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“A perceptive, richly detailed biography.”—*Kirkus*

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# AN AMERICAN ODYSSEY

## The Life and Work of Romare Bearden

By **Mary Schmidt Campbell**

(Oxford | \$34.95 | Hardcover | 9780195059090 | 464 pages | 24 pp 4-color plates, 75 b/w images | September 3, 2018)

“Through her long association with Romare Bearden and his work, Mary Schmidt Campbell possesses a rare understanding of his life and artistry. In this beautifully written volume, she sensitively illuminates his biography and comprehensively traces the trajectory of his career. By brilliantly interweaving the political history of African Americans throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of one of our foremost artists, she has written a book that speaks to anyone who is interested in American history, art, and culture.”—**Henry Louis Gates, Jr.**, Harvard University

“A dynamic portrait... Bearden once wrote, ‘The Negro artist must come to think of himself not primarily as a Negro artist, but as an artist,’ and Campbell perfectly encapsulates that notion in this analysis of Bearden’s remarkable career.”—*Publishers Weekly*

Romare Bearden’s life intersected squarely with the battle over representation of black experience in America. He spent his childhood at the heart of the New Negro Movement in New York City. He began his career as a cartoonist during his college years, and in the later 1930s, turned to painting and joined a community of artists supported by the WPA. As Bearden’s reputation grew he perfected his skills, studying the European masters and finding new ways of applying them to the America he knew, one in which the struggle for civil rights became all-absorbing. By the time of the March on Washington in 1963, Bearden had begun to experiment with the Projections, as he called his major collages, in which he tried to capture the full spectrum of the black experience, from the grind of daily life to broader visions and aspirations.

***AN AMERICAN ODYSSEY: The Life and Work of Romare Bearden*** by Mary Schmidt Campbell offers a full and vibrant account of Bearden’s life—his years in Harlem (his studio was above the Apollo theater), to his travels and commissions, along with illuminating analysis of his work and artistic career. Campbell, who met Bearden in the 1970s, was among the first to compile a catalogue of his works. ***AN AMERICAN ODYSSEY*** goes far beyond that, offering a living portrait of an artist and the impact he made upon the world he sought both to recreate and celebrate.

**About the Author:** **Mary Schmidt Campbell** is President of Spelman College and Dean Emerita of the Tisch School of the Arts. She served as the vice chair of the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities under former President Barack Obama.

### Events for Mary Schmidt Campbell:

AJC Decatur Book Festival	Decatur, GA	9/1/18
Jimmy Carter Presidential Library	Atlanta, GA	9/4/18
New York Institute for the Humanities	New York, NY	9/12/18
Brooklyn Book Festival	Brooklyn, NY	9/16/18
Enoch Pratt Free Library & Lewis Museum	Baltimore, MD	12/5/18
Philadelphia Free Library	Philadelphia, PA	12/6/18

## **Advance Praise for *AN AMERICAN ODYSSEY*:**

“[Campbell] authoritatively conveys the complexity of Bearden’s struggles as a Black artist who both aggressively supported his Black colleagues in Harlem-based exhibitions and believed that the universality of artistic vision must move beyond any single community to be most effective. It is an exhilarating and instructive read.”—**Ruth Fine**, Curator

“Meticulously researched and highly readable, this ground-breaking analytical biography of one of the twentieth century’s leading figures in painting, collage and other art forms is an immensely important addition to recent art historical literature and biography. It is a pleasure to read and is a necessary addition to our American cultural consciousness.”

—**Edward J. Sullivan**, Helen Gould Sheppard Professor of the History of Art, Institute of Fine Arts (Deputy Director), New York University

“In this extraordinary book, Mary Schmidt Campbell unveils—in brilliantly researched and captivating language—the journey of unrelenting effort and self-discovery that has earned Romare Bearden a place of rare distinction, as both an artist universally revered by the greater art world and as a ‘hero’ to his own people.... Every page is abundant with vivid imagery and detail that brings Romare Bearden’s artistic odyssey to life. Bravo!”

—**Dianne McIntyre**, Choreographer

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