

## **Faith Ringgold**

### **1930 – 2024**

#### **Artist Photograph**

Born on October 8, 1930 in Harlem, New York, Faith Ringgold is considered to be one of the most important African American artists. Working in a variety of mediums including painting, sculpture, and performance, Ringgold is best known for her “story quilts” that combine narrative with quilted borders and text. Faith died in April, 2024.

#### **U.S. Postage Stamp Commemorating the Advent of Black Power, 1967, from “The American People” series, oil on canvas, 72”x96”**

This painting represents Ringgold’s feelings concerning the disadvantage of being African American in the United States. Like many artists at that time, she used the American flag, posters, maps, and postage stamps as subjects of her painting. Ninety light faces and ten dark faces represent the percentages of white and African Americans in the U.S. The dark faces and the words BLACK POWER cross to form an X. This image points out Faith’s frustration with racial inequality.

#### **Groovin’ High, 1986, acrylic on canvas, tie-dyed, painted and pieced fabric, 56”x92”**

By 1986, Faith had found an art dealer willing to showcase her work. This painting shows jubilant movement and expresses Ringgold’s newfound freedom in her career. Dancers shift in polyrhythms - an African way of having a variety of rhythms around you at the same time; the figures are different sizes, moving in different directions and in different spaces. Ringgold sewed her favorite motif – four triangles to form a square – and quilted them together to create the border. Ringgold began to describe herself as “a painter who works in the quilt medium.”

#### **Who’s Bad?, 1988, acrylic on canvas, pieced fabric, 70”x92 ½”**

This quilt was created to celebrate Michael Jackson’s socially conscious artistry. Michael Jackson dances jubilantly across the foreground of the quilt – his toes clicking on the graffiti names of African American heroes. More names rise above them as graffiti on the skyscrapers that fill the background. Even the corners of the colorful quilt remind us of heroic African Americans who are so good, they’re “bad.”

#### **Dancing at the Louvre, 1991, from “The French Collection; Part I” series, acrylic on canvas, pieced fabric borders, 73 ½”x 80”**

In 1991, Ringgold traveled to Paris to begin working on a series of story quilts called the French Collection which tell the adventures of a character she created named Willia Marie Simone, who moved to Paris at 16 to become an artist. In this part of the story, Willia helps her friend Marcia take her three daughters to visit the Louvre, a historic museum in Paris. Here children dance in front of the familiar painting the “Mona Lisa”, by Leonardo da Vinci.

**The Sunflowers Quilting Bee at Arles, 1991, from “The French Collection: Part I” series, acrylic on canvas, pieced fabric, 74”x80”**

This quilt tells the story of Willia at a meeting of an imaginary group called the National Sunflower Quilters Society of America. Standing in the sunflower field is Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh (who we will learn about later this year!), who painted many still life images of sunflowers during his lifetime. When the sun goes down, the women finish piecing their quilt. This is a quilt within a quilt; a quilt of sunflowers in a field of sunflowers.

**4. Tar Beach, 1988, from “Women on a Bridge” series, acrylic on canvas, tie dyed and pieced fabric, 74”x69”**

On hot summer nights, Faith’s family sometimes cooled off with the neighbors on the tar-paper roof of their building. The adults laughed, told stories, and played cards. Children got to stay up late if they promised to lie quietly on a mattress.

*Click on the picture to link to a video of Faith Ringgold reading her book, Tar Beach (approx 5 minutes).*