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## Junior art fans exhibit enthusiasm for Bearden

BY JOYCE SHELBY  
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Crown Heights youngster Robert David had never heard of the famous African-American artist Romare Bearden until a visit to the Brooklyn Children's Museum last week.

But as the third-grader looked at Bearden's watercolor illustrations from the one children's book he wrote, Robert had nothing but admiration.

"He drew very beautiful things. I love the colors and the shapes," said Robert, 8. "They're magnificent."

The 23 watercolors for "Li'l Dan, the Drummer Boy: A Civil War Story" are being shown for the first time ever at the museum.

The paintings are part of a citywide celebration of Bearden's work that includes exhibits and activities at more than 20 cultural institutions.

"The Art of Romare Bearden," a retrospective on national tour, opened at the Whitney Museum of American Art in Manhattan last Thursday. Organized by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, the exhibit includes the collages and photomontages Bearden is best known for.

"I can't think of another time when cultural institutions, big and small, have rallied together like this to support one artist," said Radia Harper, vice director at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. "This speaks to how highly a regarded artist he was. Everybody loves Bearden."



Navarro for NEWS

Brooklyn Children's Museum President Carol Enseki shows youngsters the original and colorful art of Romare Bearden, a Harlem artist whose work is being celebrated citywide.

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Born in 1911 in Charlotte, N.C., Bearden grew up in Harlem and graduated from New York University. He had studios throughout the city and lived in lower Manhattan.

Considered by many to be a Renaissance man, he also designed theatrical sets and costumes and wrote music and books for adults.

His family discovered his children's book after Bearden died in 1988, said Niobi Ngozi, director of education at the Brooklyn Children's Museum. The story of an orphan who served in the Union Army was published last year.

Brooklyn Children's Museum President Carol Enseki said the "Li'l Dan" watercolors will be a launching pad for children to tell their own stories and make their own collages.

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