
Faith Ringgold's 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

I, Too, Am America: Blackness Is a Superpower

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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).

Ringgold died at her home in Englewood, New Jersey, on April 12, 2024, at age 93.