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Faith Ringgold

born 1930, New York, New York

active New York and California

***Flag Story Quilt*, 1985**

cotton canvas, tie-dye fabric made by Marquette Johnson, piecing, appliqué, ink

copyright: © 1985 Faith Ringgold

Museum purchase: Peter T. Bohan Art Acquisition Fund, 1991.0040

The work of Faith Ringgold has been a powerful force in American culture for the past 50 years. Her influence is especially strong in the realm of story quilts, which she pioneered for the modern era along with other women artists. The Spencer Museum is fortunate to have Ringgold's *Flag Story Quilt* in its permanent collection—one of the most requested and sought-after works in the region. Centered on a tragic Black male hero, *Flag Story Quilt* tells a heart-wrenching tale of racism, using the symbolic form of the U.S. flag to interrogate patriotic narratives and insert text in the blank, "white" fields.

The tie-dye fabric is made by Marquette Johnson, who will be reunited with this quilt for the first time since it was made when Johnson visits Lawrence in July. Ringgold will also be in Lawrence in July as the keynote speaker for the National African American Quilt Convention. They are special guests of the National African American Quilt Convention (July 11–14, 2018).

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Leo Ransom

born 1965, Bonham, Texas

active Sherman, Texas

***Frederick Douglass*, 2013**

100% cotton fabrics, cotton thread, Heat N Bond Lite Fusible, wool batting

Loan courtesy of Leo Ransom

Leo Ransom honors important historical and contemporary figures in his quilts. This portrait quilt portrays Frederick Douglass, the African American author, activist, and orator. Douglass (1818–1895) escaped from enslavement at age 20 and rose to prominence as a public speaker and abolitionist. Douglass's work as an activist and author remains influential to this day.

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Leo Ransom

born 1965, Bonham, Texas

active Sherman, Texas

Jimi Hendrix, 2017

100% cotton fabrics, Robert Kaufman fabric, cotton and silk threads, Trans Web Fusible, wool batting

Loan courtesy of Leo Ransom

Ransom's quilt pays homage to the iconic American rock musician Jimi Hendrix, who died very young but left an influential legacy.

Hendrix (1942–1970) is widely considered one of the top rock musicians of the 20th century and one of the most celebrated electric guitarists of all time. Ransom shows Hendrix in the colorful context of the 1960s by using a rainbow background.

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Leo Ransom

born 1965, Bonham, Texas

active Sherman, Texas

Nelson Mandela, 2015

100% cotton African fabrics, other cotton fabrics, cotton and silk threads, Trans Web Fusible, wool batting

Loan courtesy of Leo Ransom

Ransom learned traditional quilt piecing from his home economics teacher in school. He returned to quilting a number of years later in 2011, and now combines portrait techniques with various forms of quilt-making. His source material comes from people he admires—including people who have died—and popular culture. In this quilt, Ransom honors the renowned world leader Nelson Mandela. This portrait of Mandela has been in five competitions and three other exhibitions. Ransom has also portrayed important women among those he honors with his quilt-making, including Oprah Winfrey and Maya Angelou.

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William Daniels

born 1975, New Orleans, Louisiana

active New York City

Bovid Mask with Burkina Faso Border #3, 2017

100% satin cotton fabric mask and ultra-suede background, African print fabric from *Cultured Expressions*, poly/cotton binding, backing, and batting

Loan courtesy of the artist

Daniels describes the influence for this work: “The border in the *Bovid Mask* wall hanging features images of masks used in festivals held during the dry season in villages of Burkina Faso, West Africa. The actual wooden masks are usually around three feet high, giving the wearer an otherworldly height and appearance. Representing the spirits of the village, the masks are used in ceremonies to protect and chaperone residents and influence nature.”

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William Daniels

born 1975, New Orleans, Louisiana

active New York City

Bovid Mask with Burkina Faso Border #2, 2017

100% cotton fabric, unbleached cotton muslin, cotton satin, African print fabric from *Cultured Expressions*, poly/cotton binding, backing and batting, reverse appliqué

Loan courtesy of the artist

Daniels describes the influence for this work: “Historically, masks have been used in cultures all over the world. Typically they are made of wood by skilled craftsmen. Besides human faces, African masks often have animal shapes. The Bovid (or antelope) is one of the more commonly featured animal shapes.”

Based in New York City, Daniels experiments to integrate modern archetypes with historical, societal, or spiritual topics. He is currently a PhD candidate at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts. He is also the lead curator for Quilters of Color Network in New York.

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William Daniels

born 1975, New Orleans, Louisiana

active New York City

***The Owl*, 2017**

cotton satin fabric and African cotton prints from *Cultured Expressions*, 100% cotton fabric for background, poly/cotton binding, batting, and backing, reverse appliqué

Loan courtesy of the artist

Daniels describes this work:

“Solitary, nocturnal, and mysterious, the owl has a significant place in the folklore of several ancient cultures and is also present as a symbol in many contemporary spiritual orders and secret societies.

In parts of Africa, the owl is the representation of misfortune or sorcery. Kikuyu peoples of Kenya see the presence of an owl as a symbol of death. Swahili peoples believe the owl brings illness to children, while the Zulu view owls as the familiar of occultists. In Morocco, it was alleged that the cry of an owl could kill an infant.

Apache and Seminole tribes considered owls as messengers carrying supernatural warnings or messages from the dead. Cherokee peoples saw the owl as a bad omen for the imminent death of a family member or loved one. Aztecs, Mayans, and Peruvians regarded the owl as a symbol of destruction, and sacred to the lord of the dead. Chinese culture relates the owl to mystery, mysticism, secrets, intelligence, and death.

On the other hand, owls are regarded as lucky and are carried in the form of talismans and charms in Japan. Mythology frequently associates the owl with wisdom and femininity. The owl was a symbol for Athena, goddess of wisdom and strategy, and was a guardian of the Acropolis in Ancient Greece.

The owl can also be seen in several ancient texts of the Freemasons and in modern media by organizations purported by conspiracy theorists to operate under the influence of a secret Freemason order called The Illuminati.”

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Luke Haynes

born 1982, Durango, Colorado

active Kansas City

Self-portrait/on my bed #3, 2010

cotton fabrics, felt, piecing, appliqué

Loan courtesy of Luke Haynes

This is the first quilt by Haynes to use the log cabin pattern, and it is an early self-portrait of the artist made from new materials rather than recycled scraps. Haynes is interested in the intersection of tradition and contemporary life, in the ways that quilting relates to architecture, and in blurring the distinction between art and function as he hopes to “alter the way objects and space are perceived.” Haynes studied at the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem and at the Cooper Union School of Architecture in New York.

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Luke Haynes

born 1982, Durango, Colorado

active Kansas City

abstract, 2013

recycled fabrics: cotton, wool, silk, rayon, polyester

Loan courtesy of Luke Haynes

Haynes aims to transform the traditional quilting form by integrating new perspectives, such as architecture, into his work with textiles. In this quilt, Haynes recycled existing fabrics into a geometric design, connecting to various quilting traditions.

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Marvin Crum

born 1951, Detroit, Michigan

active Lawrence, Kansas

The Proposal, 2017

cotton fabric, denim cotton, crystals

quilted by Sandra Morgan Cockrum

Loan courtesy of the artist

This quilt portrays a scene from Zora Neal Hurston’s novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). Crum previously exhibited this quilt in September 2017 in an exhibition in Lawrence that Marla Jackson organized to celebrate the work and influence of Hurston.

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Marvin Crum

born 1951, Detroit, Michigan
active Lawrence, Kansas

Parrot, 2018

cotton fabrics
quilted by Montika Allen-Atkinson
Loan courtesy of the artist

Crum described this work by saying: “The *Parrot* quilt is full of brilliant colors that I can’t fully see to enjoy.” Crum is color blind, but that does not stop him from incorporating color relationships and patterns into his art. His current work often focuses on a single figure—whether feathered, furry, or human—to which Crum may be paying homage.

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Marvin Crum

born 1951, Detroit, Michigan
active Lawrence, Kansas

I’m Fed Up, 2018

cotton fabrics, cotton thread
quilted by Montika Allen-Atkinson
Loan courtesy of the artist

Crum described this work by saying: “This quilt I created because today’s current events have troubled me. I don’t consider myself a political person but I’m fed up with how this country is being governed.”

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Marvin Crum

born 1951 Detroit, Michigan
active Lawrence, Kansas

Leo, 2018

African wax cotton, piecing and appliqué
quilted by Montika Allen-Atkinson
Loan courtesy of the artist

In this quilt, Crum pays homage to a favorite animal, “Leo the Lion.” His love for the subject is further accentuated by the quilting patterns—the decorative stitching that holds the quilt together. The quilting was done by Montika Allen-Atkinson.

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Julius J. Bremer

born 1955, Cleveland, Ohio

active Cleveland, Ohio

A Tear for America, 2015

cotton, silk fabric, rough-edge appliqué, free-motion quilting

Loan courtesy of Julius Bremer

This quilt represents President Barack Obama, and the care and empathy that Obama showed to the American people and others across the globe. Bremer has created several quilts that honor President Obama, one of which toured nationally in an exhibition called *Journey of Hope: Quilts Inspired by President Barack Obama*, organized by Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi. In addition to being a quilt artist, Bremer has served as head of the Business and Labor Department of the Cleveland Public Library.

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Miles Beaty

born 2007, Lawrence, Kansas

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 2018

cotton fabrics

quilted by Marla A. Jackson

Courtesy of Miles Beaty

Eleven-year-old artist Miles Beaty created this quilt during a workshop for children at Marla Jackson's African American Quilt Museum and Textile Academy in Lawrence. Jackson runs "Beyond the Book," a student outreach program that teaches visual literacy to youth in Northeast Kansas. Beaty chose to pay homage to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose message of peace and justice for all is as relevant today as it was when Dr. King—who was assassinated in April 1968—was alive.

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Willie Cole

born 1955, Somerville, New Jersey

Man, Spirit, and Mask, 1999

photoengraving, embossing, lemon juice (left); screen print, lemon juice, scorching (center); photo engraving, color woodcut (right)

Museum purchase: Peter T. Bohan Art Acquisition Fund, 2001.0056.01,02.03

Cole honors several ideas and ancestries in this triptych on paper. For Cole, the steam iron serves as a symbolic conduit between African and African American identity. The pattern of an iron's steam vents superimposed on the artist's face recalls ritual scarification or a mask. Cole has explained, "I think that when one culture is dominated by another culture, the energy or powers or gods of the previous culture hide in vehicles in the new cultures." In previous works, Cole has often used his collection of old steam irons to scald patterns into paper, closing the gap between scarification and domestic work. For the larger-than-life images in *Man, Spirit, and Mask*, he printed the iron shape with lemon juice that was then scalded, turning the fabric brown.

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Kehinde Wiley

born 1977, Los Angeles, California

active New York City

Cerealart Projects LLC, publisher

St. Francis of Adelaide, 2006

marble dust, resin, casting

Museum purchase: R. Charles and Mary Margaret Clevenger Art Acquisition Fund, 2010.0192

This work pays homage both to the history of art and to African American men. Making reference to art historical portraits of saints, Wiley updates the canon and corrects its exclusion of African American men while also honoring their presence in a society that has often undervalued them. His juxtapositions disrupt accepted social categories and challenge models of class, race, power, and identity. His anonymous, urban portrait subjects are clothed in the accessories of nobility and privilege, while their oversized jerseys or clinging t-shirts pronounce the prominence of hip hop culture.

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Gordon Parks (1912–2006)

born Fort Scott, Kansas; died New York, New York

Man Peeking from Manhole, Harlem, 1949

gelatin silver print

Museum purchase: Friends of the Art Museum, 1993.0046

After growing up in Fort Scott, Kansas, Parks became a highly successful photographer and filmmaker. Among other activities, he joined the staff of *Life* magazine in New York in 1949 as the magazine's first African American photographer. Parks also worked with authors including Ralph Ellison. Parks created a series of photographs that interpret events in Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* (1952), such as this image of a man peeking out from a manhole in New York's Harlem neighborhood. In this work, Parks honors both Ellison and the citizens whom Ellison features in his influential book. Parks went on to enjoy a multi-faceted career working in poetry, ballet, painting, filmmaking, and music in addition to photography.

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Aaron Douglas (1899–1979)

born Topeka, Kansas; died Nashville, Tennessee

Self-portrait, 1954

charcoal, Conté crayon

Museum purchase: Peter T. Bohan Art Acquisition Fund,
1995.0042

Today, this self-portrait serves to honor the power and influence of Topeka-born artist Aaron Douglas, the leading visual artist of the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance was a social movement in New York in the 1920s that celebrated creative expression by African American artists and writers.

In 1954, Douglas created this charcoal self-portrait and portraits of several other faculty members at Fisk University, the historically black university where Douglas taught art. When the group of portraits was exhibited at Fisk's Carl Van Vechten Gallery, Douglas was praised for his ability to delineate the appearance of his sitters in a commanding manner without flattery, and for the acute skill with which he captured their spirit.

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