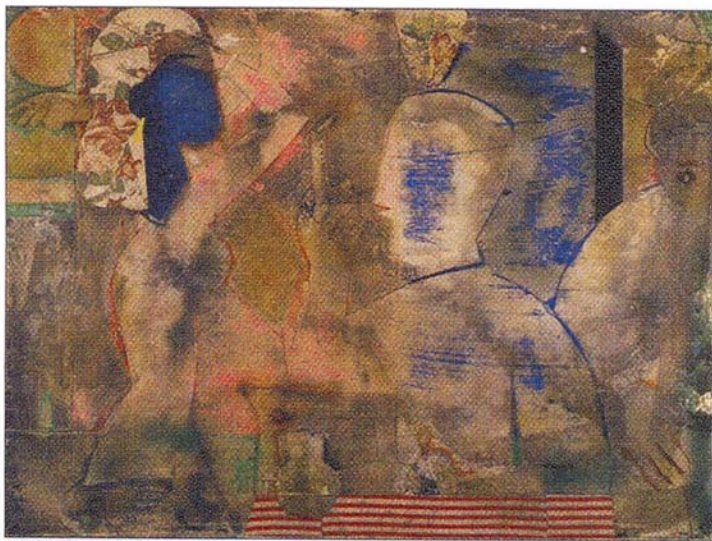


## reviews: national



Romare Bearden, *Morning by Candlelight*, ca. 1969–72, collage and mixed media on fiberboard, 30" x 40". Jerald Melberg.

## '25/25'

Jerald Melberg

Charlotte, North Carolina

This show, subtitled "Celebrating 25 Years and 25 Artists," marked the gallery's quarter-century anniversary and also functioned as a kind of autobiography of the dealer by invoking his relationships with artists. Paintings by Wolf Kahn and Ida Kohlmeyer recalled a time when Melberg curated exhibitions of their work at the city's Mint Museum of Art. The late Romare Bearden, a Charlotte native, has been with the gallery since its doors opened, three locations ago. And Argentinean artists Ernesto Berra and Raul Diaz were discovered during Melberg's trips to South America. Personal connections aside, the show, featuring one work by each artist, had no theme, but was able to demonstrate the dealer's acute interest in modernist abstraction and contemporary representation. There was a bright yellow canvas with a slashing black glyph by Robert Motherwell and a loosely—and lushly—brushed floral still life by Donna Phipps Stout. A stack of geometric forms in stainless steel by James Rosati seemed pulled up toward some unseen magnet.

Affinities were in evidence. Stanley Boxer's gobs of white paint give the abstract surface of *Scorched-chillofemmapossibility* (1982) motion, as flecks of color, especially a mint green, peek through. Likewise, Brian Rutenberg uses assertive patches of pigment in *Sleepsong 3* (2008) to pile up high-key colors, with another green—this one turquoise—flashing up like lightning.

In Bearden's *Morning by Candlelight* (ca. 1969–72) three collaged figures behind a cloth-covered table seem to come together as a whole. A scrap of flowered wallpaper makes a headdress, a curving pencil line an ear, and surfaces abraded by sandpaper glow with blue and pink. Was any other artist ever so lyrical with an X-Acto knife? —Richard Maschal