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**Covers: Penelope Vlassopoulou, no water, 2014–15**, intervention/performance artifacts (artworks © Penelope Vlassopoulou; photographs by the artist). See page 63.

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**Romare Bearden, untitled work for cover of *Fortune*, January 1968, collage, cover:** 14½ x 11 in. (36.8 x 27.9 cm) (artwork © Romare Bearden Foundation, Time, Inc.)

## Reconfiguring Race, Recontextualizing the Media: Romare Bearden's 1968 *Fortune* and *Time* Covers

I would like to thank Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, Meredith Malone, Kirsten Olds, and members of the Interdisciplinary History Writing Workshop at Saint Joseph's University for their feedback on earlier versions of this paper.

1. "Cities: Recipe for Riot," *Time* 89, no. 26 (June 30, 1967): 28. As with many texts in *Time*, no author is credited.
2. Bearden used photographs from magazines, and a memo by the *Time* employee Nancy Atkinson indicates that he used photographs from the Time-Life Picture Collection for the cover of the November 1, 1968, issue of *Time*. However, extensive attempts to locate specific source images and to determine how they appeared in magazines were not successful. Nancy Atkinson, memo to Jack Mulligan, October 26, 1968, Archives, Time, Inc., New-York Historical Society, New York.
3. This essay identifies Bearden's covers as collages: although they were photographed for reproduction, he constructed them as collages, works primarily made up of cutouts of blank paper and magazines. Bearden described his works as collages. See, for example, Romare Bearden, interview with Henri Ghent, June 29, 1968, Oral History Interview with Romare Bearden, Research Collections, Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Washington, DC.
4. See David Abrahamson, *Magazine-Made America: The Cultural Transformation of the Postwar Periodical* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1996), 75; and Kathrin Fahlenbrach, Erling Siversten, and Rolf Werenskjold, "Introduction: Media and Protest Movements," in *Media and Revolt: Strategies and Performances from the 1960s to the Present*, ed. Fahlenbrach, Siversten, and Werenskjold (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 12.
5. David Carter, "From 'We Shall Overcome' to 'We Shall Overrun': The Transformation of U.S. Media Coverage of the Black Freedom Struggle,

Photographs of African Americans looting and inciting angry mobs, a smoldering city block, and articles describing cities "hit by ghettomania": magazines from the late 1960s repeatedly associate blacks with violence, destruction, and instability.<sup>1</sup> Compared to this kind of coverage, Romare Bearden's collage for the January 1968 issue of *Fortune*, a "Special Issue on Business and the Urban Crisis," looks surprisingly devoid of conflict. Here fragments of photographs and brightly

Emily Hage

colored paper combine to create a balanced, asymmetrical depiction of a peaceful, if worn, city corner. On the stoop a man looks away as a woman in curlers watches the viewer with a serious, thoughtful expression, and two children play just across the street. Near the title, individuals peer out from three windows—the person on the left made manifest mostly by an oversize cigarette, its smoke echoing the exhaust emanating from a factory in the distance, an iconic reference to *Fortune's* focus on industry. Brown and black dominate, punctuated by rectangular areas of flat red, yellow, and blue. Cutouts form a patchwork of textures,

including the crumbling brick, stone, and chipping paint of a structure housing a barbershop, a church, and apartments.<sup>2</sup>

Bearden's layered composition is not explicitly political, but its depiction of blacks in the city and its placement on the cover of a large-circulation magazine inherently challenge sensationalizing media coverage of the "urban crisis" that perpetuated racist stereotypes of African Americans in the late 1960s. This piece and Bearden's collage for the cover of the November 1, 1968, issue of *Time* diverge from prevalent journalistic images of blacks in an incisive, multifaceted, and subtle way that resists mass media's penchant to simplify, distort, and objectify.<sup>3</sup> The 1960s witnessed a significant increase in magazine production, from eight thousand five hundred to nine thousand five hundred titles, and in 1968 the press increasingly recognized the power of pictures.<sup>4</sup> The historian David Carter has called this period "the era of the media-defined watershed," when the power of reportage to shape public perception continued to expand.<sup>5</sup> Bearden's works prompt a rereading of the publications they adorn while also suggesting that his approach to these news sources was not altogether antagonistic. He hijacked the magazine not only as a source, but also as an object and as a site of critique and artistic practice.

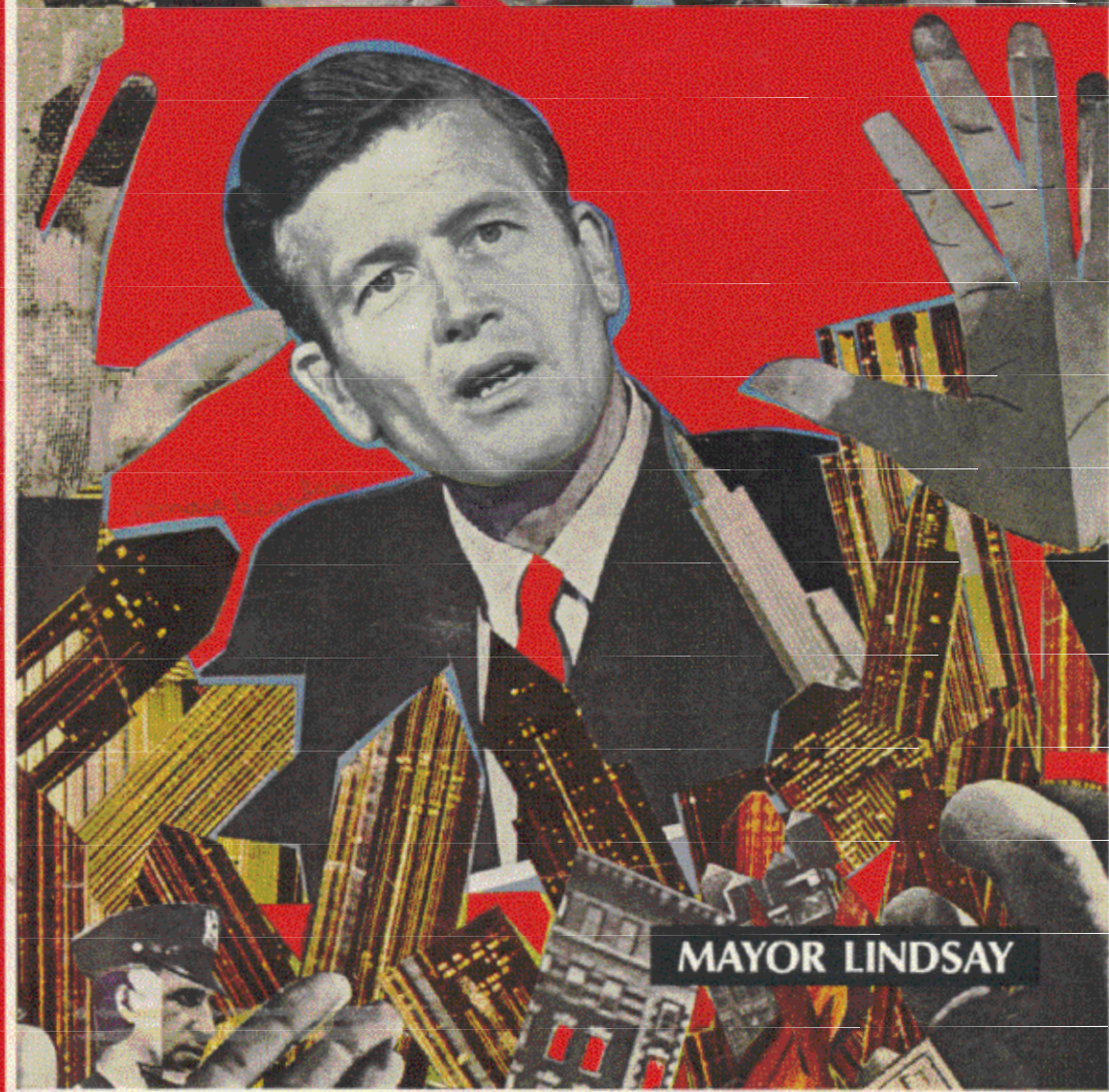
The reproduction of these compositions on periodical covers informed their production, circulation, and reception. Unlike traditional fine art spaces, comparatively autonomous and divorced from temporal exigencies, magazines are mass-produced, quickly made, and ephemeral—typically perused for a week or a month and tossed out when the next issue arrives—and they reach much wider audiences. The positioning of Bearden's collages inflects expectations and therefore reactions to them, and the works simultaneously comply with and sabotage readers' confidence that the cover should support the views expressed within. Additionally, their venue illuminates understandings of the potential of collage. Because they appear on covers they call forth connections between collage and magazines, which helped spur collage by providing not only raw material but also innovative methods of picture making. Both are composite, fragmented, and intertextual, inviting multiple interpretations and demanding that audiences try to reconcile contradictions or hold them in tension.<sup>6</sup>

FIFTY CENTS \*

NOVEMBER 1, 1968

NEW YORK: The Breakdown of a City

TIME



**Romare Bearden, untitled work, cover of *Time*, November 1, 1968**, collage, cover: 12 x 9½ in. (30.5 x 24.1 cm) (artwork © Estate of Romare Bearden Foundation, Time, Inc.)

1964–68, in *Comparative Perspective*,” in *Media and Revolt*, 184.

6. For more on the efforts necessary on the part of viewers to comprehend Bearden’s compositions, see Lee Stephens Glazer, “Signifying Identity: Art and Race in Romare Bearden’s Projections,” *Art Bulletin* 76, no. 3 (September 1994): 411, 423; and James C. Hall, *Mercy, Mercy Me: African-American Culture and the American Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 175.

7. Beginning in the 1930s, Bearden accepted commissions for illustrations and political cartoons for *The Baltimore Afro-American*, *Collier’s*, *Life*, and *Fortune*.

8. Bearden also made a cover collage for the April 20, 1969, issue of the *New York Times Magazine*, but examination of this piece, which shows African Americans in a rural setting, is beyond the scope of this essay. The two covers discussed here offer representative cases of Bearden’s engagement with popular magazines, and both speak to his responses to pressing urban concerns of the time.

9. See, for example, Martin A. Berger, *Seeing through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); and Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

10. An exception is the writing of David Banash, who traces collage practice to magazines. Banash, “From Advertising to the Avant-Garde: Rethinking the Invention of Collage,” in *Postmodern Culture* 14, no. 2 (January 2004): paragraphs 12, 24. Recent analyses of photomontage and collage include Sabine T. Kriebel, *Revolutionary Beauty: The Radical Photomontages of John Heartfield* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); and Andrés Mario Zervigón, *John Heartfield and the Agitated Image: Photography, Persuasion, and the Rise of Avant-Garde Photomontage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

11. Erika Doss, ed., *Looking at Life Magazine* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001). See specifically Doss, “Visualizing Black America: Gordon Parks at *Life*, 1948–1971,” 220–41. See also Wendy Kozol, *Life’s America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); and Steven Heller, *Merz to Emigre and Beyond: Avant-Garde Magazine Design of the Twentieth Century* (London: Phaidon Press, 2003).

12. Sources on Bearden and the media include Ralph Ellison, “The Art of Romare Bearden,” in *Romare Bearden: Paintings and Projections*, exh.

Comparative analysis of these two works reveals continuities and divergences in Bearden’s approach and demonstrates that these covers constitute a critical chapter in his sustained negotiation with journalism. Bearden had been contributing to print media for decades, including a cover for the Urban League’s *Opportunity* in March 1932 and a painting for the June 1942 issue of *Fortune*.<sup>7</sup> The 1968 collages stand out, however, because they are collages and they appeared on the covers of mainstream, mass-circulation magazines.<sup>8</sup>

Scholars have analyzed journalistic photographs from the late 1960s, exposing the constructed nature of photography and noting how post–World War II media sources prompted a diversity of responses, thereby encouraging and shaping certain ideologies.<sup>9</sup> Collage and photomontage analyses point out how these closely related mediums can be manipulated to counter pretensions of transparency with polysemy, but most do not explore the magazine context in depth.<sup>10</sup> Studies such as Erika Doss’s discussion of the *Life* photographer Gordon Parks and Leigh Raiford’s examination of Emory Douglas’s collages for *Black Panther* raise important questions regarding the predicament of black artists contributing to periodicals and responding to media trends.<sup>11</sup> Building on this scholarship and sources on Bearden and the media, the present essay examines the case of Bearden, whose works draw attention to the critical significance of their venue, the magazine, and its illuminating links to collage. What follows investigates collage’s potential to be especially effective when reproduced in a magazine.<sup>12</sup>

In crafting both covers, rather than sublimating media sources into works of art, Bearden repurposed journalistic photography and advertisements, integrated them into new works of art, and put them right back into circulation. In the case of *Time* he even used the publication’s own photography collection.<sup>13</sup> Bearden’s covers interrogate the content as well as the format of mainstream magazines. More than a general critique of the media at large, they call on readers to explore alternative, critical ways of approaching magazines, noting the disjunctions they house and the ways in which captions, layouts, and choices regarding what to include can steer audiences toward particular interpretations. Collages made from magazines for magazines, Bearden’s covers proffer a valuable glimpse into the intersections of collage and this major form of print media that calls out collage’s potential not only to reframe excerpts from the news media, but also to question periodicals’ strategies. These two works are particularly pointed because they are reproduced in magazines, a place with the potential to effect change.

### **Piecing Together a Collage, Taking Apart a Magazine: *Fortune*, January 1968**

At the end of 1967, when he was commissioned to make a cover for Henry Luce’s *Fortune*, Bearden was renowned as an artist and an advocate of the civil rights movement. He had recently helped establish the artists’ collective *Spiral*, which set out to examine members’ social responsibilities amid the rising political and racial hostilities of the time.<sup>14</sup> His involvement coincided with his switch from Cubist-inspired, abstracted paintings to his critically acclaimed figurative collages and the *Projections* series, depicting primarily African Americans. Well educated, with a degree from New York University, Bearden trained with the German Dadaist George Grosz and was positioned as what Daniel Matlin describes as an

**Time, page 19, "Nation: Races: Sparks and Tinder," July 21, 1967,** page: 12 x 9 1/2 in. (30.5 x 24.1 cm) (page © Time, Inc.)

**Time, page 15 (partial), August 4, 1967,** with photograph of H. "Rap" Brown by Chuck McGowen (page © Time, Inc.)

cat. (Albany: Art Gallery, State University of New York, 1968), rep. *Massachusetts Review* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1977): 678; and Kobena Mercer, "Romare Bearden: African American Modernism at Mid-Century," in *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*, ed. Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2002), 40. See also David E. Sumner, *The Magazine Century: American Magazines since 1900* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 140; and Glazer, 421–26.

13. See Atkinson memo, which I examine more closely below.

14. For more on Spiral, see Jeanne Siegel, "Why Spiral?" *Art News* 65, no. 5 (September 1966): 48–51, 67; and Floyd Coleman, "The Changing Same: Spiral, The Sixties, and African-American Art," in *A Shared Heritage: Art by Four African Americans*, ed. William E. Taylor and Harriet G. Warkel (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art with Indiana University Press, 1996), 148–58.

15. Daniel Matlin, *On the Corner: African-American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 197.

16. *Ibid.*, 8, 197. In 1969 Bearden lamented that an emphasis on "the social elements" of his work overshadowed recognition of its artistic inventiveness. Romare Bearden, "Rectangular Structure in My Montage Paintings," *Leonardo* 2 (1969): 18.

17. Dore Ashton, "Romare Bearden: Projections," *Quadrum* 17 (1964): 100. Black journalists, writers, and curators also commented on Bearden's work in the 1960s, but I focus here on descriptions in the white press, as they shed light on the attitudes of *Fortune's* and *Time's* white editors toward the artist and why they chose him to make their covers.

18. John Canaday, "Romare Bearden Focuses on the Negro," *New York Times*, October 14, 1967, 23.

19. For more about this change, see Berger, 48; and Jenny Walker, "A Media-Made Movement? Black Violence and Nonviolence in the Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," in *Media, Culture and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle*, ed. Brian Ward (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 46. See also Carter, 182–83.

20. Carter, 184–90. For analysis of early 1960s photojournalistic coverage of the civil rights movement, see also Berger, 35–38, 46.

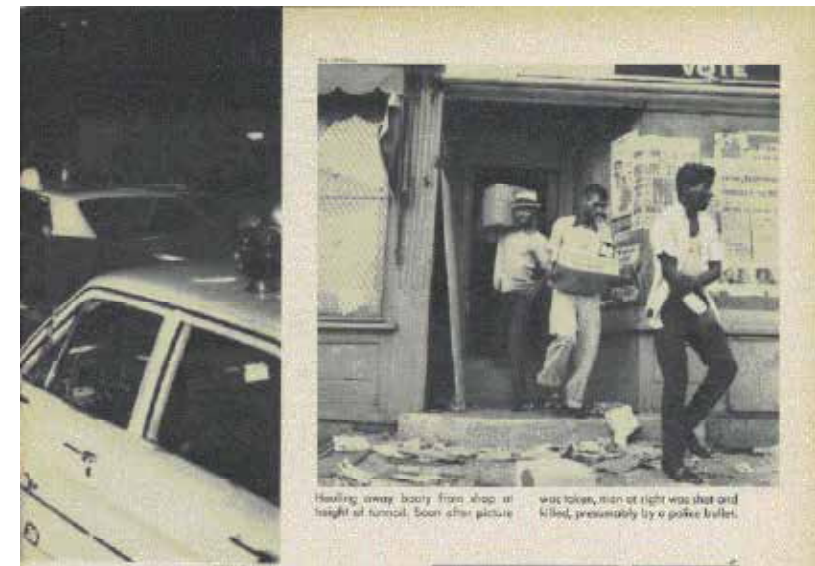
21. Edward Morgan, *What Really Happened to the 1960s: How Mass Media Culture Failed American Democracy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 127. For more on race and the media in the 1960s, see Gene Robert and Hank Klibanoff,

"indigenous interpreter" of African American culture for the white community.<sup>15</sup> For Bearden as for other blacks, this designation was, Matlin points out, "demeaning and confining," as white audiences determined its requirements and it wrongfully suggests that blacks made their works particularly for white readers.<sup>16</sup>

Although some white critics described Bearden's works as menacing, others applauded his ability to depict blacks in a nonthreatening way.<sup>17</sup> For instance, in a *New York Times* review of a 1967 exhibition illustrated with Bearden's 1967 collage *Sunrise*—which depicts a black man eating breakfast with an aproned woman behind him—the *Times's* chief art critic, John Canaday, who was white, commented that Bearden "shows us what has happened to the Negro but he shows it as a fact, not an accusation."<sup>18</sup> This understanding of Bearden made him a notable choice for *Fortune* in the late 1960s. At a time of rising apprehension about black protest, press coverage of the civil rights movement generally shifted away from sympathy for nonviolent blacks attacked by whites—which many credit with prompting civil rights reforms—toward sensationalizing accounts of black militancy and lawlessness.<sup>19</sup> Although the white press was not free of racism in the early 1960s, in 1966, as news organizations started to appreciate the news-making value of riots, blacks began to be represented as angry looters and rioting slum dwellers. Their actions were described in an objectifying, outsider's, voyeuristic manner that often defended the brutality waged against them.<sup>20</sup>

Journalistic coverage of the "long hot summer" of 1967 delivered what the political scientist Edward Morgan calls "the longest and most continuous, frightening imagery . . . of the sixties era."<sup>21</sup> Mass media focused on race riots, especially those in Newark and Detroit. In the July 21, 1967, issue of *Time*, a picture of looters appears immediately over one of a wounded white police officer, visually downplaying the violence inflicted on African Americans. One caption says that officers were told to use force "after being cornered repeatedly and pinned down by rooftop gunmen," thus justifying their violence and amplifying one interpretation of the photograph.<sup>22</sup> Blacks are not telling the story, and captions impose specific readings of photographs that reinforce widespread beliefs about their proclivity toward violence. The caption for a photo in the August 4, 1967, issue of *Time* showing H. "Rap" Brown, then the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, later the Student National Coordinating Committee), says he is "haranguing" a large crowd with the words, "That cop they stomped. Good. He's dead."<sup>23</sup> These examples are illustrative of a much larger phenomenon. In the months following the summer clashes, the number of photographs and articles about racial tensions decreased, but concerns were still at the forefront of Americans' minds, as they continued to process recent events.<sup>24</sup>

The leading business magazine of the period, *Fortune* had been mostly silent throughout the 1967 riots and their aftermath, but the January 1968 issue represents an effort to consider racial conflict in the United States. Bearden would not have known in advance the specific contents of this issue, but he was aware of its theme and could be reasonably certain that *Fortune* would not depart from common media practices. This issue of *Fortune* aligns whites with facts and links blacks, including Bearden, with opinions. An editorial introduces two articles that it says examine "the objective condition of American Negroes" and African Americans' "subjective attitudes."<sup>25</sup> "A *Fortune* Study of the New Negro Mood" provides names, quotations, and photographs of African Americans, thus, notably,



giving them a voice. Individuals share ideas about how circumstances could improve, but their words also corroborate the editors' predictions of future riots.<sup>26</sup> Quotes appear alongside casual photographs in a manner that calls to mind the supplemental, anecdotal, people-on-the-street features often found in magazines. Danny Williamson, a house cleaner from Pasadena, is quoted as saying, "Violence—it's very beautiful. It wakes the white man up."<sup>27</sup> Here the quotes are disclosed as mere opinions, unlike the data-filled study in the same issue about blacks' supposedly improving conditions, entitled "More Dollars and More Diplomas," accompanied by charts and graphs.<sup>28</sup>

The brief description of Bearden inside the issue emphasizes feelings over facts, turning any message the collage may contain into a limited, personal one: "For this special issue, *Fortune* commissioned Negro artist Romare Bearden, fifty-three, to convey his own mood of urban life. What Bearden pieced together is the striking collage on the cover."<sup>29</sup> In addition to downplaying the composition's artistic merits, this characterization glosses over problems facing city residents, particularly African Americans, and how Bearden's work may be responding to them.

Bearden's cover was in many ways palatable to *Fortune's* editors and readers, and there is evidence that some did not consider it to be a critique. The editorial staffers at *Fortune* were pleased that they were able to commission a major African American artist, and employees received posters of the piece.<sup>30</sup> Daphne Ehrlich of Houghton Mifflin writes to Bearden, "Just saw your cover on *Fortune*. Great! And it's a pretty good issue, too. Some interesting statistics."<sup>31</sup> The words "A Special Issue on Business and the Urban Crisis" frame the collage as a depiction of this crisis, with African Americans at the center of it.<sup>32</sup> The placement of the collage on the cover implies a certain accord with the magazine and supports associations of blacks with urban poverty and potentially with violence and crime, links perpetuated in the issue it adorns.

The collage also can be read, however, as a multilayered defiance of the media's objectifying representations of African Americans, one that takes advantage of collage and its context to challenge the very possibility of impartiality in the news. In this piece Bearden does not directly contradict the characterizations of blacks, including himself, as providing a limited perspective, a "mood." He employed collage as a means of crafting a complex response to objectifying pressures. Recognizing that neutrality is impossible, Bearden manipulated collage's potential as a fragmented medium that broadcasts its artificiality.<sup>33</sup> He had recently accused intellectuals of "defining the Negro sociologically, but not artistically," and his collage answers academic and journalistic, often generalizing, approaches with multifaceted, individual artistic expression.<sup>34</sup>

More than reframing media excerpts, Bearden was responding to magazines as a whole, and in doing so highlighting their ties to collage. Because of its venue, Bearden's piece dialogues with other artworks made for journal covers, and exploring this context exposes the full breadth of Bearden's critique. Most *Fortune* covers from the mid- to late 1960s are artistic representations of some aspect of industry, from Douglas Aircraft to J. C. Penney. Some spotlight the city, as well. The cover of the July 31, 1964, issue of *Time*, showing a painting by the white illustrator Russell Hoban, parallels Bearden's piece in intriguing ways. It predates Bearden's by four years, but the similarities between them are striking: Hoban's is more posed, but each one shows a worn, multiuse building, as well as figures on the stoop and in the windows.

*The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006).

22. "Nation: Races: Sparks and Tinder," *Time* 90, no. 3 (July 21, 1967): 19. For more on this tendency to highlight one interpretation over another, see Stuart Hall, "The Determinations of News Photographs," in *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance, and the Mass Media*, rev. ed., ed. Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications, 1981), 227; and Berger, 35.

23. "Cities: The Fire This Time," *Time*, 90, no. 5 (August 4, 1967): 14.

24. See, for example, Irwin Isenberg, preface to *The City in Crisis*, ed. Isenberg (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1968), 3.

25. "Editorial: What Businesses Can Do for the Cities," *Fortune* 77, no. 1 (January 1968): 127.

26. *Ibid.* Another article in the same issue also predicts more violence: Harold B. Meyers, "Putting Out the Fires Next Time," *Fortune* 77, no. 1 (January 1968): 174–76, 193–95.

27. Danny Williamson quoted in Roger Beardwood, "A *Fortune* Study of the New Negro Mood," *Fortune* 77, no. 1 (January 1968): 150.

28. Edmund K. Faltermayer, "More Dollars and More Diplomas," *Fortune* 77, no. 1 (January 1968): 140–45.

29. Untitled description of cover, *Fortune* 77, no. 1 (January 1968): 2, emphasis added.

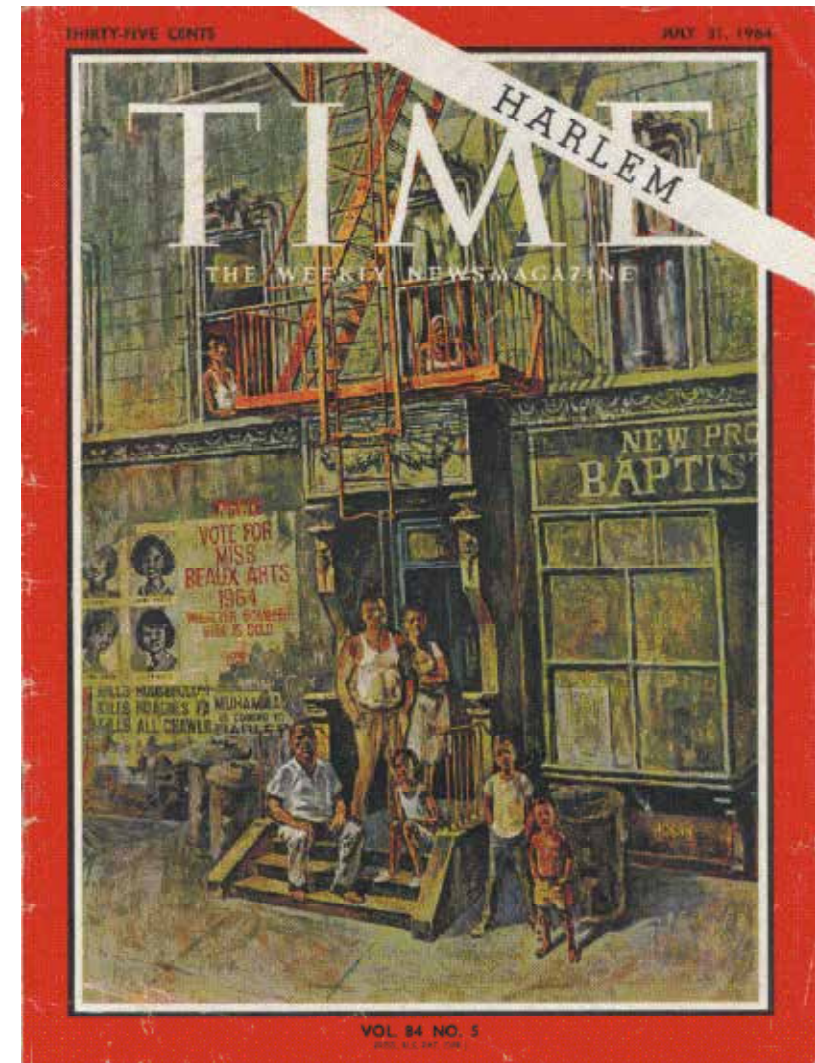
30. William Rukeyser (an associate editor of *Fortune* in 1968), phone interview with author, July 2012. The poster was also offered for sale to readers: *Fortune* 77, no. 1 (January 1968): 193.

31. Daphne A. Ehrlich, letter to Romare Bearden, December 28, 1967, Romare Bearden Papers, Archives of American Art, box 1, folder 6.

32. The details of Bearden's commission are not known, and there was most likely no contract. None could be located in the *Time*, Inc. archive. The absence of a contract was not unusual, according to Leonard Wolfe, a former employee in the art department at *Fortune* in the 1970s.

33. Wolfe phone interview with author, July 2012. This interpretation coincides with Kriebel's description of photomontage: Kriebel, 10–11.

34. Romare Bearden quoted in Charles Childs, "Bearden: Identification and Identity," *Art News* 63 (October 1964): 62.



**Russell Hoban, untitled illustration for cover of *Time*, July 31, 1964**, cover: 12 x 9½ in. (30.5 x 24.1 cm) (artwork © Estate of Russell Hoban, *Time*, Inc.)

35. Harlem was Bearden's primary home from the mid-1910s until 1956, when he moved elsewhere in Manhattan.

36. Glazer points out this feature in Bearden's projections. See Glazer, 426.

37. Mercer discusses this journalistic tendency. See Mercer, 30.

38. A letter to Bearden from Evelyn Wolfe suggests that she noted its dissidence: the cover, she tells him, "hits with a ton of bricks!" Her comment, though vague, suggests that she understood the image as provocative. Evelyn Wolfe letter to Romare Bearden, November 9, 1968, Romare Bearden Papers, Archives of American Art, box 1, folder 12. For more on collage and montage's political potential, see Kriebel, 98.

Bearden would probably have taken note of this earlier issue of *Time*, titled "Harlem," given his constant collecting of magazines and the fact that he called Harlem home for some forty years.<sup>35</sup> Whether he knew of it or not, however, his collage can be perceived as a rejoinder to depictions like it. Whereas Hoban renders the scene in a single medium from a one-point perspective, Bearden made use of collage to contest a straightforward, simplified evocation of black urban life. Mechanical reproduction mitigates the unevenness produced by the combining of disparate cutouts, but the clashing shifts in scale, angles, and color, and the resulting disjointedness result in a composition full of tension and ambiguity. They also call attention to the artifice of the image and to Bearden's presence, specifically his acts of cutting, assembling, and pasting.<sup>36</sup> His formal innovations foreground process and fabrication and communicate more than one viewpoint. In these ways Bearden deposes presumptions of objectivity regarding urban concerns advanced by journalistic photos.<sup>37</sup> The nature of collage is provocative also in that it compels viewers to combine dissimilar elements into some kind of coherent picture, potentially encouraging further involvement.<sup>38</sup>

The venue of this 1968 collage draws out parallels between collage and the magazine and prompts a critical reevaluation of magazine content. It alerts readers to how both are composite, intertextual, subjective, and disjointed, made up of different, often conflicting, commercial and journalistic fragments. Ads showing affluent whites, for example, face features on violence and destitution among American cities' black residents.<sup>39</sup> The material, multipage format of periodicals invites readers to choose a personal, usually nonlinear means of perusing their pages.<sup>40</sup> Because Bearden's work is made up of photos like those found inside *Fortune*, it also encourages individual action, exposing pictures and articles as just so much material to be cut up, recombined, and reassessed. By forcing viewers to piece together his composition, Bearden underscores the ultimate indeterminacy of specific content and of the magazine as a unit. Far from trying to communicate a single message, the cover calls for unpacking various readings of the collage, and, on a broader level, the magazine. Bearden effectively deconstructed the periodicals he constantly mined, and the collage's function as the cover of *Fortune* at once camouflages this rethinking and renders it all the more radical.

Stuart Hall's discussion of encoding and decoding offers a helpful means of comprehending the polyvalence of Bearden's collage. Hall posits, "When the viewer takes the connoted meaning . . . full and straight, and decodes the message in terms of the reference code in which it is has been encoded," he or she is "operating inside the dominant code."<sup>41</sup> One could say that *Fortune*, by putting Bearden's collage on its cover, presents him as working inside the "dominant code" or position expressed in magazines. Alternately, the collage can be seen as encoded according to Bearden's oppositional position toward media images.<sup>42</sup> As the novelist Ralph Ellison pointed out in the same year Bearden made these covers, in his collages, the artist "sought . . . to reveal a world long hidden by the clichés of sociology and rendered cloudy by the distortions of newsprint and the false continuity imposed upon our conception of Negro life by television and much documentary photography." Ellison further claims that Bearden achieved this goal through artistic means, "a reassembling in forms" that aims to expose the complexity of individual African Americans' experiences.<sup>43</sup> Kobena Mercer adds that at a time when "the problem-oriented depiction of the 'ghetto' had saturated [photojournalism] with connotations of poverty, injustice, and despair," Bearden's "dis-articulation" of the purported realism of photography was especially transgressive because it implied, as Mercer puts it, that "social reality is itself composite and contradictory."<sup>44</sup>

Building on these accounts we can say that Bearden understood what Hall calls "both the literal and the connotative inflection given by a discourse," but decoded it in "a globally contrary way."<sup>45</sup> Bearden's response is subtle, motivated in part by his ongoing goal of supporting civil rights without having his complex artistic efforts identified as simply political statements.<sup>46</sup> Yet by excerpting magazines, Bearden literally "detotalizes the message in the preferred code," as Hall describes the oppositional strategy, so that he can "retotalize the message" in an alternative framework of his own making, the collage, which adorns the very publication it contests.<sup>47</sup> Because the *Fortune* cover is so evidently fragmented and constructed, it ultimately defies the notion of transparency, and its positioning makes its critique all the more incisive.

39. The August 4, 1967, issue of *Life*, to cite just one example, includes an advertisement for Mobil Oil with the heading, "Till Death Do Us Part," urging drivers to avoid amorous and potentially fatal distractions, illustrated by a photo of a white couple in a car. The ad is sandwiched between an article about racially motivated violence and a photograph of Detroit burning during the riots. *Life* 63, no. 95 (August 4, 1967).

40. See Sally Stein, "The Graphic Ordering of Desire: Modernization of a Middle-Class Women's Magazine, 1919–1939," in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 145.

41. Stuart Hall, "Encoding, Decoding," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 101.

42. *Ibid.*, 103.

43. Ellison, 678.

44. Mercer, 40. For more on Bearden's opposition to the media, see Jae Emerling, "On the Image of Bearden," *Romare Bearden: Southern Recollections*, exh. cat., ed. Carla M. Hanzal (Charlotte, NC: Mint Museum, 2011), 75; and Darby English, "Ralph Ellison's Romare Bearden," in *Romare Bearden, American Modernist*, ed. Ruth Fine and Jacqueline Francis (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 20.

45. Hall, "Encoding, Decoding," 101, 103.

46. See Romare Bearden quoted in Sharon F. Patton, "Memory and Metaphor: The Art of Romare Bearden, 1940–1987," in *Memory and Metaphor: The Art of Romare Bearden, 1940–1987* (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1991), 43; Bearden interview with Henry Ghent, Archives of American Art; and Bearden, "Rectangular Structure in My Montage Paintings," 197.

47. Hall, "Encoding, Decoding," 98–99, 103.

## Inverting Expectations, Calling Out Contradictions: *Time*, November 1, 1968

Almost a year after Bearden created the *Fortune* cover, the editors at *Time*, another Luce publication, asked him to design the cover for their November 1, 1968, issue.<sup>48</sup> These two issues bookend an exceptionally turbulent year in US history. It witnessed the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, and ensuing riots in Washington, DC, Baltimore, Chicago, and other cities, as well as buildup to the presidential elections that occurred just days after this issue of *Time* came out. Like the January 1968 issue of *Fortune*, the November 1 *Time* grapples with concerns regarding urbanism and race, but with a much more specific focus: New York City and its white mayor, John V. Lindsay. The headline reads, "New York: The Breakdown of a City," and the issue describes the many problems then facing the city, specifically traffic, education, and crime. Bearden composed the *Time* cover in a little over a day, and for this "crash cover," as editorial staff called such quickly rendered pieces, he produced a multilayered representation of the problems then besetting his city, one that references various popular depictions of New York and inverts media-induced expectations of African Americans' instability.<sup>49</sup> In this case the cover interacts directly with *Time*, as almost all of the photos Bearden appropriated for this collage came from the Time-Life Picture Collection.

In the center he affixed a photo of Lindsay's face that appears to have been taken when he was delivering a speech. The mayor also seems to be trying to balance or hold up the figures above him. Bearden made Lindsay's hands from a photograph of a road, thus fusing him with the city streets. He set the photo of Lindsay against a solid area of red with blue edging all around him, evidence of the fact that he originally chose blue as the background color but then changed it to red, a color associated with urgency. Bearden told magazine staff that he chose this color because "it is more in keeping with the situation in which Lindsay finds himself." The piece is divided into three main registers: the top one showing children, a police officer, and a firefighter, the bottom one composed of another officer and black, white, and gold skyscrapers, including water towers and what look like Harlem row houses, and Lindsay in the middle. Placed at opposite corners, the two police officers imply a line that connects the children above with the structures below. The hands on the bottom, significantly, foreground the fact that the work was made expressly for a magazine cover to be held by the reader, who is thus brought into this tumultuous scenario.

Despite the work's visual complexity, its message at first looks straightforward: Lindsay is in the midst of a crisis illustrated by the tottering buildings, police officers, and children. A Time Inc. check requisition form addressed to Bearden indicates that the sum is payment "For cover collage on Mayor Lindsay beset by city's problems."<sup>50</sup> Like the *Fortune* cover, this one can be understood as serving a creative but ultimately complementary function.<sup>51</sup> However, deeper analysis reveals how this collage summons many interpretations. Additionally, it suggests that Bearden regarded journalism seriously, if critically, and grasped its possibilities.

The *Time* cover references a broad range of visual representations characterizing the city in both optimistic and cynical ways. The crowded overlapping of these structures evokes a well-known collage, *Metropolis* (1923), by Paul Citroen, the Dutch photographer, photomontagist, and painter with ties to Dada and the

48. Like *Fortune*, *Time* targeted affluent white audiences, but *Time*'s cheaper price meant that more people were likely to buy it on the street. *Fortune* depended primarily on subscriptions for sales. Henry Luce to Board of Directors, May 24, 1929, and Henry R. Luce, "Prospectus for a Monthly Magazine," draft, n.d. [1929], Time Inc. Archives, quoted in Alan Brinkley, *The Publisher: Henry Luce and His American Century* (New York: Knopf, 2010), 152. Rukyeser interview; Brinkley, 138. In the early 1960s *Time* and *Fortune* boasted national circulations of 3.5 million and 460,000 respectively. John J. Abele, "Publisher Stepped Down in '64 as Editor in Chief," *New York Times*, March 1, 1967.

49. According to the Atkinson memo of October 26, 1968, Bearden met with *Time*'s cover editor and researcher on a Wednesday, started work Thursday morning, and submitted the collage on Friday at noon. Further information and the quotation in this paragraph of my text are from the same memo.

50. Carbon copy of check requisition form, October 30, 1968, Archives, Time, Inc.

51. In the 1960s more and more *Time* cover images corresponded directly with the content of the magazine. Wolfe, phone interview with author, July 2012.



**Paul Citroen, *Metropolis*, 1923**, collage, 30 x 23¼ in. (76 x 59 cm). University of Leiden (artwork © 2015 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York / c/o Pictoright Amsterdam; photograph provided by Bridgeman-Giraudon/ Art Resource, NY)

Bauhaus. An avid art historian and collagist, Bearden would have been familiar with this futuristic, utopian view of the city, especially since Citroen knew Grosz, Bearden's former mentor. *Metropolis* provided an especially fitting precedent for Bearden, as it demonstrates photomontage's ability to express what Sabine Kriebel calls "the heady tempo of modern urban life."<sup>52</sup> The animation of the buildings in Bearden's cover also recalls the famous 1933 film *Forty-Second Street*, which presents New York as a playground of possibilities and includes a scene showing dancers making up a backdrop of city structures that part in the center.<sup>53</sup> The film may have informed Bearden's design, and indeed the golden edifices look as if they could have been taken from a poster for the movie.<sup>54</sup>

These visual allusions serve as a particularly penetrating foil, however, to the collapse of the city described in this issue of *Time* and other magazines during this period. The collage is more akin, perhaps, to the dystopia expressed in

52. Kriebel, 7.

53. I would like to thank Kostis Kourelis for pointing out this similarity to me.

54. Bearden worked with pictures of buildings from his own collection for this piece. Atkinson memo.

55. Robert Zecker, *Metropolis: The American City in Popular Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), 79.

56. *Fortune* 20 (June 1939): 144. Michael Augspurger argues that Grosz's image of New York was both chaotic and hopeful, and that *Fortune*'s caption for the painting, "I know that the past was great and the future will be great—Walt Whitman," casts the image in an optimistic light. Yet the image itself, showing overlapping, off-kilter buildings, and boats, buildings, and an airplane belching exhaust, is far from an idealized view of New York. Augspurger, *An Economy of Abundant Beauty: Fortune Magazine and Depression America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 195–96.

57. Untitled text, *Time* 92, no. 18 (November 1, 1968): 7.

58. Such efforts were spearheaded by the polarizing "master builder" of postwar New York, Robert Moses, with whom Lindsay had a notoriously tense relationship. See Sam Roberts, ed., *America's Mayor: John V. Lindsay and the Reinvention of New York* (New York: Museum of the City of New York and Columbia University Press, 2010), 137.

59. Jacqueline Francis, "Bearden's Hands," in *Romare Bearden, American Modernist*, 121.

60. "School Days Are Here Again—Almost," *Life* 65, no. 12 (September 20, 1968): 56B.

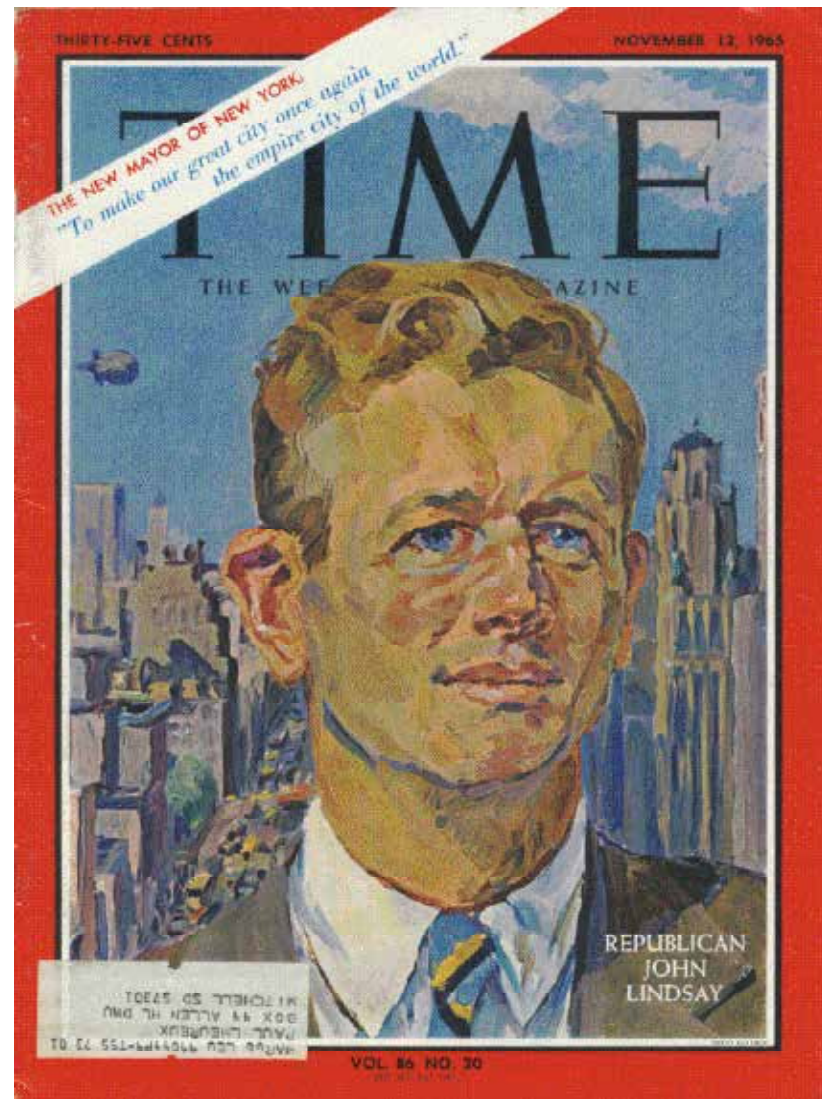
Fritz Lang's 1927 *Metropolis*, a film widely viewed as a retort to Citroen's vision, as it highlights class disparities in the futuristic city.<sup>55</sup> The underside of urban life is also an ongoing theme in Grosz's satirical paintings, drawings, and collages from the early twentieth century, including *Metropolis* (1916–17), an apocalyptic vision of Berlin, and the collage *The Guilty One Remains Unknown* (1919), featuring a prostitute and a rogue surrounded by words—"capitalists," "death"—and drawings and photos of tall city structures arranged helter-skelter. Grosz also expresses the chaos of New York in his painting *Lower Manhattan*, reproduced in *Fortune* in July 1939.<sup>56</sup>

Understood along these lines, rather than being stacked in a dynamic, dizzying, jostling array of urbanity, the buildings in Bearden's collage seem actually to be falling down. *Time* quotes Bearden's vision when looking out a window of the *Time, Inc.* building: "The buildings were full of lights. I saw them toppling around the Mayor."<sup>57</sup> The brownstones among the Art Deco skyscrapers also call to mind the literal demolition of New York neighborhoods to construct expressways and a corporate downtown.<sup>58</sup> Here Bearden's references to such contrasting views of the city interrogate simplified perceptions of urban realities, and the combination of all these depictions of the city parallels magazines' jarring juxtapositions of incongruent content. By underscoring his process and literally excerpting from *Time*, Bearden calls attention to the fact that the total effect of experiencing a magazine, however one reads it, is one of disjunction and contrast—characteristics shared by collage.

As in the case of the *Fortune* cover, this collage invites comparisons with other magazine covers and photos. It dialogues with media representations of the mayor in the mid- to late 1960s, which portray him as relaxed and confident. In Henry Koerner's portrait of Lindsay on the cover of *Time* the week after Lindsay was elected (November 12, 1965), the mayor dominates the composition, looking self-assured, with the city's skyline behind him. Like Hoban's painting, Koerner's offers a single point of view, foregrounding Lindsay in a way that implies that he is bigger than the problems besieging the city. Similarly, the mayor's smiling face appears on the May 28, 1965, and November 12, 1965, covers of *Life*, and even as problems were heating up in New York Lindsay looks more staid but nevertheless buoyant on *Life*'s May 24, 1968, cover.

The photograph of Lindsay that Bearden cut out for his composition resembles these portraits, but because it is suspended amid throngs of people and buildings, Lindsay looks overwhelmed and powerless in the face of the turmoil that surrounds him. The hands, as Jacqueline Francis demonstrates, can be seen as forming "parentheses that bracket the suggestion of speech and leadership."<sup>59</sup> They also transform his affect from one of confident leadership to an ambivalent combination of protection against the falling buildings, submission to the crisis, exasperation, defensiveness, or a plea for a halt in disputes among New York residents and officials.

The cover's emphasis on children, by contrast, seems to coincide with media accounts of city schools. An article on education woes nationwide in the September 20, 1968, issue of *Life*, for example, features a large photograph portraying children behind the bars of a closed school fence with the caption "Angry pickets in a confrontation with the children in the middle."<sup>60</sup> In the November 1, 1968, issue of *Time*, similarly, an article points out the plight of the children:



Henry Koerner, *untitled illustration for cover of Time, November 12, 1965*, cover: 12 x 9½ in. (30.5 x 24.1 cm) (artwork © Estate of Henry Koerner, Time, Inc.)

Romare Bearden, *John Lindsay, 1968*, collage, image area approx. 14 x 10 in. (35.6 x 25.4 cm). National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution (artwork © Romare Bearden Foundation/ Licensed by VAGA, New York; photograph provided by National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution/Art Resource, NY).

“Almost ignored were 1,100,000 students who are not only losing classroom time but possibly suffering serious psychological damage from the conflict.”<sup>61</sup> In his *Time* cover, Bearden indicates the numbers of children by overlapping fragmented photos of many youths; while the hands of the adults are visible, the students’ are mostly hidden, suggesting their vulnerability.

At the same time, however, Bearden’s collage is conspicuously at odds with images accompanying stories like *Time*’s. News accounts of education in the late 1960s stressed the role of race in the debate. The press described African American parents protesting the substandard education of their children, white teachers expressing fears about being replaced by their black counterparts, and teachers and parents exchanging racial slurs. Photographs and magazine issue titles such as *Time*’s “Public Schools: Teacher Power v. Black Power,” from September 20, 1968, reinforce the focus on race. The November 1, 1968, issue of *Time* shows a group of African American high school students pointing to a sign lamenting their closed school and displacement.

61. “John Lindsay’s Ten Plagues,” *Time* 92, no. 18 (November 1, 1968): 22.





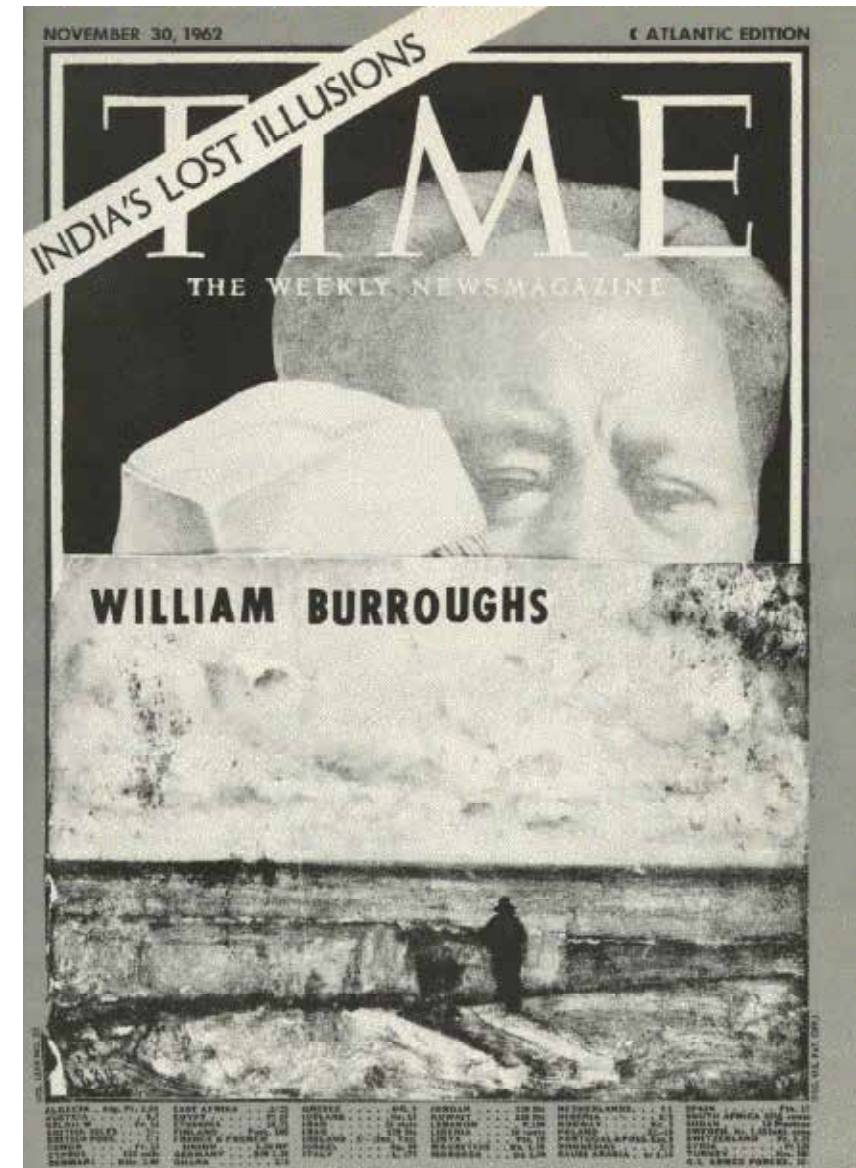
Again, Bearden did not know exactly what would be inside this issue, but he took advantage of the commission to launch his response to contemporary representations of racial tensions in education. His collage contrasts with the media's repeated placement of blacks at the center of New York debates on education. Except for one man whose face is fully visible only in the original collage, none of the people in Bearden's collage is clearly of African descent. The demographics of the image may be explained as part of Bearden's desire to prove that his works were not for African American audiences alone. *Time's* description of the cover supports this position. It makes a point of identifying Bearden's race, but is eager to reassure readers that his work is relevant to whites, too: "As a Negro, Bearden insists that there is no particular significance in the fact that so many of his subjects have been Negroes."<sup>62</sup> In a comment suggesting his ambivalence and his efforts to dodge pigeonholing, Bearden is quoted as confirming, "My subject is people. They just happen to turn out to be Negro."

Yet here, by including almost no blacks, Bearden visually refutes ghettoizing perceptions of his work and the constant linking of blacks with urban struggles. His cover refuses to reinforce this connection and thus invites a reconsideration of typical images accompanying such stories. Like *Fortune*, *Time* describes Bearden's picture as expressing his opinions regarding the city. Unlike most cover artists, it asserts, Bearden had no trouble because "he has strong feelings about the expanding troubles of his adopted city."<sup>63</sup> More than this, however, the collage is a layered interpretation of circumstances in New York City in 1968 and an inversion of visual representations of race in the media. The fact that Bearden gleaned the fragments that make up the composition from the magazine's own photographs further underscores their rootedness in readers' visual landscape. Like Bearden's *Fortune* collage, this one converses with a wide range of sources to complicate reductive categorizations of urban life and to call out the contradictions present in the magazines.

### Harnessing the Potential of Mass Media

The *Fortune* and *Time* commissions gave Bearden the opportunity to gain international exposure and financial compensation, and by accepting them he joined the ranks of other illustrious artists such as Diego Rivera, Jacob Lawrence, Ben Shahn, and Roy Lichtenstein.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, the immediacy and wide circulation of magazines like *Fortune* and *Time* meant that they had the potential to stimulate action among a broader audience than his collages hanging on walls could reach.<sup>65</sup> Bearden's works indicate a continuation of his long-term commitment to magazines, despite the fact that by the late 1960s civil rights advocates had good reason to be suspicious of mass media.

At around the time that Bearden was making these collages, the writer and visual artist William Burroughs stressed the centrality of news media, identifying it as the place "where the real battle will be fought."<sup>66</sup> His interest is evident in a collage that he crafted using the cover of a 1962 issue of *Time* as part of a piece he and Brion Gysin made, entitled *Time* (1965).<sup>67</sup> But unlike this piece, Bearden's covers function as collages and as covers of circulated serials, a fundamental and wide-reaching intervention. Rather than being sequestered in a rarefied realm, they are mass-produced and disseminated worldwide. Bearden's collages, which



**William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *Time*, 1965**, collage, 12 x 19½ in. (30.5 x 24.1 cm), limited edition (artwork © 1965 William S. Burroughs, used by permission of The Wylie Agency, LLC; photograph provided by UCLA Library Special Collections)

source the very types of publications that host them, also point to the dynamic nature of collage and magazines, which bear witness to the processes by which they were made and thereby signal that these same processes may be repeated, continuing the cycle. His collages, as I have argued, can be interpreted as critical of the media and as calling attention to the inconsistencies found in periodicals. Yet at the same time his acceptance of the commissions demonstrates that he maintained a commitment to the capacity of the media, and specifically of the magazine, for provoking social change. These covers, then, point out collage's close relationship with the magazine as a source, as a target—and as a similarly multifaceted site of critique.

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62. "A Letter from the Publisher, James R. Shepley," *Time* 92, no. 18 (November 1, 1968): 7.  
63. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

64. A work by Diego Rivera appeared on the cover of *Fortune* in March 1932, a piece by Jacob Lawrence was on its October 1946 cover, Ben Shahn designed the cover of the August 1947 issue, and Roy Lichtenstein's portrait of Robert F. Kennedy was featured on the front of *Time* on May 24, 1968.

65. George Grosz also modeled for him the potential of the print medium as a site of political activism. In the early twentieth century, Grosz and his fellow Dadaists published their sardonic collages in magazines such as the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (*AIZ*), as well as their own publications, among them *Der Dada*.

66. William Burroughs interview with Dan Georgakas, "Rapping on Revolutionary Techniques" (1970, London), rep. *Burroughs Live: The Collected Interviews of William S. Burroughs, 1960–1997*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 150, quoted in Banash, paragraph 30.

67. The limited-edition collage was part of an altered version of *Time* magazine that Burroughs compiled with Brion Gysin. For more on this piece, see Robert A. Sobieszek, *Ports of Entry: William S. Burroughs and the Arts* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, dist. Thames and Hudson, 1996), 35–37.