “V” shape, mean to do? Do they to point back to the “Double V” campaign of 1942 to 1943, launched by the African American weekly newspaper *Pittsburgh Courier* to demand two victories—the Allied forces in World War II and anti-racist and civil rights campaigners in the American armed forces and on US soil?¹⁴ Do they communicate either victory or surrender, signs that would be broadly apropos to the subject of war and conflict, events of the 1960s and the past—distant and ancient—including that of the martyr Maurice?

The legendary Roman soldier from Thebes, Egypt—known variably as Maurice, Mauritius, Moritz, Morris, and the Coptic Greek name *Maurikos*—was said to have been martyred for his Christian faith in the third century in the Upper Rhone Valley of present-day Switzerland. Starting in the sixth century, Catholics on the European continent celebrated him in poems, psalms, and sacraments. Subsequently, during Europe’s Middle Ages, a broader cult of Maurice blossomed on the continent. There, he was venerated in hundreds of Christian churches and altars and recognized by numerous chivalric orders and towns that bear his name, such as Switzerland’s St. Moritz.¹⁵ In the tenth century, the Holy Roman Empire beatified him: he is the patron saint of fighting men.¹⁶ Medievalist Jean Devisse has pointed out that St. Maurice’s iconography was “‘white’ until the mid-thirteenth century.”¹⁷ The heyday of the black St. Maurice was 1490 to 1530, according to architectural historian Dorothy Gillerman; afterward, black portrayals of Maurice diminish in number and then disappeared, for “once again . . . the color black had become associated with spiritual darkness and cultural ‘otherness.’”¹⁸ Maurice was not a typical patron of twentieth-century or contemporary African American Catholics: these congregations more often pay homage to St. Augustine and St. Monica (both of African descent), St. Benedict the Moor (of African and Sicilian descent), St. Martin de Porres (a mixed-race person born in Lima, Peru), and St. Peter Claver (Spain).¹⁹



Fig.3. Statue of St. Maurice, c. 1240–50. Sandstone, 43 11/16 in. high (fragment). Magdeburg Cathedral of St. Maurice and St. Catherine, choir, Magdeburg, Germany. Image: Hickey & Robertson, Houston/The Menil Foundation

The best-known monument to St. Maurice rendered as a person of African descent is the eponymous statue of a chain mail-wearing knight (c. 1240–50) installed in the choir of the Cathedral of St. Maurice and St. Catherine of Alexandria in Magdeburg, Germany (fig. 3). More than twice as tall as *Mauritius*, the Magdeburg Maurice is 43 11/16 inches in height. Over the centuries, it has suffered noticeable losses: its sandstone medium is abraded; paint has worn away in many places; portions of the nose have been chipped off; and absent are the legs on which the figure once stood, as well as the object implement it once held in its right hand. In a reduced state, the Magdeburg figure is drawn into an interesting conversation with Bearden’s *Mauritius*, which is a stark collection of juxtaposed elements.

Did Bearden know the Magdeburg Maurice? It does not seem that he traveled to its German location. Yet he surely saw reproduced images of this famed knight and perhaps actual statues and paintings of him.²⁰ Bearden was a bookish student of art histories from a number of world traditions; he was

curious about all representations of black people and would have likely fixed upon the Magdeburg Maurice as compelling. Moreover, in the 1960s, the politically active Bearden, an artist-activist if there ever was one, had to have been musing about war, sacrifice, and death across eras and spaces.²¹

Earlier in his career, Bearden had investigated the subject of war through prose. Among his papers were unpublished manuscripts—a short story and a radio play—written after 1941 about the immediate effects of World War II on societies. Bearden joined the army in 1942 and served three years in stateside bases in New Jersey, Alaska, Kentucky, Arizona, and Massachusetts. While he never fought on the battlefield, the grim tenor of these texts indicate that Bearden was thinking about the manifestation of post-traumatic stress disorder among servicemen and the way they engaged with civilians while on furlough or after being discharged.²² Religious beliefs are questioned, and perhaps the characters’ dialogues mirror Bearden’s own spiritual journey during the war and its aftermath. Certainly, there is documentation of Bearden’s baptism in an African American Episcopal Church in North Carolina in 1911; there are numerous images that reference Christian icons and events and his research into African and African diaspora religions and rituals. Yet there is no evidence that Bearden regularly worshipped in any churches or identified with a particular denomination.²³

Similarly, while there is no indication that Bearden opposed the Vietnam War and America’s entrenchment in it, he had to have been aware of the anti-war sentiment across the world. Both the conflict and the demonstrations against it were the subject of nightly television newscasts. In a widely covered speech in New York City at Riverside Church in 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. joined those who were denouncing the war: he deemed it an imperial and immoral onslaught against Vietnam’s poor and its human right of sovereignty, and he decried the US policy of disproportionately drafting America’s poor and people of color to wage the battle.²⁴ By the late 1960s, the human and economic costs of the Vietnam War were apparent to most people, and servicemen’s dissent and discontent could be heard as well, by anyone paying attention.²⁵ In September of 1969, *Time* magazine published “Black Power in Viet Nam,” a title that evoked the rallying cry of black American activists articulating pride, self-determination, and independence.²⁶ Bearden is believed to have been a regular *Time* reader; he certainly knew the magazine’s import to American culture, having been commissioned to create a cover image for it in 1968.²⁷

Political protest was a dominant strain of Bearden’s early work—panels and covers for black American weekly newspapers and monthly magazines in the 1930s—and occasionally in late-career, large-format projects such as *Berkeley—The City and Its People* (1973; City of Berkeley, California) and *Captivity and Resistance* (1976; African American Museum of Philadelphia), which offered passages of a student rally (as a photo collage element) and identifiable revolutionary figures such as Joseph Cinqué, John Brown, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Tubman, respectively.²⁸ At a time when such imagery was being produced by his peers and by emergent political groups such as the Black Panthers and the Free Speech Movement, Bearden eschewed explicit signification.²⁹ For *Mauritius*, his tack was oblique—its title was tied to a historical figure, and its form, arguably, to every fighting man—black and nonblack, of Bearden’s time and of all time. Constructed of materials felicitously given and found, *Mauritius* was imbued with the spirit of collaboration, creative association, and individual innovation provided by the platform of Cordier & Ekstrom’s exhibition *Blocked Metaphors*. As that exhibition title proclaims, literal readings were meant to be frustrated.

Coda

Contemporary artist Stan Squirewell (b. 1978), in his own words, “looks for images of blackness everywhere in the world.”³⁰ He photographs exhibited objects and pictures that he encounters during his visits to museums across the world and subsequently reorganizes these discrete parts into collages. As Bearden was, Squirewell was inspired by the legend of St. Maurice. Squirewell’s *Maurice the Saint* is a photo of Francis Harwood’s recognizable *Bust of a Man* (1758; The J. Paul Getty Museum), a black stone sculpture. In Squirewell’s composition, the figure’s head is seen in three-quarter profile and its left shoulder is exposed; sturdy medieval armor covers only part of the man’s trunk. Not only is the armored suit incomplete, but so is the warrior’s body below the beltline. Yet this muscular warrior is not entirely vulnerable. He is a formidable relic of past representation with relevance for the present, resurrected by Squirewell, interested as he is in presenting a virtuous and inspiring black masculinity.



Fig. 4. Stan Squirewell, *Maurice the Saint*, 2017. Scorched pigment print, 14 x 20 in. Courtesy of the artist

Therein lies the subtle difference between Bearden’s *Mauritius* and Squirewell’s *Maurice the Saint*. While both are fragmented forms, Squirewell’s naturalistically rendered figure holds the potential of becoming visibly whole and complete—like a computer graphic rendering—in way that Bearden’s *Mauritius* does not. Stubbornly object-like, Bearden’s assemblage, while named for a historical figure, is distanced from that flesh-and-blood person. Speaking about his paintings, Bearden once wrote “In my work, if anything I see connections, so that my paintings can’t be only what they appear to represent.”³¹ Extending that premise about painting to the sculptural *Mauritius*, we might conclude that in this project, he sought to make connections rather than delineations. *Mauritius*, unquestionably, is about something, and if we allow it to be, it can be about something else as well.

Notes

This essay is dedicated to art historian Helen M. Shannon, PhD (1948–2018).

¹ This source of inspiration for this essay was Ruth Fine, “The Spaces Between,” in Ruth E. Fine et al., *The Art of Romare Bearden*, exh. cat. (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art in association with Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 4–137, 252–62. *Mauritius* is discussed in Fine’s sweeping and informative consideration of the artist’s career, and there is a full-page reproduction of the work on page 81 (fig. 77). *Mauritius* was featured in the National Gallery of Art’s related exhibition, *The Art of Romare Bearden*, which traveled to four venues during 2004–2005. April Kingsley documented *Mauritius*—in “Chronology,” in Carroll Greene, *Romare Bearden: The Prevalence of Ritual*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971), 13—as “his only sculpture.” I started research on this project in 2011

-
- when I presented a lecture, “Romare Bearden’s *Mauritius*,” at the Arthur M. Sackler Museum at Harvard University. See Jennifer Doody, “An Artist Who Disrupted Convention,” *Harvard Gazette*, November 3, 2011, at: <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/11/an-artist-who-disrupted-convention>.
- ² Arne Ekstrom to Darthea Speyer, September 25, 1964, as quoted in Fine, “The Spaces Between,” 41.
- ³ “Art Notes: The Cast is a Flock of Hat Blocks,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1969, section D, 35.
- ⁴ Don McDonagh, “Hats Off!—New York Art,” *Financial Times*, February 27, 1970, 3.
- ⁵ McDonagh, “Hats Off!—New York Art,” 3.
- ⁶ John Canaday, “Art: Hats Off to ‘Blocked Metaphors!’ 52 Artists’ Treatment of Same Object Shown,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1969, 39. The number in the subtitle is a typographical error.
- ⁷ “Head Art,” *New York Magazine* 2, no. 48 (December 1, 1969): 56.
- ⁸ “Art: Old Hat No More,” *Time* 94, no. 25 (December 19, 1969): 48.
- ⁹ McDonagh, “Hats Off!—New York Art,” 3.
- ¹⁰ “Head Art,” 56.
- ¹¹ Canaday, “Art: Hats Off to ‘Blocked Metaphors!’ 52 Artists’ Treatment of Same Object Shown,” 39.
- ¹² McDonagh, “Hats Off!—New York Art,” 3.
- ¹³ See Jacqueline Francis, “Bearden’s Hands,” in *Romare Bearden: American Modernist*, exh. cat., ed. Ruth Fine and Jacqueline Francis (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art in association with Yale University Press, 2011), 119–42.
- ¹⁴ I thank Makeda Best for reminding me about the “Double V” campaign. See “Double V Campaign,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 7, 1942, 1. *Pittsburgh Courier* editors scripted this statement, inspired by a January 31, 1942, letter whose author proposed: “I suggest that while we keep defense and victory in the forefront that we don’t lose sight of our fight for true democracy at home. . . . Let we colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory.” Quoted in Pat Washburn, “The *Pittsburgh Courier*’s Double V Campaign in 1942,” *American Journalism* 3, no. 2 (1986): 73. Bearden and his mother, journalist Bessye J. Bearden, were regular contributors to the *Pittsburgh Courier*.
- ¹⁵ The naming history of Mauritius, the Indian Ocean nation-state, differs from the Maurice hagiography. In 1598, Dutch sailors landed on the island and named it after the Dutch Federation Prince Maurice of Nassau. Still, it is intriguing that *Mauritius* was Bearden’s chosen title for the Cordier & Ekstrom commission.
- ¹⁶ According to Jean Devisse, Maurice was not “a people’s saint but a companion of those in power.” Devisse, “A Sanctified Black: Maurice,” trans. William Granger Ryan, in *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the Early Christian Era to the “Age of Discovery,” Volume 2, Part 1: From the Demonic Threat to the Incarnation of Sainthood*, ed. David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., new edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 148.
- ¹⁷ Devisse, “A Sanctified Black,” 150. The quotation marks around “white” are mine. Devisse fails to problematize the invention of that designation in the European Middle Ages. On the rise of the representation of the white European male on the continent, see Madeline Caviness, “From the Self-Invention of the Whiteman in the Thirteenth Century to *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*,” *Different Visions: A Journal of New Perspectives on Medieval Art* 1 (September 2008): 1–33.

-
- ¹⁸ Dorothy Gillerman, review of *Mauritius: Der heilige Mohr/The Black Saint Maurice*, by Gude Suckale-Redlefsen, with the collaboration of Robert Suckale, trans. foreword and introduction, Genoveva Nitz, (1988), *Speculum* 65, no. 3 (July 1990): 764.
- ¹⁹ Cecilia Moore to the author, May 24, 2017. I thank Professor Moore, a religious studies scholar at the University of Dayton, for her insight about the devotional figures of note for twentieth-century African American Catholics.
- ²⁰ El Greco's *The Martyrdom of Saint Maurice* (1580; Chapter House, Monasterio de San Lorenzo, El Escorial) was reproduced in the popular *New International Encyclopedia of Art* (New York: Greystone Press, 1968), 2042. In this painting, the saint is not depicted as a man of African descent. However, as is the case in Bearden's *Mauritius*, blue and yellow are important hues in the composition: El Greco presents the saint's dress as blue, red, and green, and in the foreground are members of the Roman Theban Legion wearing yellow and blue.
- ²¹ In *Time*, the unnamed writer mentions that Martin Carey's *Owl's Head* reminded its maker of both an owl and "a soldier's helmet." See "Art: Old Hat No More," 48.
- ²² Jacqueline Francis, "Reading Bearden," in Fine et al., *The Art of Romare Bearden*, 177.
- ²³ Rocío Aranda-Alvarado and Sarah Kennel, with Carmenita Higginbotham, "Romare Bearden: A Chronology," in Fine et al., *The Art of Romare Bearden*, 214–47.
- ²⁴ Benjamin Hedin, "Martin Luther King Jr.'s Searing Speech, Fifty Years Later," *New Yorker*, April 3, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/martin-luther-king-jr-s-searing-antiwar-speech-fifty-years-later>.
- ²⁵ James Maycock, "War Within War," *The Guardian*, September 14, 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2001/sep/15/weekend7.weekend3>.
- ²⁶ "Black Power in Viet Nam," *Time* 94, no. 12 (September 19, 1969): 24.
- ²⁷ Emily Hage, "Reconfiguring Race, Recontextualizing the Media: Romare Bearden's 1968 *Fortune* and *Time* Covers," *Art Journal* 75, no. 3 (July 2016): 36–51.
- ²⁸ Lauren Kroiz, "Relocating Romare Bearden's Berkeley," *Boom* 6, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 50. Also see Fine et al., *The Art of Romare Bearden*, 83.
- ²⁹ I thank the anonymous reader of this manuscript who suggested that *Mauritius* should be compared to Betye Saar's early works which in different ways—sometimes subtly, other times explicitly—invoke the culture and politics of American racialization and racism. The reader rightly mentions the more direct address to these histories in Edward Kienholz, *It Takes Two to Integrate* (1961; Collection of David R. Packer and M. Bernadette Castor, Portola Valley, California) and David Hammons, *The Door* (1969; California African American Museum, Los Angeles).
- ³⁰ Stan Squirewell to the author, January 2, 2017.
- ³¹ Romare Bearden to Mary Schmidt Campbell, September 22, 1973, quoted in Fine, "The Spaces Between," 33.