

ROMARE BEARDEN'S THE PEPPER JELLY LADY AT PBMA

Palm Beach Modern Auctions is honored to present an original collage by Romare Bearden, in the November 15 Modern and Contemporary Art and Design auction.

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“

Bearden's message celebrating community and dignity resonates as strongly today as it did in his lifetime. This is the kind of artwork that belongs in a museum or a major private collection.”

Rico Baca

[Modern Auctions](#) is honored to present a rare and important original collage by [Romare Bearden](#), "The Pepper Jelly Lady," the handmade work that the artist himself used to create his celebrated 1980 lithograph. The collage will be offered in PBMA's November 15 Modern and Contemporary Art and Design auction.

Bearden remains one of the most influential American artists of the 20th century. His work, rooted in storytelling, community, and the Black experience, feels especially relevant today as our culture continues to examine identity, history, and the narratives that shape us. His

collages, vibrant and layered, drawn from everyday life, speak to resilience, dignity, and the humanity found in ordinary moments.

The original collage, "The Pepper Jelly Lady" collage, is exceptionally rare. Few of Bearden's hand-worked collages that directly led to print editions remain in private hands, and even fewer come to market. This example comes from the prominent South Florida collection of Dr. Lawrence and Joy Silverstein, who acquired several works directly from Bearden's studio in St. Maarten. The Silversteins also donated one related painting from this group to the Boca Raton Museum of Art, a testament to the caliber of this collection.

The significance of this work extends far beyond its role as the source image for the lithograph. It is museum-level material: deeply textural, richly layered, and filled with the visual rhythms that define Bearden's mature style. Comparable Bearden collages reside in the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and The Studio Museum in Harlem.

Its appearance in Palm Beach marks an important moment for the region's growing cultural

landscape. Bearden is a pillar of American art history, and works of this importance have traditionally surfaced only in New York or Los Angeles. The fact that such a piece is being offered through a Palm Beach auction house reflects the strength of South Florida's expanding community of collectors, museums, and cultural institutions.

"The Pepper Jelly Lady" also carries a notable exhibition history. The Silversteins loaned the piece to the High Museum of Art in Atlanta for its 2019 - 2020 Bearden presentation, further underscoring its value to scholars and the public.

Rico Baca, owner and auctioneer of Palm Beach Modern Auctions, notes: "Bearden's message celebrating community, dignity, and everyday stories resonates as strongly today as it did in his lifetime. To bring an original collage of this quality to market, especially one tied so directly to a beloved lithograph, is truly special. This is the kind of artwork that belongs in a museum or a major private collection."

The original collage, "The Pepper Jelly Lady" collage will be available for private viewing two weeks prior to the auction. Interested parties may request a condition report or schedule an appointment with the PBMA team.

Auction Date: November 15, 2025

Location: Palm Beach Modern Auctions

Link to Lot: <https://bid.modernauctions.com/online-auctions/palm-beach-modern/romare-bearden-the-pepper-jelly-lady-watercolor-painting-collage-8283387>

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Romare Bearden The Pepper Jelly Lady
Watercolor, Paper, and Fabric Collage

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