

# Faith Ringgold

Courtesy of ACA Galleries



Faith Ringgold, American People Series #19: U.S. Postage Stamp Commemorating the Advent of Black Power, 1967



## The Enduring Power of Faith Ringgold's Art

By Artsy Editors

Aug 4, 2016 4:57 pm



Portrait of Faith Ringgold. Photo by Grace Matthews.

In 1967, a year of widespread race riots in America, Faith Ringgold painted a 12-foot-long canvas called *American People Series #20: Die*. The work shows a tumult of figures, both black and white, wielding weapons and spattered with blood. It was a watershed year for Ringgold, who, after struggling for a decade against the marginalization she faced as a black female artist, unveiled the monumental piece in her first solo exhibition at New York's Spectrum Gallery. Earlier this year, several months after Ringgold turned 85, the painting was purchased by the Museum of Modern Art, cementing her legacy as a pioneering artist and activist whose work remains searingly relevant.

### Where did she come from?

Ringgold was born in Harlem in 1930. Her family included educators and creatives, and she grew up surrounded by the Harlem Renaissance. The street where she was raised was also home to influential activists, writers, and artists of the era—Thurgood Marshall, W.E.B. DuBois, and Aaron Douglas, to name a few. "It's nice

to come up in a period where great changes are being made," she once said. "And that was my period: the '30s to the '60s, when radical changes were being made."



Faith Ringgold, *The American People Series #20: Die*, 1967. Image courtesy Faith Ringgold and ACA Galleries, New York.

Ringgold received her art education at City College, down the street from her childhood home. "I got a fabulous education in art—wonderful teachers who taught me everything except anything about African art or African American art. But I traveled and took care of that part myself," she's said. After graduating, she began her career painting landscapes and still-lives in the style of modern European masters. But her practice quickly pivoted to focus on her own experience and the political and social tensions that surrounded her, namely the struggle for equality among women and the black community.

### What inspired her?

Throughout her career, Ringgold's work has been driven by the challenges and fulfillments of her life and the lives of those around her. "First of all, you should never make something, as an artist or even as a writer, that is outside of your experience," she once said. "People will use what is available to them. I am black and I am a woman. There it is."

In 1963, as the fight for racial justice animated the Civil Rights movement, Ringgold began her seminal "American People Series." It was the artist's first body of work to manifest her mature style—one that fused the forms and techniques of folk art with content inspired by the most vocal social critics of her time, such as the writers James Baldwin and Amiri Baraka. In an early painting from the series, *The American People Series #1: Between Friends* (1963), two women, one black and one white, stand close but seem to stare through each other. A red divider cuts through the center of the composition, bifurcating the two women and emphasizing their distinct experiences and, perhaps, their inability to understand one another.



American People Series #16: Woman Looking in a Mirror, 1966  
ACA Galleries

The '60s also gave birth to Ringgold's role as an activist. In 1968, she organized a demonstration protesting the omission of black artists in a Whitney Museum show highlighting American sculptors of the '30s. Two years later, she was on the front lines of another demonstration at the Whitney—this time protesting the woeful dearth of female artists across the museum's exhibition program. The demonstrators brandished police whistles, feminine products, and eggs: "I boiled mine, painted them black, and wrote 50 percent on them [to indicate the percentage of women who should be included in shows]," Ringgold said. "It felt like we were doing something and were a part of the movement in America to equalize things."

Inspired by the history of African and African-American art, Ringgold introduced fabric and three-dimensional forms into her practice in the '70s. Her experiments resulted in soft sculptures that drew from tribal masks and handmade dolls; in "The Harlem Series" (1975), these took the form of Civil Rights heroes and black cultural icons, like pastor Adam Clayton Powell Jr., activist Martin Luther King Jr., and NBA star Wilt Chamberlain. Not long after, Ringgold began making her "Story Quilts"—intricate narrative paintings bordered with fabric that would put her name on the map (she adapted one piece, *Tar Beach*, 1988, into a popular children's book), but weren't accepted into the art historical canon until recently. The Guggenheim purchased *Tar Beach* in 1988 but has yet to place it on public view.

Why will she go down in history?

Ringgold passionately combines a deep commitment to social activism with a style that draws from folk art and modernist painting. Across her body of work, paintings and sculptures lay bare the discrimination that plagues our world and double as rallying cries for urgent change. “You can’t sit around waiting for somebody else to say who you are. You need to write it and paint it and do it,” she once said. “That’s the power of being an artist.” And while the subjects and scenes that fill Ringgold’s compositions are inspired by the American experience, the themes are universal: inequality and the struggle for its eradication.



Faith Ringgold, *For the Woman's House*, 1971. Image courtesy Faith Ringgold and ACA Galleries, New York.

In 1971, Ringgold took up a residency of her own design at Rikers Island. For several months, she interviewed women incarcerated in the Women’s House of Detention. She asked inmates what they hoped to see in the site-specific painting that she would create for the space. “Many of them voiced the opinion that they wanted to be able to see women being things in the world other than some of the things they had gotten arrested for,” she recalled. A year later, *For the Women’s House* (1971) was installed on the walls of the prison: It showed women of all races working in an expansive range of professions, many of them traditionally associated with men: doctors, police officers, basketball players. In the corner of the composition, an open book reads: “I knew someone had to take the first step. –Rosa Parks.” It’s a fitting tagline for Ringgold’s own influential and groundbreaking practice.

—Alexxa Gotthardt

**"Faith Ringgold: An American Artist" to open at the Crocker Art Museum**



Faith Ringgold (American, born 1930), *We Came to America*, 1998. Color etching 1/15, 15 1/2 x 19 3/4 inches © 2018 Faith Ringgold, member Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

**SACRAMENTO, CA.-** On February 18, 2018, the Crocker Art Museum will bring to Sacramento Faith Ringgold: *An American Artist*, an exhibition of Ringgold’s famous story quilts, tankas (inspired by thangkas, Tibetan textile paintings), oil paintings, prints, drawings, masks, sculptures, and original illustrations from the artist’s award-winning book *Tar Beach*.

While Ringgold's work has been featured in a Sacramento gallery show before, the Crocker's exhibition brings together more than 40 examples of Ringgold's varied production spanning several decades, from the 1960s through the first years of the current century. The works on view highlight themes of family life, relationships, and jazz music, as well as race and the history of slavery in America.

“Faith Ringgold has long been an important voice about the discrimination felt by many artists of color, women, and other minorities,” said Crocker Art Museum Director and CEO, Lial Jones. “In addition to highlighting stories that must be heard, she creates engaging work that speaks to all, and I am delighted that we are bringing her art back to Sacramento for the public to view.”

Faith Ringgold has been telling her story through art for over half a century. Best known for her “story quilts,” Ringgold is also a painter, mixed-media sculptor, performance artist, activist, author, and teacher.

The youngest of four children, Ringgold was born in Harlem, New York, in 1930 — just six months after her 18-month-old brother died of pneumonia. Named Faith as a symbol of healing and hope, the artist recalls her

childhood as “the most wonderful period ... until now.” She was surrounded by imaginative people and spent much of her youth cultivating her own creativity. Faith’s father was a gifted storyteller, and her mother a successful fashion designer. Because of her chronic asthma, Ringgold passed much time indoors, coloring with crayons, sewing, and working with her mother’s fabrics.

Describing her youth, Faith said, “I grew up in Harlem during the Great Depression. This did not mean I was poor and oppressed. We were protected from oppression and surrounded by a loving family.” Ringgold’s parents made sure their children experienced the vibrant cultural happenings of the Harlem Renaissance. Neighbors included future legends like Duke Ellington and Langston Hughes. Faith’s childhood friend, Sonny Rollins, who would himself become an influential jazz musician, often visited and played his saxophone.

In the 1950s, Ringgold completed a bachelor’s degree in fine art and education and a master’s degree in art at the City College of New York. “I got a fabulous education in art — wonderful teachers who taught me everything except anything about African art or African American art. But I traveled and took care of that part myself.” She had two daughters with her husband, jazz and classical pianist Robert Earl Wallace, but was divorced after four years.

The following decade held several turning points for the artist. Ringgold traveled to Europe, visiting museums in Paris, Florence, and Rome. In 1962, she married Burdette “Birdie” Ringgold, taking his last name. One day, the couple visited a Manhattan gallery to show the gallerist examples of Ringgold’s still lifes and landscapes. The gallerist responded, “You can’t do that.” Ringgold came to realize, “what she’s saying is: It’s the 1960s, all hell is breaking loose all over, and you’re painting flowers and leaves. You can’t do that. Your job is to tell your story.”

Ringgold responded by addressing the subject of race in America in her first series of political paintings, *The American People*, and became involved in the artistic and political events of the era. She, with others, formed the Ad Hoc Women’s Art Committee, protesting the Whitney Museum of American Art’s virtual exclusion of women from its annual show (the Whitney’s 1969 Annual included only eight women out of 151 total artists). The protesters demanded 50-percent women, and though the Whitney didn’t meet this goal, the museum did include 20 percent the following year.

In the 1970s, Ringgold returned to her roots in working with fabric, making masks, sculptures, and tankas for her masked performances. She made her first story quilts in the 1980s, combining images with text as a way of publishing her own, unedited words. “During that time, I was trying to get my autobiography published, but no one wanted to print my story. In 1983, I began writing stories on my quilts as an alternative. That way, when my quilts were hung up to look at, or photographed for a book, people could still read my stories. They are written the way I write my children’s stories — each section written on the quilt is a page.”

Today, Ringgold is included in the Whitney’s collection, and she continues to champion equality and freedom of speech, opening the art world for female artists and artists of color. “In the exhibition *Faith Ringgold: An American Artist*, there is warmth, charm, and straightforward honesty in Ringgold’s art,” said Crocker Art Museum Associate Curator Kristina Gilmore. “It draws us in and disarms us, then often reveals powerful messages. Through her work, she speaks truths that are sometimes haunting and painful, but often joyful and heartwarming. It’s quite inspirational.”

# ArtReview

**Faith Ringgold *Paintings and Story Quilts, 1964–2017* Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London 23 February – 28 April**

Faith Ringgold's *American People Series #20: Die* (1967), a large-scale painting of blood-spattered limbs during a race riot, introduced the artist's work to the UK with a bang when it was included in *Soul of a Nation* at Tate Modern last year. For her first solo exhibition in Europe, Pippy Houldsworth Gallery highlights two related strands of Ringgold's practice: paintings from the 1960s and the story quilts that she's been making since 1980 (and for which she is best known). Each of the five quilts on display belongs to a different narrative series, in which they act as chapters. These hybrid works are richly detailed, combining acrylic painting with carefully crafted patchwork and handwritten text. They are clamorous and – even at their most joyous – activist in intent. Ringgold has long fought against prejudice: in 1971 she founded the campaign group 'Where We At', Black Women Artists, and telling stories through quilts began as her riposte to a publishing industry uninterested, as she saw it, in narratives of black lives.

The small gallery is full of rich, interconnected stories. In the four early oil paintings on show, European Modernism combines with traditional Nigerian and Ghanaian masks to devastating effect: everyday racial and gender tensions are conveyed through stark, black-edged figures filled with saturated planes of colour. *American People Series #16: Woman Looking in a Mirror* (1966), for instance, sees a black woman impassively consider her own reflection. The composition is both homage to and subversion of Pablo Picasso's post-Cubist phase (see his *Girl Before a Mirror*, 1932), and highlights the importance of self-definition in a racist, sexist society. Or take the quilt-edged painting *Subway Graffiti #2* (1987), in which Ringgold gathers together dozens of characters she was either close to or admired – from her studio assistant to Jean-Michel Basquiat – in a joyously sprawling portrait of late-1980s New York in which a fictionalized family of slaves who have fled a cotton plantation and followed the Underground Railroad in search of freedom are finally reunited. The latest quilt, *Ancestors Part II* (2017), is an unabashed paean to hope for the future. Multiracial children dance together in a dreamlike state, with an accompanying text describing their song for a 'world at peace' filled with 'love not hate'.

Combining an advocate sensibility with a clarity of graphic imagination, the piece is – almost – an effective stand-in for Ringgold's project as a whole. There are so many threads to unpick here, so tightly packed in, that the shows only failing is its necessarily limited scale and reach. Though lauded in the US – Ringgold's many children's books feature on school curricula and her work is held in over 50 public collections – the eighty-seven-year-old artist is relatively little-known on these shores. Let's hope we won't have to wait much longer to see her given the space she deserves. *Isabella Smith*





*Coming to Jones Road Part II n.2 We Here Aunt Emmy Got Us Now, 2010, acrylic on canvas with fabric border, 173 x 160 cm. © the artist.*

Courtesy ACA Galleries, New York, and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London

## ARTFORUM



### WEISS BERLIN

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Thu - Sat 1pm to 6pm

#### MUST SEE

#### Faith Ringgold

April 25 - June 16, 2018

04/23/2018 Faith Ringgold in conversation with Zoe Whitley (Tate Modern)  
6:30pm

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## **GALLERY WEEKEND BERLIN PREVIEW**



Image courtesy of Weiss Gallery, Berlin. Faith Ringgold, Ego Painting (1969)

Possibly the most talked about exhibition that will be open during Gallery Weekend (in art critic circles at least) will be the Faith Ringgold exhibition at Weiss Gallery near Kurfürstendamm. Ringgold is an esteemed American artist well known for works on canvas as well as quilts depicting aspects of the representation of African Americans. Weiss recently hosted an exhibition of the work of Ed Clark, another African American artist whose career has spanned more than more than 12 presidential administrations – and the ensuing political upheavals thereof – and the Faith Ringgold show promises to be another exploration of an invaluable contemporary artist whose works, both historic and contemporary, are more relevant than ever.

**OCULA REPORT**

## The Lowdown: shows to see during Gallery Weekend Berlin



**Faith Ringgold**  
**Weiss Berlin**  
**24 April–9 June 2018**

Just a short walk from Kunsthandel Wolfgang Werner, artistic endurance through adversity is a topic that resonates. Weiss Berlin is exhibiting some of the most important works by African American artist Faith Ringgold, including her 2007 painting *Hate is a Sin*, which takes the flag of the Confederate States of America, often flaunted as a symbol of white supremacy, as its starting point. Ringgold must have felt just a pinch of irony when the painting was purchased by the Whitney Museum of Art nearly 50 years after she was racially insulted outside the New York institution during a protest against their failure to show black and women artists. The works exhibited at Weiss span the decades from the 1960s to the 2000s, and represent the range of media and inspiration that Ringgold has employed in her broad, always acute vision of black life in America. The tender, detailed narrative quilts that she began making in the 1970s will be shown alongside marker pen drawings, paintings and sculptures.

On 23 April at 6:30pm, 87-year-old Ringgold will deliver the Distinguished W.E.B Du Bois Lecture at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, in conversation with curator Zoe Whitley of Tate Modern, London, who recently co-curated the exhibition *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of black Power* (12 July–22 October 2017), which included Ringgold.







# ARTFORUM

## Faith Ringgold ACA GALLERIES

Faith Ringgold's paintings from the 1960s stand alone and they have for some time. Long excluded from art-historical narratives, the canvases are frank and unforbearing in what they depict (racial conflicts, gender troubles), but they also have a rather curious way of being so, Ringgold constructs her pointed subject matter via anomalous means, deploying odd but successful color choices, imbuing figurative compositions with bold geometry, and implementing a wending of Matisian line. This body of work—which was culled by Dorian Bergen from the 2010 survey organized by the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, before it is reconstituted this summer in Washington, DC, at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, from June 21 through November 10—is paired with Ringgold's more recent and better-known quilt pieces. These stem from the artist's identification as a feminist in 1970 and leave behind the traditional stretched canvas for "women's work" and African textiles. Yet Ringgold's break with convention was evident before then.

The series "American People," 1963-67, shows Ringgold buoyantly imaging suppressed aspects of Americanness, employing figuration to a nuanced, generative end. In *American People Series #9: The American Dream*, 1964, a woman is seated for a portrait in three-quarter profile with her right arm held upright and her wrist bent to reveal a large, brushy diamond ring. But consumerism isn't the primary critique at hand. Brightly lit from above, her skin (composed of a sampling of pink, cream, and blue) looks porcelain, yet a portion of her head is covered in shadow. The exaggerated darkness of the skin there registers not merely as the effect of shadow; the woman appears to have a two-toned complexion, light and dark. The appearance of this fractured self in 1964 calls forth more contemporary notions of race and gender as performance, and also helps set the stage for Adrian Piper's performative questioning at the start of the next decade.

Such fragmentation of the self complicates many of the works that were on view. In *American People Series #20: Die*, 1967, a gruesome, blood-spattered riot painted on a grand scale, Ringgold quells chaos by abandoning verisimilitude through a boldly flat, graphic style,



Faith Ringgold,  
*American People Series #9: The American Dream*, 1964, oil on canvas, 36 x 24".

Compositionally and thematically located somewhere between Gormic and Bay Area painter Joan Brown's jocular, defiantly two-dimensional interior portraits of the 1970s, the painting conveys the moment's urgency with a deadpan flamboyance. The static figures, each implicated simultaneously as victim and aggressor, stare forward with vacant, disinterested expressions that belie the trauma they have experienced. The result is a sense of isolation that is evident throughout many of Ringgold's '60s works.

*Black Light Series #10: Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger*, 1969, emphatically takes up one of Jasper Johns's signal subjects—the American flag—and pushes Leo Steinberg's notion of "the commonplace as a painting" to a bluntly provocative edge, interweaving prejudice into the composition of Old Glory: The first word of the title's imperative is flatly laid atop the stars, the red stripes winding the second one into formation. Here, the US tricolor is tonally darker than we're used to: red, gray, and blue. The "Black Light" series, 1967-69, to which *Flag* belongs, is marked by Ringgold's decision to forgo the use of white paint, a refusal that allows protest to reach visible and internal equipoise in her work. "Protest art" is often identified through its explicit subject matter, yet Ringgold's production goes further—visually signifying her protest and physically embodying it as well. This limiting structural tenet imbues the paintings with a palpable density, as if the nails they're hanging on might buckle under their weight.

—Beau Rutland

# ARTFORUM

## Faith Ringgold

04.01.13

AUTHOR: PAIGE K. BRADLEY

03.02.13-04.27.13 ACA Galleries

Following the first comprehensive survey of Faith Ringgold's paintings from the 1960s at the Neuberger Museum of Art in 2010, this exhibition of her early works includes selections from the series "American People," 1962–67, and "Black Light," 1967–69, as well as six examples of her famed story quilt paintings. *The Lover's Trilogy: #2 Sleeping*, 1986, an example of the latter, depicts a couple sleeping with a blanket running across their bodies, embellished with the story of their dysfunctional yet loving relationship, while the colors and shapes of fabric surrounding the figures speak to their African heritage. This work, like all of Ringgold's quilts, revivifies a tradition—historically "women's work"—while also proposing an alternative format for painting, still vibrant even five decades after its first articulations.

It is in her oil paintings, however, that one sees how Ringgold directly grappled with the weight of the European tradition she learned as an art student at the City College of New York in the 1950s. Take *Black Light Series #10: Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger*, 1969, for instance, which was created in response to the first image of the *Apollo 11* moon landing. The piece portrays the American flag, with some editorial revisions. Embedded among the gray stars of Old Glory, and only a few hues darker than them, is the word DIE. Though rendered in capital letters, it is surprisingly subtle, coded into the pattern. But the command is clear, testifying to a reality of enduring prejudice and racism still apparent in the fabric of our society. Irregular, mazelike gray and red stripes suggest an alternative iconic image for another America, perhaps the one first glimpsed on a mass scale during the civil rights movement by way of the newly established ubiquity of television and media. Ringgold's stars and stripes disrupt the image and narrative of national harmony that the flag vaunts, and challenges America's hubris in perpetuating a legacy of colonization. These early works remain relevant as evidence of the struggle and triumph of her fight to claim difference and individual identity as both a virtue and a form of resistance to the homogenization of artistic discourse.

# The New York Times

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2013

## Art in Review

### Faith Ringgold

'Faith Ringgold's America: Early Works and Story Quilts'

ACA Galleries  
529 West 20th Street, Chelsea  
Through April 27

Few artists have kept as many balls in the air as long as Faith Ringgold. As the 25 works in this exhibition demonstrate, she has spent more than five decades juggling message and form, high and low, art and craft, inspirational narrative and quiet or not so quiet fury about racial and sexual inequality.

Most of the paintings here are little-known efforts from the 1960s that resurfaced in the Neuberger Museum of Art's 2010 show "American People, Black Light." Joining them are nearly a dozen of her better-known story quilts from 1973 to 2004. (The paintings will rejoin the Neuberger show, which has been traveling and will open next at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington on June 21.)

It's great to see the story quilts with their elaborate figurative scenes framed by piecework borders, especially "Who's Bad?," a 1988 tribute to Michael Jackson's pulsing music video, and also examples from the "Feminist" series, mounted on appliquéd fabric in the manner of Tibetan thangka.

But the real attraction here are Ms. Ringgold's implacable works



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND ACA GALLERIES, NY

Strong color and geometric abstraction: a 1964 oil from Faith Ringgold's "American People" series, at ACA Galleries.

from the '60s and their assured synthesis of style, ideas and feelings. Often made without white paint as a protest against racism, they combine aspects of Pop art and Social Realism while using geometric and biomorphic abstraction in symbolic ways. Again and again, strong color, bold composition and a commanding internal scale render simple images complex.

The uplifting message of "Study Now," which depicts a young woman carrying a red book emphasized by a big red arrow, is complicated by the longing in her eyes. "The Artist and His Model" (1966) cuts several ways, showing a ferocious young black artist with a marvelous, masklike face in blue and brown, accompanied by a blond, fair-skinned model. And the harrowing mural-size "Die" (1967), with its battling figures and splattered blood, shows how the violent legacy of slavery permeates society as a whole.

Ms. Ringgold's most resolute activism is expressed in several stark political paintings that pit messages against abstract design, without either backing down. They presage the use of language by artists as various as Barbara Kruger, Christopher Wool and Glenn Ligon.

This show leaves you curious about the art that Ms. Ringgold, who was born in 1930, made in the 1950s, before her '60s blossoming. You also wonder why her extensive achievement has not received a full-dress retrospective from a major New York museum.

ROBERTA SMITH



# The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2010

## An Era's Injustices Fuel an Artist's Activist Works

**BY MARK H. FISHER** — The artist Frank Ruggold, who spent 18 years in prison for his involvement in the 1960s civil rights struggle, says that the injustices of that era have shaped his art. He says that the injustices of that era have shaped his art. He says that the injustices of that era have shaped his art.

**FRANK RUGGOLD** — Mr. Ruggold was born in 1938 in an art-encouraging family — his mother was a fashion designer — and earned an M.F.A. from City College in 1964. By that time he had been married and had two children. He was teaching at the time, and was teaching at the time, and was teaching at the time.

At the time he started his own studio, he was still in and out of prison. He was still in and out of prison. He was still in and out of prison. He was still in and out of prison.

It was in 1967, when he was still in and out of prison, that he started his own studio. He was still in and out of prison. He was still in and out of prison. He was still in and out of prison.

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**Activist Works, Black Light** — The artist Frank Ruggold's painting 'Black Light' (1967) is a powerful statement on the injustices of the 1960s. It is a powerful statement on the injustices of the 1960s.

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# ARTnews



## Faith Ringgold

**Neuberger Museum of Art  
Purchase, New York**

When we think of African American artist and writer Faith Ringgold, we think of her richly colored, elaborately worked story quilts, which spearheaded a revival of the distinctive genre in the late '70s. Their renown, however, unfortunately eclipsed the powerful body of paintings, posters, and prints she made in the '60s. Rectifying the oversight, former Neuberger Museum director Thom Collins and curator Tracy Fitzpatrick gathered 46 works from that period into this illuminating exhibition, titled "American People,

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Faith Ringgold, *Self-Portrait*, 1965,  
oil on canvas, 59" x 40", Neuberger Museum of Art.

FAITH RINGGOLD COURTESY ACA GALLERIES, NEW YORK

## Biography

Faith Ringgold, born 1930 in Harlem, New York is a painter, mixed media sculptor, performance artist, writer, teacher and lecturer. She received her B.S. and M.A. degrees in visual art from the City College of New York in 1955 and 1959. Professor Emeritus of Art at the University of California in San Diego, Ringgold has received 23 Honorary Doctorates.

During the early 1960's Ringgold traveled in Europe. She created her first political paintings, *The American People Series* from 1963 to 1967 and had her first and second one-person exhibitions at the Spectrum Gallery in New York. In the early 1970's Ringgold began making tankas (inspired by a Tibetan art form of paintings framed in richly brocaded fabrics), soft sculptures and masks. She later utilized this medium in her masked performances of the 1970's and 80's. Although Faith Ringgold's art was initially inspired by African art in the 1960's, it was not until the late 1970's that she traveled to Nigeria and Ghana to see the rich tradition of masks that have continued to be her greatest influence.

She made her first quilt, *Echoes of Harlem*, in 1980, in collaboration with her mother, Madame Willi Posey. The quilts were an extension of her tankas from the 1970's. However, these paintings were not only bordered with fabric but quilted, creating for her a unique way of painting using the quilt medium.

Ringgold's first story quilt *Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima?* was written in 1983 as a way of publishing her unedited words. The addition of text to her quilts has developed into a unique medium and style all her own.

Crown Publishers published Faith Ringgold's first book, the award winning *Tar Beach* in 1991. It has won over 20 awards including the Caldecott Honor and the Coretta Scott King award for the best-illustrated children's book of 1991. An animated version with Natalie Cole as the voice over was created by HBO in 2010. The book is based on the story quilt of the same title from *The Woman on a Bridge Series*, 1988. The original painted story quilt, *Tar Beach*, is in the permanent collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

Her second children's book *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky* was published in 1992 by Crown. In 1993 Hyperion Books published *Dinner at Aunt Connie's*, Ringgold's third book based on *The Dinner Quilt*, 1986. Faith Ringgold's autobiography and first book for an adult audience *We Flew Over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold* (Bullfinch 1995; released in paperback by Duke University Press in 2005) as well as the children's book *My Dream of Martin Luther King* were published. To date she has illustrated 17 children's books. Faith's most recent books are *Harlem Renaissance Party* (Harper Collins 2015) and *We Came to America* (Alfred A Knopf 2016).