

Faith Ringgold - Mixed Media Artist



About Faith - <https://www.faithringgold.com/>

Artist: Faith Ringgold was born in 1930 in Harlem, New York. She lives and continues to work in Englewood, New Jersey as a working artist, writer, speaker, sculptor, and emeritus professor at the University of California. She earned her Bachelor in Science and Master of Art in Visual Art at the City College of New York in 1955 and 1959. She first began as a painter after a trip to Europe in 1960. Her best-known series, “The American People” of 1963-1967 was her first debut of political painting that would set the course of social justice themes within all her works. Ringgold transitioned from painting to painting on fabrics to sewing quilts and painting to sculpting and speaking for social justice on racial inequality and violence. She has been awarded with over 20 Honorary Doctorates and recognitions such as the Coretta Scott King Award for best illustrated children’s book in 1991. She has illustrated 17 children’s books and written her own experiences of her art like “The Woman on a Bridge Series”, 1988.

“In college, they never told you to paint the world as it really is, but I always have to feel something to paint it.” - Ringgold

Artwork & World: Faith Ringgold was greatly inspired by African art, especially after her travels to Nigeria and Ghana in the late 1970s. Their traditional masks are a great influence on her artistic style. She made her first quilt, “Who’s Afraid of Aunt Jemima?”, in 1983. Today, she is still inspired by the political outburst and protests, even more after the death of George Floyd in 2020. From the start of her artistry career, she has always protested the need for representation of women and People of Color - especially in the art scene. Her choice of mixed media quilt pieces resonates back to slave history and women working in textiles. “Street Story Quilt” (1985) was displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art for its 150th-anniversary show in late 2020. It



displays a story of community survival and continual recovery from historical and social inequalities. She details how her childhood in Harlem was

full of colorful art and jazz music which can be exemplified in “Tar Beach #2” (1990) where the city is celebrated in vibrant colors, patterns and text.

Morris, Bob. “Faith Ringgold Will Keep Fighting Back.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 11 June 2020,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/11/arts/design/faith-ringgold-art.html>

Paul, Stella. "Modern Storytellers: Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, Faith Ringgold." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000—. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/most/hd_most.htm (October 2004)



Tar Beach #2, 1990, silkscreen on silk
<https://www.faithringgold.com/portfolio/tar-beach-2/>



Street Story Quilt, 1985, cotton canvas, acrylic paint, ink marker, dyed and printed fabric, and sequins on cotton flannel backing.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/485416>

"Her memories of growing up in Harlem fed into the semi-autobiographical Tar Beach (1988) and Tar Beach 2 (1990) story-quilts, which depict an eight-year-old girl soaring above her neighborhood and claiming its landmarks as her own."

Jones, E. E. (2021, March 18). Faith Ringgold: 'I'm not going to see riots and not paint them'. *The Guardian*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/mar/18/faith-ringgold-im-not-going-to-see-riots-and-not-paint-them>

Audience: Faith Ringgold's art is aimed for the oppressed and is a protest against the oppressors. Her art shows the perspective of a Black person and woman in America. Her art calls for change of fundamental issues of racial equity still present today even after the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Her art represents the unseen and under-represented, such as Black women, women in the arts, women in history, and People of Color.

Artincontext. "Faith Ringgold - an Exploration of the Artistic Life of Faith Ringgold." *Artincontext.org*, 19 Sep. 2021, <https://artincontext.org/faith-ringgold/>.

Structural Frame:

What catches your eye first when you look at "Tar Beach #2" by Faith Ringgold? Where does your eye move next?

In your opinion, what story is Ringgold trying to tell? How does Ringgold use color in her piece and how does it affect the story she wants to tell?

Cultural Frame:

Who is Ringgold representing in her pieces? What story is she representing through textiles?

Vocabulary

Places: can be a physical location (site-specific) or an imaginative space personal to oneself

Textiles: fabrics, felts, fibers - anything woven

Composition: the arrangement of forms in a work of art

Value: variations of light and dark

Eye movement: the way a viewer's eye move from one area to the next in a work of art

Contrast: use of opposites near or beside (color, texture, etc)

Social Justice: justice in the distribution of wealth, privilege, and opportunities among all peoples in a society

Fast Fashion: inexpensive clothing produced rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends

Further Artwork and Research: [Fast fashion](#)

has been taken over by big brand names like H&M or Zara to reproduce clothing at a fast rate to reach their consumer, but it is affecting our society in quiet yet long-lasting ways. Some artists like [Julie Peppito](#) or [Zwia Lipkin](#) reduce the effects of fast fashion by reusing their old textiles or thrifted textiles to create their pieces. In this project, we will be using our own textiles (old clothing we don't wear, ribbons we find, a pillow, a sentimental fabric, a traditional fabric attached to your culture) to construct our meaningful, memorable place.

Questions to think about: How do we contribute to fast fashion? How can we use our own textiles and found items to create meaningful art for us and our chosen audiences?

Ben Venom - Textile Artist



<https://lifewithoutandy.com/featured/mad-love/interview-wild-r-e-imagined-ben-venom/>

Ben Venom is a textile artist who lives and works in San Francisco, California. He received his MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2007. He has pieces exhibited all around the world, such as at the Levi Strauss Museum in Germany, HPGRP Gallery in Tokyo, and Charlotte Fogh Gallery in Denmark.

He works with repurposed materials and combats ideas of masculinity and counterculture that are represented in negative stereotypes. He wants to represent their stories in a different light through soft materials like printed fabrics, ribbons, and upcycled clothing. He was introduced to sewing through the Atlanta punk rock scene. With that, he was amazed by the array of bright colors and eccentric patterns, so he took matters into his own hands and began to create himself.



<https://www.pbs.org/video/art-school-ben-venom-punk-rock-g-tilter-whats-your-style/>



War Machine, 2018, 133" x 72" Handmade quilt with recycled fabric.
<http://www.benvenom.com/>

Compare & Contrast: Ben Venom and Faith Ringgold are similar and different in big ways. They both share an interest and passion for using mixed media to create a new narrative of misrepresented groups of people. They use color, patterns, and various materials to create powerful stories through strikingly visual imagery.

Questions to consider:

1. How does Ringgold and Venom use color to attract their audience?
2. How do they use textiles to represent their underrepresented groups of people?
3. How is their work different from painting?
4. What associations do you have with fabric, and how do Ringgold and Venom challenge these associations?
5. Both artists use text. What does that text say?
6. How do the colors and patterns support or conflict with the text messages?



Kill Them with Kindness, 2022, Hand-made Quilt with Recycled Fabric 80" x 83"
<http://www.benvenom.com/>



Freedom of Speech, 1990, Acrylic and graphite on paper, 24 x 35 3/4 in. (61 x 90.8 cm)

Morris, Bob. "Faith Ringgold Will Keep Fighting Back." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 11 June 2020,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/11/arts/design/faith-ringgold-art.html>