

BAYOU FEVER BREAKDOWN

A new dance by Dada Masilo based on Romare Bearden

Friday, March 24, 6pm & Saturday, March 25, 6pm

South African choreographer **Dada Masilo** will present her new work *Bayou Fever Breakdown* at **DC Moore Gallery** on March 24th and 25th, 6 pm. Commissioned by Columbia University's Center for Jazz Studies, the new dance was developed by Masilo in response to twenty-one collages by Romare Bearden.

Bearden created the *Bayou Fever* collages in 1979, as a storyline for a dance performance, with the unrealized hope that his friend Alvin Ailey would use them as the basis for choreography. Bearden had already designed costumes and sets for one Ailey company dance, "Four Elements" (1977), choreographed by Dianne McIntyre, and also had created art to support the dance company headed by Nanette Bearden, the painter's wife.

Space is limited, to attend one of the free premiere exhibition/concerts please call the gallery at 212.247.2111 or email rjohnson@dcmooregallery.com.

"This is a major event in the worlds of Bearden and Masilo," says Columbia Professor Robert O'Meally, who assisted in the organization of the evening, "a moment of dynamic artistic interchange. We can see the painter's work embodied by one of the planet's most exciting young choreographers: African art in motion. What could be better?"

Ms. Masilo and two of her dancers will perform "Bayou Fever Breakdown" in a space surrounded by the Bearden collages, which have been shown together only on one occasion since their creation, never before in New York City. Bearden called his 1979 series of collages "Bayou Fever," and typed and hand-wrote outlines to guide the choreographer's sense of storyline, color, and character. Ms. Masilo, who is celebrated for the fluidity of her movement through traditional and contemporary dance vocabularies—European, African, and American--was inspired to complement Bearden's "Bayou Fever" with her own aesthetic statement.

Staged in the mysterious in-between world of the bayous outside New Orleans, Bearden's "Bayou Fever" explores the powers of the artist in a Deep South/Global South suddenly beset by life-threatening ills and forces. Along with the twenty-one "Bayou Fever" collages, the gallery will present an exhibition of other major Bearden works that mirror "Bayou's" structures and themes.

After each performance, Ms. Masilo will entertain questions from the audience.



Romare Bearden, *Bayou Fever, The Swamp Witch*, 1979. Collage and acrylic on fiberboard, 9 x 6 in.



Romare Bearden, *Bayou Fever, Untitled (The Hatchet Man)*, 1979. Collage, acrylic, and pencil on fiberboard, 9 x 6 in.

Dada Masilo is a dancer and choreographer who was born and raised in the Johannesburg township of Soweto, South Africa. Trained in ballet as well as modern and contemporary techniques, Masilo fuses these vocabularies into her own innovative, high-speed style. In leading venues across the world, she has captivated audiences with her creations—sometimes involving film, theater, and music as well as painting and a variety of visual installations. Among others, the artist William Kentridge has been an important collaborator. Although as an artist she has declared herself more committed to the personal challenges of choreography than to political statement, her pieces often address such taboos as homosexuality and the struggle for racial justice.

Romare Bearden (1911-1988) was one of the most significant artists of the 20th century. Born in Charlotte, North Carolina, he also lived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania before moving to New York City, where he made his home for most of his life. He studied with George Grosz at the Art Students League of New York, and in the 1930s and 1940s, became close friends with several older artists, including Stuart Davis, who was an important mentor. Growing up in Harlem, Bearden had a lifelong involvement with jazz and blues. Another one of his most important themes was African American life in the rural South, inspired by his early memories of Mecklenburg County. In the 1960s, he turned to collage and photomontage, which established his reputation as a leading contemporary artist. His collages reflect international influences as well, grounded in cubism, and frequently referencing European modern masters and African art. Dance, women as power figures, and travelers—through space, time, and other realms—have helped define his work. Like Masilo, he is known for art that is collaborative and supportive of radical social change.



Portrait of Dada Masilo by Suzy Bernstein

DC MOORE GALLERY specializes in contemporary and twentieth-century art. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm. For more information, for photographs, or to arrange a viewing, please call 212-247-2111 or email Rachel Johnson at rjohnson@dcmooregallery.com.