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Contact: Erin Lauderman, 612.625.9685, elauderm@umn.edu

***Rose and Melvin Smith:  
Remembering Rondo***

June 7 through September 8, 2019



Melvin Smith, *Combs Family*, 2003, paper collage.

MINNEAPOLIS – The Weisman Art Museum at the University of Minnesota presents *Rose and Melvin Smith: Remembering Rondo* (June 8 through September 8, 2019). Currently living in Eagan, Minnesota, Rose and Melvin Smith were residents of St. Paul’s Rondo neighborhood for many years. The Smiths’ art consists of urban scenes and portraits that present realist, expressionist, and at times allegorical takes on Black life in America. The works in this exhibition are drawn from their Rondo series—a sprawling body of work that stands as an elegiac anthem for that lost neighborhood and the enduring community that lives on in its wake.

From Melvin’s witty, unflinching collaged portraits and three-dimensional models of Rondo buildings to Rose’s touching portraits of family and joyful images of musicians, the works in



Rose Smith, *Sonny and Glenn*, 2013, oil on canvas.

the exhibition speak to the complex spectrum of life in Rondo and, by extension, the African American community writ large. Deeply committed to sharing the role of the Twin Cities in the broader history of civil rights, the Smiths insist this is more than a local story and that all of America needs to remember Rondo.

Melvin uses found material—images and objects—to construct both collage paintings and sculptural works. He creates portraits of individuals and portrait-like images of urban scenes, picturing people, buildings, and landscapes. In *Combs Family*, three men constructed from layers of paint and collaged paper stand, directly and confidently, facing the viewer. Behind them lie collaged photographic images of neighborhood homes under a painted sky. The image shows the tremendous influence of Romare Bearden (1911–1988), who utilized collage and painting, perhaps most famously to expressively picture the Great Migration. Like Bearden, Melvin is inspired by jazz—the deliberate clash and upending of received styles—which gives his works a physical and emotional depth.

Rose primarily works with oil painting on canvas or paper, picturing recognizable yet expressive and sometimes emblematic figures. In *Sonny and Glenn*, two African American adolescents stand tall in their jeans and sneakers against a vibrant, nondescript green background. Both assured and awkward, the work pictures Rose's older brothers and, more poetically, the internal and physical contradictions of these figures, made all the more fraught by their stature as Black boys.

Focusing on their own lived experiences, the Smiths' art offers an intimate view of everyday Black life in Rondo and the rich histories embedded in those experiences. Their desire to preserve and trumpet the travails and triumphs of their community is testimony of their devotion to it. The Weisman is honored to present *Remembering Rondo*, illuminating and celebrating two of the most important and prolific artists of our state and region.

## RELATED PROGRAMS

**Exhibition Preview Party** June 6, 2019 | 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

A celebration of the intimate and sprawling works of Rose and Melvin Smith—explore the histories embedded in their paintings and collages. The evening will include small bites, jazz music by PaviElle, and conversation with the artists.

FREE admission. Register at [z.umn.edu/SmithsExhibitionPreview](https://z.umn.edu/SmithsExhibitionPreview)

**Remembering Rondo | Community Event** July 17 | 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Celebrate Rondo artists and community members past, present, and future. Explore the *Remembering Rondo* exhibition through storytelling with Beverly Cottman. Watch *Rondo: Beyond the Pavement*, a documentary showing the perspectives of Rondo elders told through the point of view of young Rondo media makers with a panel to follow. Gather and share with the StoryMobile, recording stories and reactions on the plaza. Enjoy free ice cream.

**ABOUT WAM**

Since its origin in 1934, the Weisman Art Museum has been a teaching museum for the University of Minnesota. Today, education remains central to the museum's mission to create art experiences that spark discovery, critical thinking, and transformation, linking the University and the community. The Weisman Art Museum is located at 333 East River Road, Minneapolis, on the University of Minnesota campus. Admission to exhibition galleries is always free.

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