Lesson Plan:  
color citiscape

Artist:  
Romare Bearden

Art Work:  
Untitled, 1993
2 epoxy and faceted glass
side windows: 9’ 6” x 4’ 10” x 3/4”
center window: 9’ 6” x 10’

Location:  
Westchester Square Subway Station
IRT #6 at Westchester Avenue and East Tremont at Williamsbridge Road, Bronx

Grades:  
1-3

About the Art:
Shortly before his death in 1988, Romare Bearden completed the project design for a stained-glass window in the Westchester Square IRT station. The work is based on a collage depicting an elevated train weaving in and out of a cityscape in Bearden’s familiar Cubist description of New York City street life. The experience of riding the elevated trains is central to his imagery. “To see the changing aspects of the city—the great buildings of midtown... and the tenements abutting the elevated lines. Like Edward Hopper, I drew inspiration from these sights.” Bearden’s stained-glass window, made from a thick durable epoxy, is located in the entrance. The windows were executed by Belgian born and trained architectural glass artist Benoit Gilsoul who collaborated closely with Bearden. Bearden realized immediately that the light medium of stained glass was ideal for his image of the project. This is Bearden’s only work in glass. Mr. Gilsoul has used brightly colored glass translating the textures and brush strokes which he discussed with Bearden as the ‘cartoon’ (drawing) for the windows that were executed.

Activity Objective:
Students will be able to create a collaged cityscape by using construction paper in contrasting colors, cut into a variety of geometric shapes.

Questions for Discussion:
What do you see? What shapes does Bearden use to make us think of a city? Are most of the shapes tall and long—or short and wide? Do any of the shapes overlap? How do the shapes differ from each other? How does Bearden use color? Do you see any warm colors? Cool colors? Do you see a warm building with cool windows? Do you see a cool building with warm windows? Why do you think he used the colors this way?
Materials:
Construction paper in a variety of colors
scissors
 glue sticks

Procedure:
• Ask each student to think of a time of day and a type of weather. What would be the best color to represent this time? Ask each student to choose a piece of construction paper that represents their time of day.
• Ask students to find a sheet of construction paper that is a contrasting color to the sky. Have students cut the construction paper into a shape that they remember observing in Romare Bearden’s cityscape. Ask students to continue using different colored sheets of paper to create their own cities, remembering that they can overlap their shapes.
• Once students have the buildings glued down, they can use contrasting pieces of paper to create windows and other details.

Closure:
Ask students to work in pairs. Each pair will take turns acting as an art critic and an artist. The art critic interviews the artist to learn about the artist’s process, inspiration, and thoughts on his or her cityscape. Each student will then write a review of his or her partner’s artwork.

New York City Strands of Art Education:
1. Art making
2. Literacy in the arts
3. Making connections
4. Community and cultural resources
5. Careers and lifelong learning

National Art Education Learning Standards:
1. Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes
2. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas
3. Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the works of others
4. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures