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came increasingly to rely on the West Indies Federation as a bulwark against Communism. As Parker points out: "Washington, for its part, integrated the WIF into its security plans. Besides bolstering the hemisphere perimeter, the WIF also made a statement to the Third World: that the West could be treated to sponsor 'progressive' decolonization" (p. 118). However, the West Indies Federation collapsed soon after its establishment, carrying with its demise the American hopes of creating a "counter-model" for regional progress.

This volume is a model of meticulous and insightful scholarship. It is a major addition to the historical literature on decolonization, on the British Caribbean and on U.S. foreign policy in general.

### References

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**Sally Price and Richard Price. 2006. *Romare Bearden: The Caribbean Dimension*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 189 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8122-3948-5.**

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*Romare Bearden: The Caribbean Dimension* is a handsome art publication in big format that straddles fields of study such as cultural criticism, art history and anthropology. In a concise preface, the distinguished team of Caribbean scholars Sally Price and Richard Price state their intentions. First, to introduce to a larger audience a group of little known watercolors created in the Caribbean by American artist Romare Bearden, (1911-1988), and to present the context in which they were produced. Secondly, to propose that Bearden's Caribbean artistic output, from 1973 until his death in 1988, spearheads a transformation that grants a new critical assessment of his later production regardless of its medium, where it was created or the audience it was intended for.

Bearden's work, rooted within the modernist tradition and the

African American heritage—of both, the rural south and Harlem—has received well deserved recognition since the 1970s. He had retrospectives at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, (1971), the Mint Museum of Art in North Carolina, (1980), and the Detroit Institute of the Arts, (1986), as well as posthumous retrospectives at The Studio Museum in Harlem (1991), and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC (2003). In October of 2010, a national touring exhibition of his work will open at the Mint Museum sponsored by the National Endowment of the Arts that granted the project one of only five American Masterpieces Grants awarded to museums nationwide in 2010.

Such recognition notwithstanding, the Prices find, in reviewing Bearden's bibliography, that there is a void in scholarship regarding the aspect of the artist's production that is the subject of this book. Why this blind spot? They put forward two convincing reasons. Although unfounded, there is a perception that watercolor is a facile medium and a minor genre within the Fine Arts. Keenly aware of cultural hierarchies, they also cite the apathy in the United States for the art produced in the Caribbean. They describe such pattern as the "American difficulty with accepting the Caribbean as a site of serious culture" (p. 16).

The well honed team of anthropologists is up for the challenge to fill the void. The main focus of their research and publications for over 35 years has been the Caribbean region, where they continue to live and work for the better part of each year. Their proficiency as researchers and writers, their knowledge of the cultures in the area and their professional and personal connections in the islands are formidable. Just as powerful is the couples' passion for the subject at hand.

Generous access to the holdings of the Romare Bearden Foundation granted the authors a splendid variety and wealth of sources. These, which are meticulously listed in their notes, include: artwork, correspondence, journal notations, tape-recorded interviews, texts authored by Bearden and art historical studies. In addition, they conducted interviews with many of Bearden's friends, associates and collectors in St. Martin and the United States.

With their usual skill, the writers bring into play a great many sources throughout the book. These are employed very effectively to anchor the first two chapters, "Romare Bearden: A Life in Art" and "A painter's Mind." In these chapters they lay out the groundwork for several lines of discussion that re-emerge throughout the book. There is an attempt to understand and describe this artist's creative process which was far from naive. Bearden was an intellectual who lived through the Harlem Renaissance, received a college education, attended art schools and traveled to Paris, the first time, with the GI Bill in 1950. He co-authored *The Painter's Mind: A Study of the Relations of Structure and Space in Painting*

(1969), an erudite book on the techniques of painting that embraces areas as diverse and complex as Byzantine and Renaissance art, Dutch and Chinese painting, Cubism and Abstraction.

The following chapters, the Prices devote to the analysis of the Caribbean watercolors in their context and to comparisons with other media within Bearden's oeuvre such as painting and collage. They incorporate sound art historical research cannons. The authors became familiar with the extensive bibliography on Bearden, they consulted specialists on the subject and they scrutinized the artwork to look for evidence to support their contention that the artist's Caribbean production has a significant effect on his final creative output as a whole. They argue well by underscoring the similarities among his later works and the Caribbean watercolors. They carry this out by using over 150 excellent illustrations, primarily in color. No doubt the authors accomplish what they set out to do with this publication.

As they have often done, the Prices use a narrower topic to consider questions larger in scope. Two of the final chapters, "Going to the Edge: Rituals of the Obeah" and "Don't stop the Carnival," are devoted to Bearden's representations of important ceremonial aspects of the African diaspora in the Caribbean. They take advantage of some of the same sources and other informants to examine these two ritualistic traditions bringing to bear pertinent aspects of European mythologies. They add valuable insights to the discussion on the essential role of the spiritual and the celebratory in Afro-Caribbean continuance.

*Romare Bearden: The Caribbean Dimension* also offers a glimpse at an intellectual and artistic milieu that is rarely represented – that of African American and Afro-Caribbean art historians, scholars, artists, musicians, writers, intellectuals, gallery owners, museum directors and collectors. The Prices broach issues such as the complex role of an African American intellectual/artist, the abundance and significance of African American and Afro-Caribbean sources and the hierarchical structures and racism that pervade cultural production. It is refreshing when the deviate from Standard English whether using other variations themselves or citing from Bearden's close friend and intellectual partner Albert Murray or from Nobel Prize writer Derek Walcott.

The Prices quote most extensively from Romare Bearden himself. In the preface they introduce a segment from an interview that explains the artist's vital relationship with the Caribbean: "Art will go where energy is. I find a great deal of energy in the Caribbean... It's like a volcano there, there is something underneath that still smothers." Without question, it is the "smothering underneath" (p. 16) that stirs Sally Price and Richard Price to continue to produce fine scholarship on the Caribbean as a region.