

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: FIFTY YEARS OF ART BY FAITH RINGGOLD



Declaration of Independence: Fifty Years of Art by Faith Ringgold

May 17 - June 26, 2009

Curated by Judith K. Brodsky and Ferris Olin

Essay by Tanya Sheehan

Comments by Michele Wallace

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Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

The Institute for Women and Art

The *vision* of the Rutgers Institute for Women and Art (IWA) is to transform values, policies, and institutions, and to insure that the intellectual and aesthetic contributions of diverse communities of women in the visual arts are included in the cultural mainstream and acknowledged in the historical record.

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- Educational and curricular development led by The Feminist Art Project (TFAP) website and the soon-to-be launched FARE: Feminist Art Resources in Education for K-12, college students and their teachers (<http://feministartproject.rutgers.edu/>).
- Research and documentation facilitated by the Getty and New Jersey State Council on the Arts-funded Women Artists Archives National Directory: WAAND, as well as the archival collections found in the Miriam Schapiro Archives on Women Artists (<http://waand.rutgers.edu/>).
- Exhibitions and public programming organized by the award-winning and nationally recognized Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series, founded in 1971 by Joan Snyder, and other sponsored events through the US and abroad (http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/exhibits/dana_womens.shtml).

Ferris Olin and Judith K. Brodsky, directors, Institute for Women and Art and curators, Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series
Connie Tell, project manager, The Feminist Art Project
Nicole Ianuzelli, project manager, The Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series
Lana Sacks, project manager, *Faith Ringgold: A Celebration*

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Foreword

Judith K. Brodsky and Ferris Olin, curators

Faith Ringgold is a heroine of ours. To curate an exhibition of the work she has created over a lifetime is an honor and privilege. This exhibition was mounted in conjunction with the conferring of a Rutgers honorary degree on Ms. Ringgold. We are proud that our university has recognized this extraordinary cultural force in the United States and the world beyond.

We want to thank Nicole Ianuzelli, project manager for the Dana Women Artists Series. Nicole was responsible for the preparation and mounting of this exhibition. We also want to acknowledge and thank Lana Sacks for coordinating the gala event held in the gallery celebrating Faith. Thanks, too, to the Department of Visual Arts, Mason Gross School of the Arts and LaToya Ruby Frazier, curator of the Mason Gross Galleries, for allowing us to use the gallery space for this exhibition and the Department of Art History for its support. We also thank the interns, especially Maria Giancola and Theresa Kissane along with others, who helped put this exhibition together, and the staff of the Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions, Sandra Sewing, Allison Lindblom, and Donna Brown, who assisted in the installation.

We must also express our heartfelt appreciation to Tanya Sheehan for her excellent essay, Michele Wallace for her insightful comments, Dorian and Jeffrey Bergen, directors of the ACA Galleries, who represent Faith and who loaned the works in the exhibition, the High Museum of Art for the loan of *Sonny's Quilt*, Grace Matthew, assistant to Faith Ringgold, and to the artist herself, especially for allowing us to honor her through this exhibition.

It was particularly exciting to publish the deck of cards which Faith designed especially for this occasion, thus fulfilling a longing of hers since her student days. There are just too many human aspects to this exhibition to recount all. We count it as one of the joyous events of our lives.

Faith Ringgold: Forging Freedom and Declaring Independence

Tanya Sheehan, Assistant Professor
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This retrospective exhibition celebrates the work of the distinguished artist, storyteller, writer, and social activist, Faith Ringgold, who for half a century has asked challenging questions about what it means to be black, a woman, and an artist in the politically charged and evolving landscape of modern America culture. What, in this context, do the terms “freedom” and “equality” mean? To whom have the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness been guaranteed, and to whom have they traditionally been denied? In what ways can individuals express their desires to be free? And how can their expressions of freedom ultimately bring about social change? Ringgold’s creative and critical responses to such questions have taken a variety of forms, including public performances, paintings, and posters in the 1960s, soft sculptures and tanka-framed paintings in the 70s, innovative story quilts in the 80s, award-winning children’s books in the 90s, and more recent experiments in printmaking. While acknowledging the diversity of Ringgold’s body of work, this exhibition explores how we might approach it as a cohesive declaration of independence – that is, as an expression of Ringgold’s own hard-won liberties as a Harlem-born female artist and an acknowledgement of the hopes and struggles for freedom and equality that have shaped the lives of all African Americans and all women.

It is most fitting that this look back (and forward) at Ringgold’s remarkable career is organized by the Institute for Women and Art at Rutgers, given that the artist has forged a close and productive relationship with the university since the 1970s (see chronology). It was in 1973 at the Rutgers University Art Gallery in Voorhees Hall that Ringgold mounted her first retrospective exhibition, which she described to a New Brunswick newspaper at the time as “my first big show – a great honor.”¹ Surveying ten years of art-making that Ringgold considers her early mature period, the 1973 exhibition reflected on the development of her unique visual language as a black woman artist and her increasing engagement with contemporary politics at a critical moment in the history of American race relations.

In the ten years surveyed by the retrospective, Ringgold had already introduced her first declarations of independence to the art world by experimenting with color, form, and perspective. Ringgold had earned degrees in art at the City College of New York in the 1950s, where she was taught to copy classical sculpture and paintings by European “masters.” Unsurprisingly, she found this traditional artistic education restricted her freedom of expression and was wholly at odds with her growing interest in painting the black body. As she recalled in a 1990 interview, her art teachers at City College “were not able to help me paint the images or the color of black people... they thought of all people as being white.”² In response, Ringgold became determined to develop her own style of painting in the 1960s which represented contemporary black life by means of abstract forms. Inspired by the work of Jacob Lawrence, William H. Johnson, and other artists of the Harlem Renaissance, amidst whose legacy she had been raised, Ringgold began painting flat shapes and figures defined by dark or saturated color and heavy outlines, rather than by traditional modulations of light and shade.

1 Doris E. Brown, “Social Commentary Rings True,” *The Home News* (March 4, 1973): C21.

2 Eleanor Flomenhaft, “Interviewing Faith Ringgold / A Contemporary Heroine,” in *Faith Ringgold: A 25 Year Survey*, edited by Eleanor Flomenhaft (Hempstead: Fine Arts Museum of Long Island, 1990), 8.

It was in 1963, while summering with friends at Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard, that she first applied her new style of "superrealism" to a series of canvases. Large in her mind was the recent consolidation of the Civil Rights Movement in the form of the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-56, the Freedom Rides of 1961, the 1963 march in Birmingham, and other nonviolent protests against racial segregation and discrimination. So, too, were her thoughts inevitably drawn to the hostility and physical violence with which many white Americans reacted to such expressions of black agency. Images of demonstrators attacked by police dogs and fire hoses in Birmingham saturated the American media just months before Ringgold began painting her American People Series, a collection of explicitly political and sobering observations about black-white relations in 1960s America.

The first painting in the series, *Between Friends* (fig. 70), depicts what Ringgold has described as "an uneasy meeting between a black and a white woman," not unlike the encounters she observed in the middle-class interracial community of Oak Bluffs.³ In a single canvas, Ringgold summarized the hopes and challenges of racial integration at that historical crossroads, staging them on the bodies of women. The artist arranged her figures in close proximity to one another, using the same (and significantly chosen) shades of red and blue to render aspects of both women's features and dress. The heavily outlined bodies nevertheless appear self-contained; not only are the women separated by a physical barrier that they subtly overlap but do not breach, but each figure appears to look past her "friend" at an undefined point outside the frame. This sense of distance, together with the stern expression, severe profile, and dominating physical presence of the white woman, ultimately suggests that true friendships are impossible to construct across the racial divide, as long as the social environment that would foster them remained hostile to anything but superficial changes to its existing power structures.

As the Civil Rights Movement gave way to the Black Revolution in the late-60s and early-70s, Ringgold positioned herself on the front lines of the fight for black freedom and equality. She did so by participating in feminist demonstrations across the city and advocating for non-white representation at New York's major art museums; she also co-organized the infamous "Flag Show" at the Judson Church in Greenwich Village, which defended the work of artists accused of "desecrating" the American flag with their political messages (including herself). The paintings she produced in this period register the increasing visibility of her own efforts to combat the brutality of institutionalized racism in the United States. The American People Series, for instance, culminated in 1967 with the iconic paintings *Die* and *The Flag Is Bleeding*, each of which explore women's role as mediators within bloody confrontations between black and white men. Ringgold went on to produce her highly symbolic and abstract Black Light Series, in which she developed a non-white palette with which to paint racial blackness, before turning to her Political Posters Series, which took as its subject the oppression of minority groups and their advocates throughout American history.

Representative of the latter's formal innovations and political declarations is *Women, Freedom, Now* of 1971 (fig. 22). Made of cut paper, this poster shows a variety of artistic and cultural influences on Ringgold's work at the time, including the techniques of modernist collage and political propaganda, the illusionism of Op Art, and the triangular patterns of Bakuba textiles from the Kongo.⁴ The appropriation and mixing of these seemingly disparate

³ Faith Ringgold, *We Flew Over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1995), 145. Ringgold originally titled the painting, *The Wall between Friends*.

⁴ See Lisa Farrington, *Faith Ringgold: The David C. Driskell Series of African-American Art*, vol. 3 (San Francisco: Pomegranate Communications, 2004), 36.

visual forms itself has a politics, since it challenges traditional notions of the West as synonymous with whiteness and modernity and thus deconstructs its binary opposition to the non-Western, or the so-called dark and primitive. Similarly, the poster's use of text and color mediates between two contemporary political movements with different histories and distinct aims. While the words "WOMAN" and "NOW" (a reference to the National Organization of Women founded in 1966) express Ringgold's feminist agenda, their delineation in red, black, and green (the symbolic colors of black nationalism) demonstrate that her fight for "FREEDOM" in the 60s was concerned with the liberties of all African Americans.⁵

A powerful black woman who had taken her politics to the streets of New York and translated them into a series of provocative paintings: this was the Faith Ringgold whom visitors to the Rutgers University Art Gallery encountered in 1973. In addition to showing nearly all twenty canvases from the American People Series, six paintings from the Black Light Series, and a large group of watercolors out of which the Feminist Series developed, Ringgold created a new body of work for her first Rutgers retrospective, intending, as she later put it, "to indicate the future directions my work would be taking."⁶ The exhibition included, for instance, some of the earliest paintings that Ringgold framed in cloth and hung on dowels on the wall of the gallery. She was struck by the formal and ideological possibilities of this format after first encountering Tibetan Buddhist tankas at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.⁷ Not only were cloth-framed paintings much easier and less expensive to transport than canvases on wooden stretchers under glass, they also challenged the tradition of Western easel painting and the white male authority that it embodied. Ringgold further saw in tankas a valuable opportunity to embrace the artistic traditions of her own family. In one of countless moments in Ringgold's career when family has shaped her art, she collaborated with her mother, the New York fashion designer and dressmaker Willi Posey, to create her first tanka paintings in 1972.

In a press photograph taken at Voorhees Hall in 1973 (fig. 1), Ringgold and Posey admire their family's co-production of the early tankas: daughter conceived of and executed the painting, mother sewed the frame out of printed and pieced cloth, and granddaughter (Ringgold's first child, the feminist critic Michele Wallace) served as the model for the figure. The object of their gaze is one of three works at the Rutgers retrospective that belonged to Ringgold's newly conceived Slave Rape Series, a group of vertically oriented "political landscapes" that employ the tanka format. *Slave Rape Series #2: Run* (shown in the photograph), like the later *Slave Rape Series #13 (of 16): Fight to Save Your Life* currently on view (fig. 25), depicts an unclothed African woman in an abstract "jungle" landscape. At first glance the viewer might read these works as simply reproducing racial and gender stereotypes, given that the bulging eyes and gaping mouths associated with black caricatures of the Jim Crow era dovetail with popular representations of black women as hysterical, primitive creatures. Upon closer inspection, however, one observes that Ringgold has armed her female figures in the series with weapons, endowing them with the

5 Ringgold's desire to draw feminism and the Black Power movement into conversation with one another informed her Feminist Series of 1972, which pairs abstract forest landscapes with excerpts from an anthology of black women authors. See, for example, *Feminist Series: There Was One of Two Things* (#6 of 20) (fig. 26).

6 Ringgold 1995, 197.

7 Ringgold produced her first tanka paintings in 1972 in the Feminist Series (see note 5). These vertical cloth-framed paintings were not included in the 1973 Rutgers retrospective. Instead, Ringgold showed a group of 57 small watercolors out of which she developed the Feminist Series. Painted in the summer of 1972 in Europe, these watercolors depicted abstract landscapes which Ringgold combined with vertical texts about women that she wrote with her daughter, Michele Wallace.

means with which to regain control over their own bodies, which had become the possessions of Western (white, male) colonizers and slavers.⁸ This kind of close critical looking – at the figures, at one’s self, and at their respective places in history – was precisely what the Slave Rape Series encouraged viewers in the gallery to do.

The exhibition at Voorhees Hall also introduced the Rutgers community to two of Ringgold’s earliest “portrait masks,” another of her newest experiments with mixing media.⁹ In 1973 Ringgold had been working on both the Witch Mask Series and the Family of Woman Series, which consist of soft sculptures made from pieced, embroidered, or painted fabrics (sewn by Willi Posey) as well as beading, yarn, raffia, and other materials derived from African artistic traditions. Female figures based on Ringgold’s close relatives, like *Aunt Edith* and *Aunt Bessie* (figs. 62 and 63), feature truncated bodies of patterned cloth, long hair, abstracted facial features, and open mouths. Ringgold appropriated this last characteristic from African masks to both celebrate her cultural heritage and to make a feminist declaration about women’s need for emotional agency. While Ringgold represented many of her early soft sculptures attempting to speak, cry, or kiss, she equipped Aunt Bessie with a whistle around her neck, through which artist and subject announced their desire to be heard.

Following her ten-year retrospective at Rutgers, Ringgold’s career as an artist took off. Not only did she retire from her teaching job to devote herself full time to art-making, but her decision to embrace easily portable materials in the form of tanka paintings and soft sculptures meant that her work could now travel at relatively low cost to university and college galleries across the country, reaching a wide audience. Ringgold would return to Rutgers several times in the decade after her first retrospective to lecture on “black” and “feminist” art, to participate in several group exhibitions that included freestanding soft sculptures from her Woman on a Pedestal Series (see *Yvonne*, 1978, fig. 66), and to perform on Douglass campus (then Douglass College) with her wearable masks and costumes.

Ringgold’s first painted quilt, *Echoes of Harlem* (1980), was shown at Rutgers in 1983 as part of a traveling exhibition devoted to fine artists’ engagement with quilt making. The quilt medium opened up exciting formal and conceptual possibilities for Ringgold, providing her with a support that was both portable and closely tied to African, African-American, and female folk traditions. After her mother’s passing in 1981, moreover, the quilt became an important means for Ringgold to tell stories that combined her own life experiences with fantasies of black and female empowerment.¹⁰ Created for her twenty-year retrospective at the Studio Museum in 1984, Ringgold’s first story quilt, *Who’s Afraid of Aunt Jemima* (catalog fig. 23), consists of fifty-six squares that contain painted human figures, traditionally quilted pieced fabric, and handwritten text in black dialect through which Ringgold narrates the “real” story of the black female stereotype, Aunt Jemima. In the artist’s vision, Jemima (Blakely) was a black woman who ran a successful restaurant business with her husband Big Rufus – that is, until the couple is killed in a car crash on their way to open their newest restaurant in New Orleans. By staging the death and

8 See Lisa E. Farrington, “Faith Ringgold’s *Slave Rape Series*,” in *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture*, edited by Kimberley Wallace-Sanders (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 128-152.

9 The checklist in the 1973 retrospective catalog does not include any of Ringgold’s early masks, however brief note of their presence appears in newspaper reviews of the exhibition as well as in Ringgold’s autobiography (see Ringgold 1995, 199).

10 Flomenhaft, 12.

African funeral of Jemima, Ringgold presents her as neither despicable nor revolutionary, as artists before her had variously depicted the stereotype. Rather, she places her at the center of a family narrative and a migration story, the object of sympathetic sentiment rather than disgust or fear.

In *Tar Beach* (1988, Guggenheim Museum), her most famous story quilt and the first in the Woman on a Bridge Series, Ringgold constructs another fictional black heroine out of the memories and fantasies of her own childhood. The story is set in Harlem on the tarred rooftop of an apartment building where the artist's family would relax on hot summer nights; the children would eat quietly or sleep on mattresses, while the adults would talk and play cards. On this night in *Tar Beach*, eight-year-old Cassie Louise Lightfoot imagines she can fly over Manhattan's skyscrapers and the George Washington Bridge; in so doing, they become her possessions, bringing her family riches, happiness, and ice cream every night for dessert. For Ringgold, the bridge functions in part as a symbol of "women's courage" in a series that shows "women doing great, creative, exciting things..."¹¹ The child narrator, moreover, embodies black female agency, as we see her living out her dreams – "free to go," as she puts it, "wherever I want for the rest of my life." So powerful for Ringgold were the social message and iconography of *Tar Beach* that she returned to it many times in her career: in 1990 when she began producing silk-screen editions of the quilt titled *Tar Beach #2* (figs. 53 and 54), in 1991 when *Tar Beach* became her first illustrated children's book (figure 2), and in 1999 when she founded a community-based institution that supports the study and practice of art of the African Diaspora, named the Anyone Can Fly Foundation in honor of Cassie's nocturnal travels. The book's theme more recently inspired Ringgold to write a song "Anyone Can Fly," whose lyrics frame a 2007 silkscreen print of the same title (fig. 55).

Ringgold constructed another narrative of freedom in the 1990s in a series of twelve story quilts based on trips to Europe the artist had made with her daughters. Blurring the lines between fiction, (art) history, and autobiography, the French Collection tells the story of an aspiring female artist living in France circa 1920. We first encounter Willia Marie Simone as she dances at the Louvre with her friend Marcia and Marcia's three children. She then flees her own wedding to a rich Frenchman by flying over the Seine (fig. 56); poses nude for Picasso and Matisse; socializes with famous writers, artists, and women, including Ringgold's own friends; and holidays in Morocco and St. Tropez. In the final quilt Willia Marie delivers a "Colored Woman's Manifesto of Art and Politics" – we might call it her declaration of independence – before Ringgold, her female supporters, and a hostile group of great male artists, among whom we find Paul Gauguin and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec as well as Henry O. Tanner and Archibald Motley, Jr. Through these scenes, Ringgold comments on women's heroic struggles to balance career, marriage, and family, while acknowledging the historical importance of European art to African-American artists. She also critiques the modernist canon, which has positioned European men as "masters" of African culture and the black female body in particular.

This retrospective exhibition offers unique insights into the production of the French Collection by including four preliminary sketches for the series made between 1990 and 1996. In putting colored marker to paper, Ringgold drew rough outlines of her figures and the settings in which they would appear, not so much as an academic exercise (she did not draw from life) but as a means of working out the ideas she wanted to convey, or the story she sought to tell. As Ringgold put it to Michele Wallace in an interview regarding the French Collection: "Part of composition is having the courage to do it and to see it and to change what you see so that you can do it."¹² In many cases, there are indeed considerable conceptual differences between a sketch and its related story

11 Ibid., 10.

12 Faith Ringgold, "Mona Lisa Interview" by Michele Wallace, <http://www.faithringgold.com/ringgold/guest.htm>.

quilt. In *Study of Matisse's Model* (fig. 61), for example, Ringgold drew her heroine as an oversized woman in a red robe casually gazing at vase of red and green flowers. When Ringgold put paint to canvas, however, only the caricatured figure of Matisse would remain constant in the lower-right corner of the story quilt. In *Matisse's Model (The French Collection Part I #5)* (1991, Baltimore Museum of Art), a lean nude Willia Marie reclines on a divan below Matisse's *The Dance* (1910), the Hermitage, while the flowers from the sketch appear as a motif in the model's pillow and the painting's fabric border (fig.3).

Ringgold also introduced important changes into the French Collection when she translated individual works across media. In 1997, for instance, the artist produced a silkscreen edition of the story quilt, *The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles*, now in the collection of Oprah Winfrey. The print depicts eight black women of great historical significance whom Winfrey had identified as her role models, among them the abolitionist Sojourner Truth, the writer Zora Neale Hurston, and the civil rights activist Rosa Parks (fig. 59). Together the women stand in a sunflower field, constructing a quilt that is itself decorated with sunflowers. Although the figure of Willia Marie is not included in this printed edition of Ringgold's quilt, the struggles of the black female artist to find a place for herself in the European and male-dominated art world continue to inform the scene. This interpretation of the print depends on the figure of Vincent Van Gogh who, as in the quilt, stands outside the central group, holding a vase of sunflowers that resemble those he famously painted in the 1880s. The presence of the European "master" invites the viewer to compare the flowers in his hands to those surrounding the African-American women, both in the field behind them and in the quilt of their/Ringgold's making. What Ringgold encourages viewers to derive from such a comparison, however, is not a critical judgment about artistic greatness but rather a discovery – that each of these artists forged the freedom to render nature according to his or her own artistic vision. In the case of the African-American quilters in the print, Ringgold reinforces the political meaning of their art-making through metaphor. As she observed in the documentary film, *The Last Story Quilt* (1991), "They are piecing together freedom in this country."

In *The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles* Ringgold makes another important comparison between the tall flowers with their dark centers and, in the artist's own words, "little black people."¹³ In the late-nineteenth century, likening black faces to sunflowers was popular in blackface minstrelsy and other forms of racist caricature. In the French Collection, Ringgold ironically appropriates this instrument of racism in order to liberate her African-American subjects from it. According to her vision, the sunflowers in the scene not only become objects of aesthetic beauty but function as symbols of African Americans' ability to survive and prosper. Like black people, Ringgold observed, sunflowers constantly adjust themselves to the changing conditions of their environment, turning their bodies in relation to the sun.¹⁴

This fifty-year retrospective shows us just how important the reinvention of stereotype has been to Ringgold's many declarations of independence, from her early political paintings to her story quilts and children's books. Not everyone has embraced this aspect of her work, however. Even *Tar Beach*, which won the 1992 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award for its portrayal of minorities, was banned in 1994 in elementary school libraries in Spokane, Washington because it represented Cassie and her family consuming fried chicken, watermelon, and beer. What such objections to Ringgold's work have failed to acknowledge is the power that the African-American artist, through her child-heroine, can wield by creating a fantasy space in which a watermelon can be a refreshing treat on a hot summer night, nothing more. Cassie's dream world, in other words, is one in which racism and representation never meet.

Ringgold would again appropriate stereotype in a collection of images on the subject of jazz that transform racist assumptions about African Americans' in-

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

nate musical abilities into powerful statements about what it means to freely express oneself through art. Ringgold reflects on the importance of jazz to her life and work in paintings like *Sonny's Bridge* (fig. 30), which honors the great saxophonist Sonny Rollins whose music she experienced as a child in 1930s Harlem. In 2002, she began the Jazz Stories Series to explore the history of this art form (figs. 27-29, 31-39), which African slaves brought to America and then developed as a means of emotional and spiritual expression. "Music insured that we stayed free," she explained in a recent interview; it was a liberty that "couldn't be denied."¹⁵ Echoing Ringgold's understanding of jazz as a declaration of freedom and independence are many of the titles in the series that assert ability or action, such as *Mama Can Sing*, *Papa Can Blow*, and *Sonny Blows*. Even when the titles suggest passivity, as in the serigraph *Somebody Stole My Broken Heart*, the original lyrics with which she frames the image point to the regeneration of agency in her black female subject: "...Chased the blues right out the door. Don't hear me crying no more. Never used to see me smile. Now I'm laughing all the while." Ringgold translated these actions and emotions into undulating blue lines that outline the bodies of the singers and musicians, producing the appearance of auras around them. In this way, she enables us to see the joy and heartache expressed in the rhythms of the music.

After Ringgold and her husband Birdie moved to Jones Road in Englewood, New Jersey in 1992, she found that her own freedom to create art was challenged by her affluent and predominantly white neighbors, who tried to prevent her from building a studio in her home. Although the building plans required that zoning restrictions be lifted, Ringgold came to understand her white neighbors' aggressive reaction to them as an effort to control the racial profile of "their" community. This experience reminded Ringgold that African Americans' epic journey to freedom has not ended. She has articulated these thoughts in a collection of painted quilts and prints, known as the Coming to Jones Road Series, that tell the story of runaway black slaves who escaped north via the Underground Railroad to the beautiful, dream-like landscape of the "Garden State" over two hundred years ago. Describing the series in 2007, Ringgold wrote: "I have tried to couple the beauty of the place and the harsh realities of its racist history to create a freedom series that turns all the ugliness of spirit, past and present, into something livable."¹⁶

This retrospective allows us to trace the formal development of two sets of images in the Coming to Jones Road Series: *We Jus Keep a' Comin'* and *Under a Blood Red Sky*. The first of these began as a painted quilt in 2000 (figs. 41 and 46) which each depicts a mass of silhouetted black bodies in a brilliantly colored blue and green forest. Ringgold arranged these bodies vertically, one overlapping the next in seemingly endless numbers that move towards the safe house of "Aunt Emmy." In the many works titled *Under the Blood Red Sky*, Ringgold re-imagines this scene by including a bold red background that is suggestive of the anguish and bloodshed African Americans have endured over the last two centuries. Although there is considerable variety within the works with this title, the story they tell is consistent. In prints such as *Coming to Jones Road: Under a Blood Red Sky #5* of 2004 (fig. 52), this narrative is literally inscribed in black dialect on the white border around the image. Ringgold speaks the thoughts of her ancestors "goin North to freedom" under the shelter of night: "We moved along as if in one body hardly knowing where we was goin, our way lit only by a chalk-white moon in a blood-red sky."

In the last decade, works on paper have served as an important storytelling medium for Ringgold by enabling her to directly link word and image in innovative ways. She experimented with this narrative form in a series of drawings inspired by the events of September 11, 2001. Returning to iconography that had been so important to her artwork and activism of the 1960s, Ringgold incorporated the American flag into a new statement about freedom in the United States in response to the War on Terror. In the four drawings from the Freedom Flag Series in this exhibition (fig. 16 - 19), the artist

15 Faith Ringgold, interview by Nancy Egol Nikkal, http://www.nikkal.com/TalkTalk/Article2_WS06.html (January 25, 2006).

16 Faith Ringgold, "Coming to Jones Road," *Feminist Studies* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 350.

writes in her own hand within the flag's stripes: "War takes a toll on young men. Sends them home in body bags or out of their minds. Let's find another way to be free. Maybe fight an old man's war – Don't nobody get hurt just talk tough and keep out of danger. At night go to sleep in a bed. No more war."

There is no doubt that these statements are just as powerful and political as those Ringgold made in the 1960s when she was accused by the U.S. government of desecrating the American flag. The responses they have generated, however, have on the whole been radically different, leading not to her arrest but to her celebration by the very art institutions whose discriminatory practices she earlier protested. Certainly times have changed, but, as the critic Moira Roth observed on the occasion of Ringgold's twenty-five year retrospective, so have the packages in which Ringgold delivers her political message.¹⁷ While Ringgold began conveying her stories of black female empowerment through traditionally "safe" media like quilts and children's books in the 1980s and 90s, her more recent work like the Freedom Flag Series advocates a return to the "old ways" of peaceful resistance rather than supporting militant action. As a result, her declarations have been heard by a wider audience than ever before. Indeed, it is likely that every American, regardless of their race or gender, can recognize in this series an invaluable lesson tragically brought home by the events of 9/11 and their aftermath – that is, that the freedoms in this country are fragile and have always been in need of protection.

Despite her work's broader appeal to American institutions and audiences in recent decades, Ringgold has not backed down from radically re-interpreting the very foundations of American history and culture (fig. 15). Her latest quilt created for this retrospective is based on a series of six related illustrations of the Declaration of Independence, which Ringgold has described as "the most challenging works of art I have ever created."¹⁸ For Ringgold, illustrating the document on which American democracy was built in 1776 meant coming to terms with both its gender-specific message of freedom and its hypocritical silence on the subject of slavery. Driving this project, moreover, were once again memories of Harlem in the 30s, where she learned that "my freedom was not more than a promise that would be a struggle and could be, in many instances, denied."¹⁹

In the first illustration of the series, Ringgold conveys this sentiment in a diptych that visually interprets the famous declaration that "all men are created equal" (fig. 9). The image on the left portrays King George III as a white gentleman in elaborate eighteenth-century dress standing at the center of an upturned Union Jack, his feet planted on the faces of white male colonists; the image on the right depicts a tall ship flying the British flag, its decks teeming with dark figures, some of which fall into the waters below, while the transparent interior of the vessel contains a diagram of an eighteenth-century slave ship with black bodies arranged in orderly rows. This juxtaposition produces an incongruity that Ringgold encourages viewers to see into the history of the United States, when our "founding fathers" strictly defined manliness in terms of whiteness and equality in terms of this delimited manliness. In the second illustration, Ringgold makes her gender critique of American notions of equality explicit by asking, "And Women?" (fig. 10). In response, she pairs two grisaille portraits of famous American women over which she has handwritten excerpts of their writings on the subject of gendered equality; on the left, Abigail Adams writes to her husband John Adams in 1776 of her desire for special consideration of women's rights in the Declaration of Independence, while on the right Sojourner Truth famously speaks of the racial inequalities within her own gender in her "Ain't I a Woman?" speech of 1851. By incorporating these female voices from different historical moments that were excluded from the document she set out to illustrate, Ringgold interrupts that "sacred" text for her own political ends. While the captions in the remaining illustrations return to a direct quotation of the Declaration of Independence, the diptychs

17 Moira Roth, "A Trojan Horse," in *Flomenhaft*, 1990, 49-56.

18 Artist's statement (February 19, 2009).

19 *Ibid.*

mount a powerful critique of this country's definition of freedom – from “3. Absolute Tyranny” (fig. 11), which juxtaposes the killing of Crispus Attacks in the Boston Massacre with a lynching scene from the turn of the twentieth century, to the final image, “6. As Free and Independent States” (fig. 14), which compares Thomas Jefferson's writing of the Declaration with Martin Luther King's prayer for America in his letter from Birmingham City Jail.

Ringgold dedicated the illustrations in the Declaration of Freedom and Independence Series to the political events of 2008, when the United States elected its first black President, Barack Obama. Since then she has been outspoken in interviews about the “power of having a President who understands... what equality means to all of us” and the positive changes it will bring to the American people.²⁰ The deck of playing cards that Ringgold produced for the gala opening of this retrospective exhibition constitute a further reflection on the meaning of the historic forty-fourth presidency. As seen in figure 4, the backs of the cards include an image of the White House and the words “Yes I Can,” a declaration of individual agency derived from Obama's popular campaign slogan, “Yes We Can.” Word and image are set within a field of intersecting white lines that outline triangular fields of red, gray, blue, and black. Much can be said of the aesthetic and political significance of this arrangement by observing its structural resemblance to Ringgold's Black Light Series, which similarly incorporated blackness into America's national colors, as well as to her decades of work in the quilt medium. On the front of the cards, Ringgold develops four suits: the White House, the Light (a light bulb), the Money (a dollar bill), and the Uncle Sam Hat (figure 5). These, she explains, are symbolic of the presidency, enlightenment, power, and patriotism, respectively – “everything Obama needs to prove He Can.”²¹ Obama himself was likely the model for the figure of the King who, like the black figure of the Jack, wears a vertically striped modern suit with the addition of an American flag pin and a crown. For the Queen, Ringgold drew a powerful, fashionable black woman whose braids, beaded crown, and colorfully patterned fabrics make reference to the contemporary African diaspora. Two final figures appear on the Joker cards – one featuring a black dandy with a cocked hat and bowtie, the other a beret-wearing black woman – each calling to mind images of Jazz Age Harlem.

The historical and cultural references in the *Yes I Can* playing cards work together to convey Ringgold's political support for Obama's presidency at the same time that they stimulate the viewer to ponder countless questions about their meaning. What significance, for instance, might one attach to Ringgold's decision to fly a pure white flag above her White House? How are we to read the variations among the four cards of a given type, whether it be the spatial arrangement of objects in the “eight” cards or the precise coloring, dress, and gestures in the figural “Jack” cards? And how is Ringgold once again reinventing racist stereotype in both the Money suit, which features a crudely rendered black face on the U.S. dollar bill, and the Joker cards, in which we find images not of caricatured “fools” but of stylized social types from Ringgold's own past?

As is the case for so much of Ringgold's work, the *Yes I Can* deck speaks directly to the artist's personal history. When Ringgold was a freshman at City College in 1948, the only African American in her class and one of few women, her first assignment in a two-dimensional design course was to create a single playing card. She chose to make a Jack of Diamonds in which a series of geometric designs diagonally cut across large fields of gray and yellow (fig. 6). Without including Ringgold, however, the other students collaborated to produce a complete deck of fifty-four cards that they matted for exhibition. Although it has been over sixty years since that homework assignment, Ringgold has never forgotten the lessons it brought home to her about determination in an art world where an African-American woman would (in the words of Willi Posey) “have to be twice as good to go half as far.”²² One imag-

20 Faith Ringgold, interview by WBAI radio (January 22, 2009).

21 Artist's statement (April 24, 2009).

22 Ibid.

ines that Ringgold's childhood memories of adults playing cards on hot summer nights in *Tar Beach* further inspired the artist to design her first complete deck for the opening of her fifty-year retrospective at Rutgers. It is as if Cassie, all grown up, has joined the adults at the table, only to radically reconstruct their game so that it expresses her dream of what it means to be black, female, and free in twenty-first-century America. Ringgold's newest project thus brings into dialogue two important messages of empowerment that have defined her work since the 1980s: "Anyone Can Fly" and "Yes I Can."

Ringgold is currently translating these statements into positive social action through her work at the Anyone Can Fly Foundation and the Faith Ringgold Children's Museum of Art and Storytelling, which is scheduled to open in conjunction with a housing development in Harlem in 2011. Together these institutions will enable a new generation of Harlem residents, American children, as well as scholars and artists of the African diaspora to construct their own declarations of independence. The Rutgers community is proud to have witnessed the development of such a powerful vision of art as freedom.

Special thanks to Ferris Olin, Judith K. Brodsky, Nicole Ianuzelli, Fernanda Perrone, Allison Lindblom, Donna Gustafson, Marilyn Symmes, Kayo Denda, Nyeema Watson, Joan Marter, Grace Matthews, Michele Wallace, and Faith Ringgold for their assistance with this essay.

The Declaration of Freedom and Independence: The Invisible Story

Michele Wallace

Michele Wallace is the daughter of Faith Ringgold. Born in 1952 in Harlem, she is author of *Black Macho and The Myth of the Superwoman* (Dial Press 1979, Verso Reissue 1990), *Invisibility Blues* (Verso 1990), *Black Popular Culture* (New Press 1992) and *Dark Designs and Visual Culture* (Duke UP 2004). Wallace is also Professor of English, Women's Studies and Film Studies at The City College of New York and the CUNY Graduate Center. She is currently on sabbatical writing *Soul Pictures: Black Feminist Generations*, a series of photo-essays considering the ramifications of visuality in our family.

Your country? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed we were here. Here we have brought our three gifts and mingled them with yours: a gift of story and song—soft, stirring melody in an ill-harmonized and unmelodious land; the gift of sweat and brawn to beat back the wilderness, conquer the soil and lay the foundations of this vast economic empire two hundred years earlier than your weak hands could have done it; the third, a gift of the Spirit.

W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)

Primitive is a word I use in a positive way to explain the completeness of a concept in art. I like to layer and pattern and embellish my art in the manner of tribal art, and then, like a blues singer, I like to repeat and repeat it again. Fragmented, understated, or minimalist art forms frustrate me. I want to finish them. In the 1960s there was a minimalist aesthetic advocating “less is more.” To me, less is even less and more is still not quite enough. I was now using feathers and beads as never before.

I had been to the African source of my own “classical” art forms and now I was set free.

Faith Ringgold, *We Flew Over The Bridge* (1995)

In W.E.B. Dubois' beautiful words on the cultural legacy of African Americans, which were written relatively early in a lifetime of struggle to uplift the race, one hears succinctly put the counter-claims of the African American experience in active contradiction with the utopian rhetoric of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. No, Dubois, seems to say, none of you who would call it your country have a claim that proceeds or outweighs the claim of

the descendants of the slaves. It was the slaves, the kidnapped Africans who were here from the time of Jamestown in 1619 tilling the soil, contributing their flesh and sinew and ingenuity to build up this beautiful country, those thirteen colonies, that the Founding Fathers would declare independent of the British crown.

It was the former slaves who would supplement the military forces of the colonies in the hopes of earning their freedom in a new nation. And for some time immediately after the Revolution, it seemed in some quarters as though slavery's day was done. It was in this context that the Northern and Southern colonies struck the pact that would give slaveholders three-fifths of a vote for each of their slaves in the subsequent writing of the Constitution, helping to make their weight in national legislative bodies roughly equivalent to the non-slaveholders until the balance of power could not be maintained one minute more and the country itself faced a great Civil War.

Ironically, neither Dubois nor anyone else gave much thought to the potential for visual productivity among the slaves or even for the role of visual art in the lives of African Americans generally. When Dubois lists the African American contributions to the building of the land, the houses, the fences, the gardens and estates that the slaves made possible are considered unworthy of a mention. It follows then that it should be no surprise but when we turn to look for illustrations of the issues of race and gender in connection with the Declaration of Independence, we find precious little worthy of our respect and consideration. We find very little that can help enlighten us on the relationship of the Founders to their many slaves, and the future of those slaves. The women of any color were not even a thought.

Therefore when Faith turned last summer to the project of illustrating the Declaration of Independence, I took upon myself the task of finding what did exist among the images Americans invoke in celebration of the birth of the United States of America. I could find no visual images created specifically by African Americans in the 18th century at all bearing upon the rhetoric of the Declaration. Of the objects or images produced at the time of the American Revolution, I found some black artists: Joshua Johnston, the portrait painter who painted both blacks and whites, the slave potter from North Carolina known as Dave, the etchings by Scipio Moorhead (1773), among them one of the slave poet Phyllis Wheatley, the silhouettes of Moses Williams, who was a slave of Samuel Copley, the artist, including a silhouette of himself (in *Portraits of a People: Picturing African Americans in the Nineteenth Century* by Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, Addison Gallery of American Art, 2006).

With little in the way of precedents, Faith nonetheless devised six original images, each one double-sided with an image taken from the struggle of the American Revolution paired with an image relevant to the African American struggle for freedom and justice which continued for another two hundred and fifty years after the Revolution. First she made paintings of them as the basis for a series of lithographs with the help of her favorite Master Printer Curlee Holton, with whom she had collaborated on the prints included in *The Jones Road Series* and in the limited edition of *Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letters from a Birmingham Jail* (2007).

Faith drew upon antecedent images of the American Revolution, almost set pieces such as the signing of the Constitution by the Founding Fathers, Ben Franklin submitting the claims of the new Republic to King George, the Boston Tea Party, the Boston Massacre as rendered in the etchings of Paul Revere, and juxtaposed them with some antecedent images of the African American struggle for freedom from slavery and liberation from injustice and Jim Crow. None of the antecedents so far as the Revolution were photographic because at the time of the American Revolution (1776) and the Declaration,

there were no photographic images. Moreover, images related to slavery were comparatively rare (in paintings or prints) and inclined to be formulaic, and as such both rigid and prescriptive. The 18th Century, interestingly enough, was a world in which American artists had not yet set themselves the task of visually imagining resistance. There are some examples of British and European art which grapple with concepts of anti-slavery but such images of distinctly American origin are virtually non-existent in the 18th century. Part of the explanation, I would suggest is that the development of photography in the 19th century would prove crucial to the visual vocabulary of resistance we now take for granted. As such, Faith borrows from photographic images of events that took place in the 19th and 20th century to flesh out her reading of the 18th century Declaration.

From the outset Faith knew she wanted to emphasize African slavery since we know that slavery was a vital aspect of the colonies and would remain crucial to the productivity of the new nation. But her biggest challenge turned out to be not representing the plight of African Americans in relation to the Declaration, but rather the plight of women.

It is no secret to anybody who knows me that I love to watch films and I love to read books. There are a lot of great books about slavery, and the books that consider the issues of the 18th century and the Enlightenment in relation to slavery form a distinct category in the field of American History. In the past two decades since the unearthing of the colonial slave burial grounds in lower Manhattan, our picture of the lives of slaves and the role slavery played in the colonies, particularly in the North, has been irrevocably altered and enhanced. (This material resulted in among other works the epic New York Historical Society's *Slavery in New York* edited by Ira Berlin and Leslie M. Harris, The New Press, 2005).

Whereas when I was a graduate student in American Studies at Yale University briefly in the early '80s and studied the history of slavery and abolitionism there, the colonial period was interesting yet still sketchy in terms of readily available secondary sources. Now the secondary sources are both provocative and fascinating with work on the slave trade, itself; on the piracy on the high seas that resulted from it; on the development of abolitionism and African Diasporic contributions to the movement to end slavery; as well as such special works as Annette Gordon Reed's *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (University of Virginia, 1997), in which we learn about the fascinating connection between a family of slaves and the family of the most prominent of Founding Fathers.

I drew upon my background readings in the field to advise my Mom, such as most significantly the incomparable *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford University Press, 2006) by my former teacher at Yale, arguably the most distinguished historian of abolitionism in the world today—Professor David Brion Davis. But Faith would insist upon visual sources, regardless the arguments I might make for the supremacy of concepts and ideas, and for the visual we turned together to the recent documentary work in the field. The best of these were the following: *Slavery and the Making of America Series* produced by Thirteen/WNET New York, 2004, *Africans in America: America's Journey Through Slavery Series* produced by WGBH Boston, 2006 and *The Middle Passage* produced by HBO, 2003. But with precious few antecedent illustrations, paintings and sculpture to draw upon, no photographs and little in the way of a visual imagination, the palette of these documents remained largely monochromatic. Their artistic strengths lay largely in their use of music, in particular *Slavery* and *The Making of America* for which the celebrated African American musician Bernice Johnson Reagon wrote the score and performed much of the music, some of it with the help of her multi-talented daughter Toshi Reagon. I acquired as well the extended cds Reagon wrote and produced to accompany the production. Since the world of the slaves she is creating is as much a mystery in its musical composition as it is in its visual composition, Reagon uses her considerable knowledge of the history of African American music in the 19th and 20th century to reconstruct the music the slaves of the 18th century might have made, or might have understood if they had heard it. In the process, Reagon produces one of the most beautiful compilations of music I have ever heard, which served as an inspiration, albeit in the abstract, to Faith's wonderful work.

Faith was particularly struck by Reagon's rendering into song, W.E.B. Du Bois' famous words on the founding of the American nation, "Your country? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed we were here," which he addressed to his white readers in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

But perhaps my fondest memory of our whole interaction during her completion of the project was viewing together the docu-drama of the life of John Adams produced by HBO that spring. From this riveting experience came Faith's interest in the letters Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John Adams who was one of the signers of the Declaration. Sadly, this was as close as any woman in the 18th century got to having a verifiable impact on the contents of the Declaration. In the second of her illustrations of the *Declaration*, Faith used a painted portrait image of Abigail Adams as her model, rendering it in black and white and juxtaposed it with a carte de visite photographic portrait of the 19th century black feminist orator Sojourner Truth. On these images Faith superimposed in turn the handwritten words by Abigail Adams in the 18th century concerning the rights of women and the words Truth spoke in her defense of the vote for women (which were not successful) at the conclusion of the Civil War.

Faith's first image juxtaposes King George III against a background of the British Flag. He is walking on the heads of the American Colonists. King George III was the person to whom the Declaration of Independence was addressed. His response was extremely dismissive, which set off the American Revolution. Next to King George, Faith has set an image of a slave ship in which there is superimposed a diagrammatic portrayal of how the slaves were packed in the holds. In the water are slaves either being dumped or jumping to their deaths, recalling most famously J.W. Turner's 19th century masterpiece, *Slavership*.

The third illustration, *Absolute Tyranny*, juxtaposes the portrayal of the Boston Massacre in which Crispus Attucks, an African American was the first to fall (a version of the images printed and circulated by Paul Revere) with a lynching scene in the American South. The fourth illustration juxtaposes a rendition of The Boston Tea Party with an image taken from the famous photograph of the Civil Rights Confrontation on the Edmund Pettus Bridge some two hundred years later. Illustration five juxtaposes an image of Benjamin Franklin pleading the case of the new nation before the British Crown after the American Revolution in 1776 with an image of Frederick Douglass addressing a hypothetical abolitionist meeting under the trees in the period after his escape from slavery in the 1830s. Wherever the slave ships traveled on the high seas, there was an ongoing blood bath of contending forces. There was no justice. There was no peace. Faith's final image juxtaposes Thomas Jefferson writing the Declaration of Independence at his entirely slave-built estate in Montecello, Virginia with Martin Luther King writing Letter from a Birmingham Jail in his cell in 1963.

The Enlightenment was full of contradictions, including the Declaration of Independence which was arguably the first world historical document to result from Enlightenment ideas: equality yes, but for rational, civilized human being, which as everyone knew included only white adult land-owning males. This was such an implicit assumption at the time of the writing of the Declaration, that these terms need not even be explicitly stated, leaving perhaps the loophole of the next two centuries which find us now with a President who descends from Africa and from America combined.

Of course, Thomas Jefferson, the most revered of our founding fathers and the author of the Declaration of Independence, thought that Africans were culturally inferior based upon some rather fanciful observations culled from existing readings of African cultures and his close observation of the African slaves

he owned and carefully managed. His Montecello estate, where Faith pictures him quietly writing the Declaration, still stands today as a celebration of the beauty and careful design that he and his well trained and skillfully trained artisan slaves constructed. He kept his slaves and their families with him for life, if his finances didn't interfere, and he also chose to have each of his slaves educated in a useful trade or craft contributing to the self-sufficiency of the beautiful Monticello. But they were still slaves, and even Sally Hemmings, whom it is widely thought bore him children, who were sold to cover his debts when he died. Thomas Jefferson was one of the masters of enlightenment thought known for its rational conclusions based upon observation, its banishment of confusing and useless emotionalism as well as religious intolerance. Yet Jefferson's pristine intellect remained tainted by his own complicity in the horrifying ordeal of the slave trade in Africa. As thus his dream nation remains haunted by psychological and historical traumatization of the middle passage for his American descendants and for the world.

Illustrations



Fig. 1. Faith Ringgold and Willi Posey at Ringgold's 10-year retrospective exhibition in Voorhees Hall, Rutgers University, 1973. Photograph by Dick Costello, Courtesy of the *Home News Tribune*



Fig. 3. Faith Ringgold, *Matisse's Model* (*The French Collection, Part I: #5*), 1991, acrylic on canvas with pieced fabric border, Baltimore Museum of Art

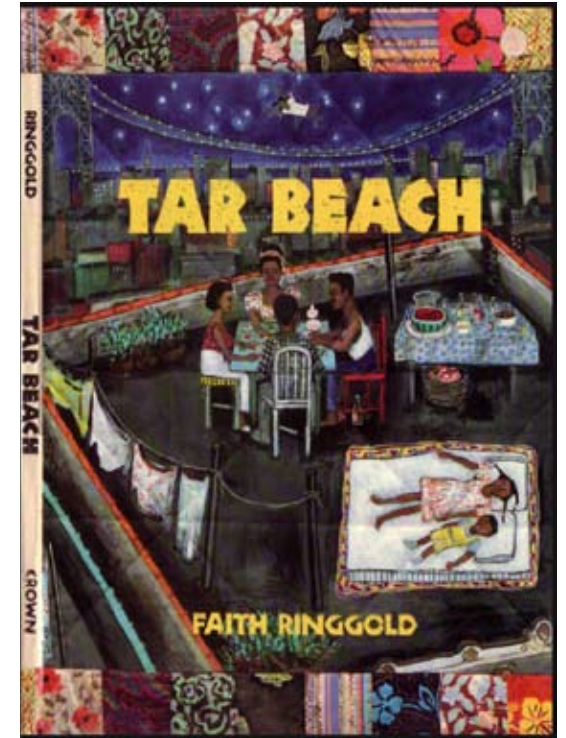


Fig. 2. Cover of Faith Ringgold's first children's book, *Tar Beach* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991)



Fig. 4. Faith Ringgold, *Yes I Can*, 2009
 Playing Cards (back of single card),
 published by IWA, printed by Ad Magic,
 Netcong, NJ

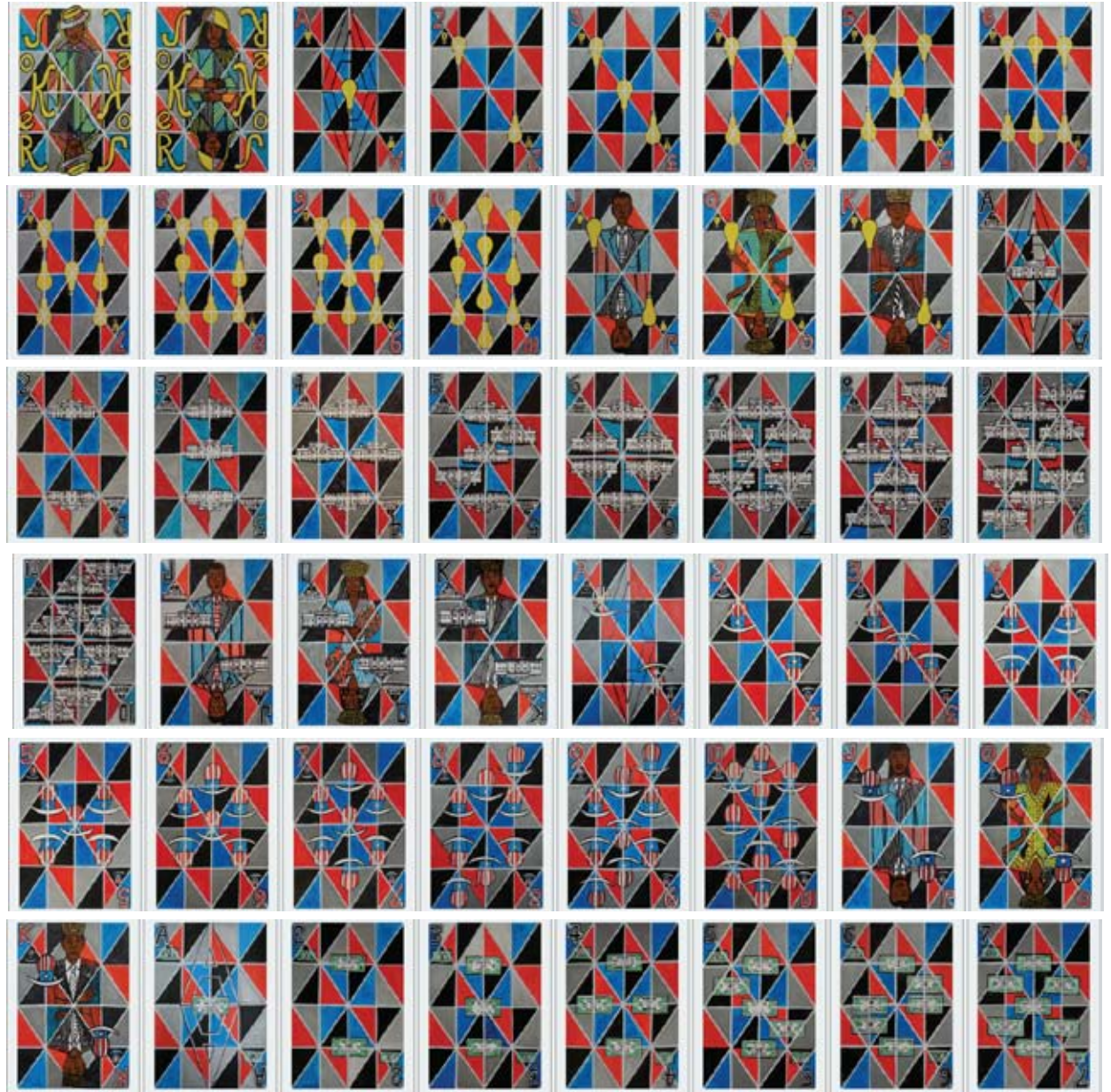


Fig. 5. Faith Ringgold, *Yes I Can*,
 2009
 Playing Cards (front of full deck),
 published by IWA,
 printed by Ad Magic, Netcong, NJ



Yes I Can *Statement by Faith Ringgold*

As a freshman at the City College of New York my first assignment in two dimensional design class was to design a playing card. I chose the Jack of Diamonds. However the other kids in the class got together and created a whole deck of 54 cards. They had their cards matted and covered with plexi glass. “We weren’t supposed to create the whole deck” I told them “just one card.” “We could do what we want” one smart-ass girl said to me.

It was 1948 and I was the only black kid in the class of 20 or more art students and the only one of maybe two or three women. CCNY was a boy’s school at that time, tuition was free and competition was steep. My one card was the homework but their deck was an exhibition.

“Don’t let this ever happen to you again,” I told myself. “No! No! Never again.” That was more than 60 years ago and I have never again forgotten the message my mother taught me: “You will have to be twice as good to go half as far.”

However, it is only now that I have made my first deck of playing cards and I must say it was great fun and a lot more difficult than I could have ever imagined. The most fun part was setting up and designing the suites to express today’s most moving message: “Yes I Can!” I selected the following four images as my suites: The Whitehouse (presidency), The Light (enlightenment), The Money (power) and the Uncle Sam Hat (patriotism), everything Obama needs to prove He Can.

Faith Ringgold 2009



Fig. 6. *Jack of Diamonds*, 1948
Tempera on card stock
3 ¾ x 3 inches; framed 12 ¼ x 11 ¼ inches



Fig. 8. Faith Ringgold signing the 2005 print edition of *Somebody Stole My Broken Heart* at her studio in Englewood, NJ. Photograph courtesy of the Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions, Rutgers University

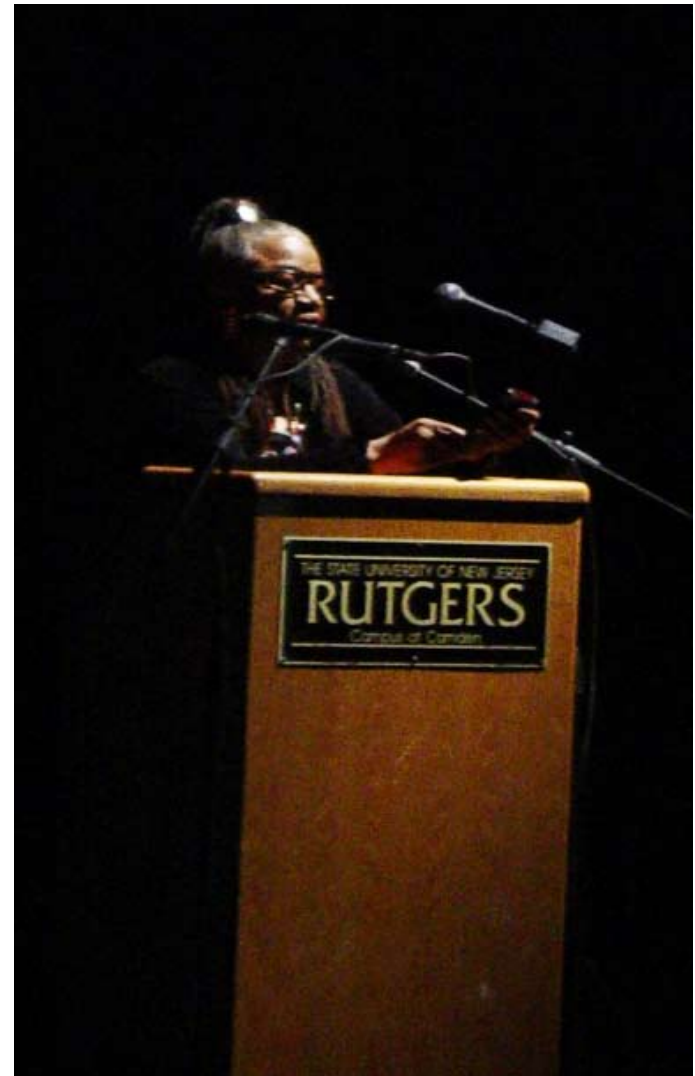


Fig. 7 Faith Ringgold lecturing at the Center for Children and Childhood Studies, Rutgers University (Camden), 2003. Photograph courtesy of the Center for Children and Childhood Studies

Declaration of Freedom and Independence

Statement

Faith Ringgold 2009

Probably the most challenging works of art I have ever created are these six illustrations of the series, The Declaration of Freedom and Independence. In order to illustrate the series, Declaration of Freedom and Independence I had to create a truth I could believe in. In no way could I illustrate that document word-for- word and ignore the fact that Slavery in America was not seriously considered in its contents.

In other words: America's declaration of independence from the British, written in 1776, was, an "underhanded lie" that has for several hundred years inspired the continuing struggle for truth and freedom in America. Understanding this, what could I say in my illustrations that could possibly inspire the truth of its impact on democracy and freedom in America?

It took Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and the phenomenal Martin Luther King: among countless others including slavers, slaves and decedents of slaves, whose ancestors were brought here in chains to build a nation that has never quite understood the word freedom in spite of the fact that in its *Declaration of Independence* it claims "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," (while actually meaning to say: white men, not black men, or white women- to say nothing of black women and) "that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. —"

When I was in elementary school we celebrated a day called "I am An American Day." I recall competing in this essay contest at my school, P.S 186 in Manhattan. One year I won the contest for my school. I don't quite remember what I had to say but I do know I was brought up to embrace the power of and the struggle for freedom in America. At the time, in the 1930s, being a Black American meant that you could, and you should exercise your Freedom of Speech. Freedom of Speech was and still is the main difference between Black Americans and other oppressed people in the world. But still I was brought up to understand that, in America, my freedom was not more than a promise that would be a struggle and could be, in many instances, denied.

However, my intention in these illustrations is to tell the story of the forefathers declaration of independence from the British, along with the African American struggle for freedom and equality that one day we hope will become an undeniable reality.

These illustrations are dedicated to the American People who in 2008 elected our first Black President, Barack Obama, to be the 44th President of the United States.



25 An historical tableau of *Images of Freedom in America*
 The text is THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776
 The titles in red represent the quotes I used for these six images.

21 ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that **all men are created equal**, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish

it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government.

Fig. 9. *All Men are Created Equal*, from the series Declaration of Freedom and Independence, 2008-09, Acrylic on paper, 1 of 6; 9 x 13 inches



62 AND WOMEN?
 A letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams
 March 31, 1776

... I long to hear that you have declared an independence and by the way in the 'New Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all the Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or Representation. That your sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend why then not put it out of the power of the vicious and Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity and impunity. Men of sense in all Ages abhor these customs which treat us only as the Vessels of your sex. Regard us then as Beings placed by providence under your protection as in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our Happiness.

...Ain't I A Woman ...speech presented by Sojourner Truth 1852 Akron, Ohio

... That man over there says that women need to be helped 'into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? ... Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him. ... If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back and get it right side up again!

Fig 10. *And Women?* from the series Declaration of Freedom and Independence, 2008-09 Acrylic on paper, 2 of 6; 9 x 13 inches



#3 ABSOLUTE TYRANNY

The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an **absolute Tyranny** over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected, whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at

large for their exercise, the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:



#4 TAXES ON US WITHOUT OUR CONSENT

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States: For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing **Taxes on us without our Consent**. For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments: For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves

invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation, and Tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & Perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

Left: Fig. 11. *Absolute Tyranny*, from the series Declaration of Freedom and Independence, 3 of 6; 9 x 13 inches
 Right: Fig. 12. *Taxes on us Without our Consent*, from the series Declaration of Freedom and Independence, 4 of 6; 9 x 13 inches



#5 WE HAVE APPEALED TO THEIR NATIVE JUSTICE AND MAGNANIMITY

In every stage of these Oppressions We have petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people. Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here.

We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

Left: Fig. 13. *We have Appealed to Their Native Justice and Magnanimity*, from the series, Declaration of Freedom and Independence, 2008-09, Acrylic on Paper, 5 of 6; 9 x 13 inches

Right: Fig 14. *As Free and Independent States*, from the series, Declaration of Freedom and Independence 2008-09, Acrylic on Paper, 6 of 6; 9 x 13 inches



#6 AS FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States, that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. — And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

— John Hancock

New Hampshire: Josiah Bartlett, William Whipple, Matthew Thornton

Massachusetts

John Hancock, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Robert Treat Taine, Elbridge Gerry

Rhode Island: Stephen Hopkins, William Ellery

Connecticut: Roger Sherman, Samuel Huntington, William Williams, Oliver Wolcott

New York: William Floyd, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris

New Jersey: Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, John Hart, Abraham Clark

Pennsylvania: Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, John Morton, George Clymer, James Smith, George Taylor, James Wilson, George Ross

Delaware: Caesar Rodney, George Read, Thomas McKean

Maryland: Samuel Chase, William Paca, Thomas Stone, Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia: George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton

North Carolina: William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn
South Carolina: Edward Rutledge, Thomas Maysword, Jr., Thomas Lynch, Jr., Arthur Middleton
Georgia: Butcher Swinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton

Declaration of Freedom and Independence Quilt
Black Historical Timeline from 1619 to 2008

- 1619 Slavery arrives in Jamestown
- 1770 Crispus Attucks first to be killed in Boston Massacre
- 1775 American Revolution begins Free Blacks serve
100,000 slaves escape
- 1776 Declaration of Independence from British
- 1787 US Constitution represents slaves as 3/5 of a man
- 1838 Frederick Douglass escapes slavery
Joins abolitionists and black voting rights
movements
- 1849 Harriet Tubman initiates Underground Railroad
- 1851 Sojourner Truth "Ain't I a Woman" Speech
- 1857 Dred Scott Decision
- 1859 John Brown Raid at Harpers Ferry
Abraham Lincoln elected President
- 1861 Confederate States secede from the Union
Civil War begins
- 1862 Abe Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation
Declares slaves "Forever Free"
- 1865 Lincoln's 13th Amendment outlaws slavery
Civil War ends
Abraham Lincoln Assassinated
Ku Klux Klan is formed
- 1892 230 lynchings in US
- 1896 "Separate but equal" doctrine
Jim Crow era
- 1920 Women's Right to Vote
- 1955 Rosa Parks
Martin Luther King
Montgomer Bus Boycott
Civil Rights Movement
- 1968 Martin Luther King assassinated
- 2008 Barack Obama elected first Black President



Fig. 15. *Declaration of Freedom and Independence Quilt*, 2009
 Acrylic on Canvas with Painted and Pieced Border
 65 x 52 inches

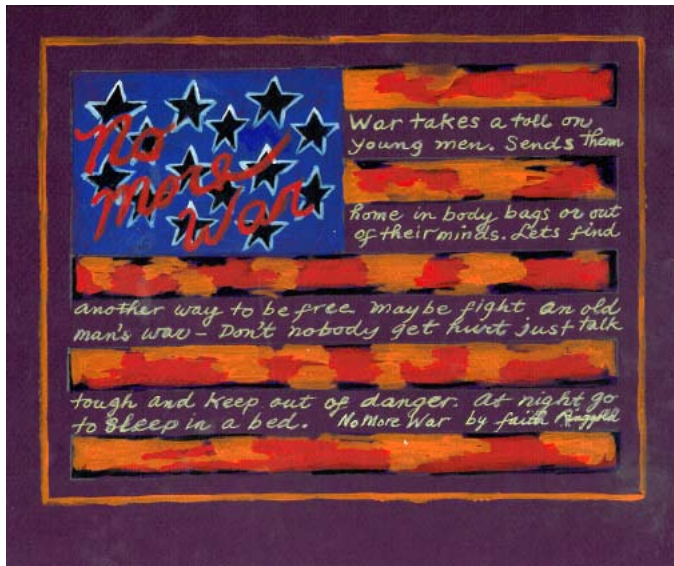


Fig. 16. Flag #01, 2003
Felt pen and gouache on paper
8 1/2 x 10 inches

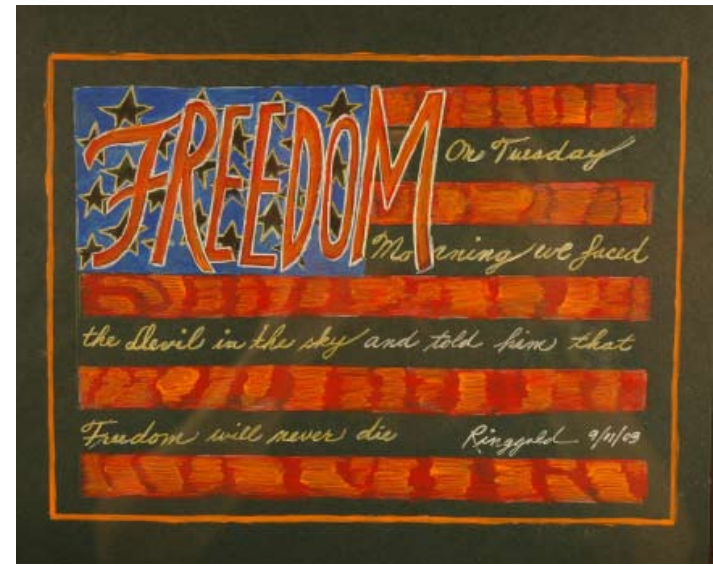


Fig. 17. Flag #06, 2003
Felt Pen and Gouache on Paper
8 1/2 x 10 inches

Fig. 18. Flag #10, 2003
Felt pen and gouache on paper
8 1/2 x 10 inches



Fig. 19. Flag #11, 2003
Felt pen and gouache on paper
8 1/2 x 10 inches

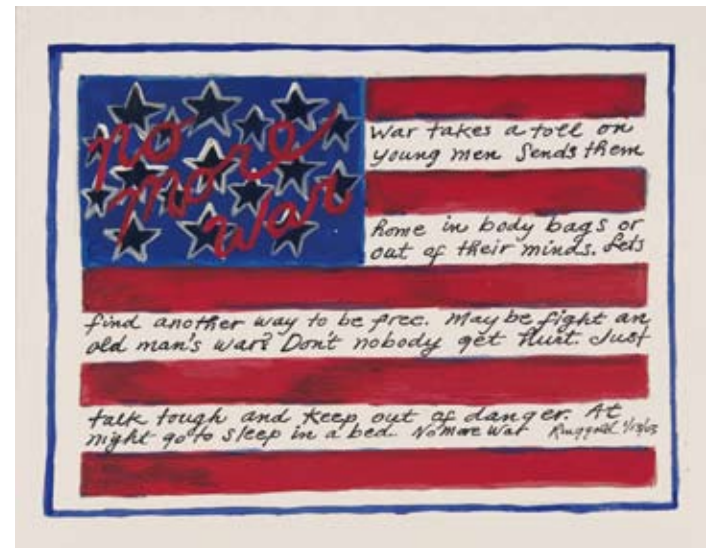




Fig. 20. *The Flag is Bleeding #2* (The American Collection #6), 1997



Fig. 21. *Yes We Did*, 2009
Acrylic on Paper, 12 x 9 inches

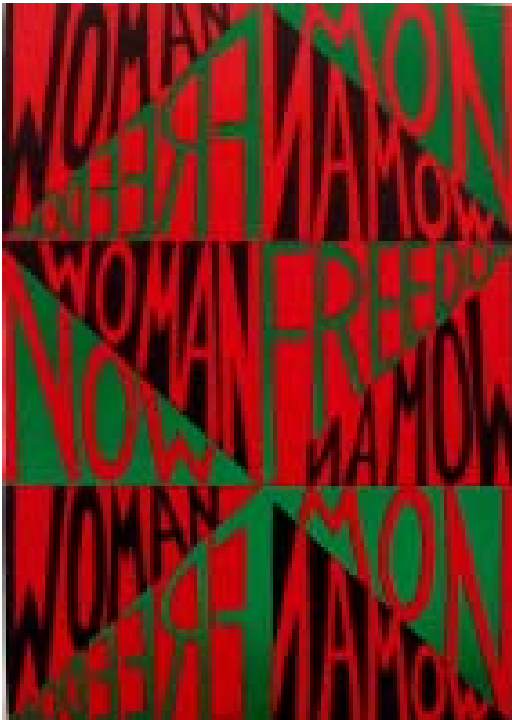


Fig. 22. *Woman Freedom Now* (Political Posters), 1970
Cut Paper. 30 x 20 inches



Fig. 23. *Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima?*, 1983
Acrylic on Canvas with dyed, painted, and pieced fabric,
90 x 80 inches



Fig. 24. *Working Women*, 1996
Acrylic on canvas with pieced fabric, 41 x 31 inches



Fig. 25. *Fight to Save Your Life*, #13 of 16, Slave Rape Series, 1973-93, Acrylic on linen with pieced fabric border tanka, 39 x 22 ½ inches



Fig. 26. *There Was One of Two Things*, #06 of 20, Feminist Series: 1972, Acrylic on canvas framed in cloth, 46 ½ x 34 inches



Fig. 27. *Nobody Will Ever Love You Like I Do*, 2006
Serigraph AP, 30 x 22 inches, Edition of 10; 2/10



Fig. 28. *Somebody Stole My Broken Heart*, 2007
Serigraph, 30 x 22 inches, Edition of 60; 28/60



Fig. 29. *Groovin' High*, 1996
Silkscreen, 32 1/2 x 44 inches
Edition of 425; 138/425

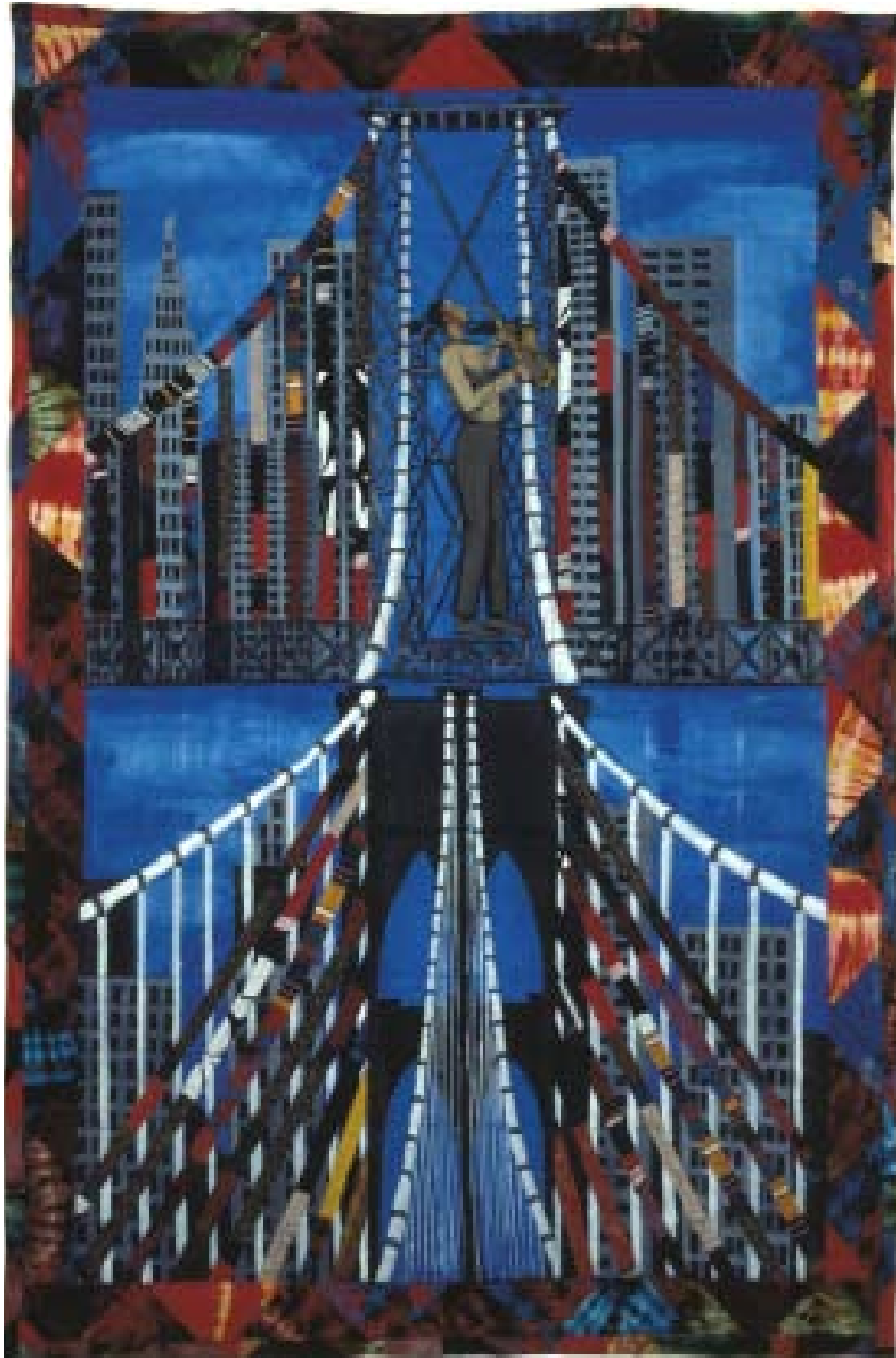


Fig. 30. *Sonny's Bridge*, 1986
Acrylic on canvas
84 1/2 x 60 inches; Framed 90 1/4 x 65 1/4 inches



Fig. 31. *Jazz Stories: Sonny Blows 3/3*, 2001-2004.
Acrylic on paper, 19 1/2 x 13 1/2 inches



Fig. 32. *Papa Can Blow*, 2005
 Silkscreen, 28 ½ x 22 ½ inches
 Edition of 70; 37/70

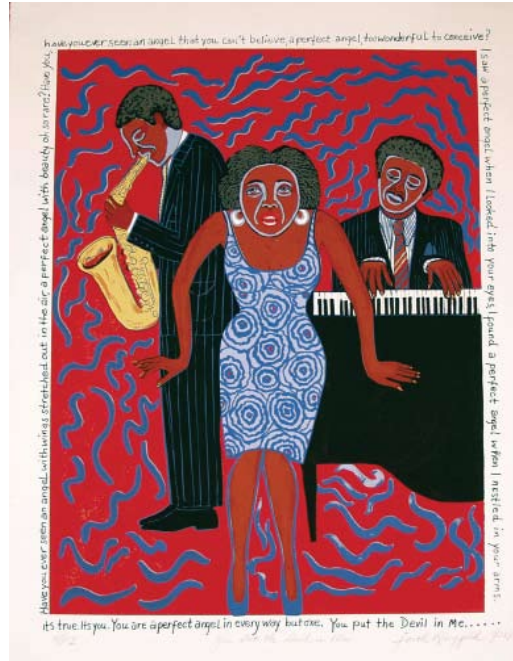
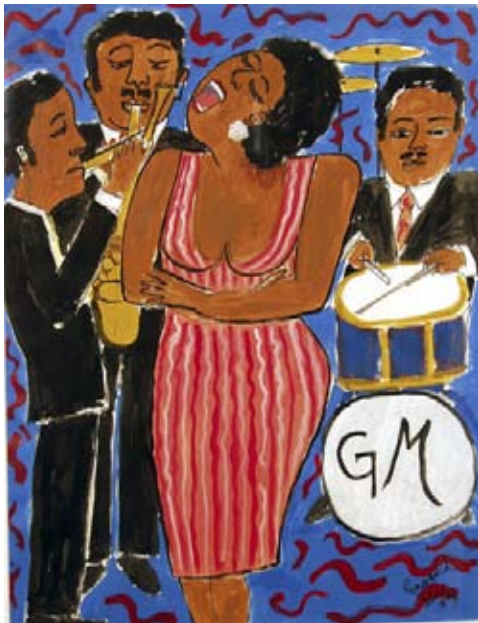


Fig. 33. *Mama Can Sing: You Put the Devil in Me*, 2004, Serigraph, 30 x 22 inches
 Edition of 100; 64/100



Fig. 34. *Jazz Stories: Mama Can Sing 7/7*, 2001-2004
 Acrylic on paper, 23 x 17 ½ inches



Left: Fig. 35. *Jazz Stories #4: Nobody Will Ever Love You Like I Do*, 2003
 Acrylic on paper, 22 ½ x 17 ¼ inches

Middle: Fig. 36. *Mama Can Sing Papa Can Blow*, 2003
 Serigraph, 20 x 29 inches, Edition of 50; 45/50

Right: Fig. 37. *Wynton's Tune*, 2004
 Silkscreen, 30 x 22 inches, AP 23



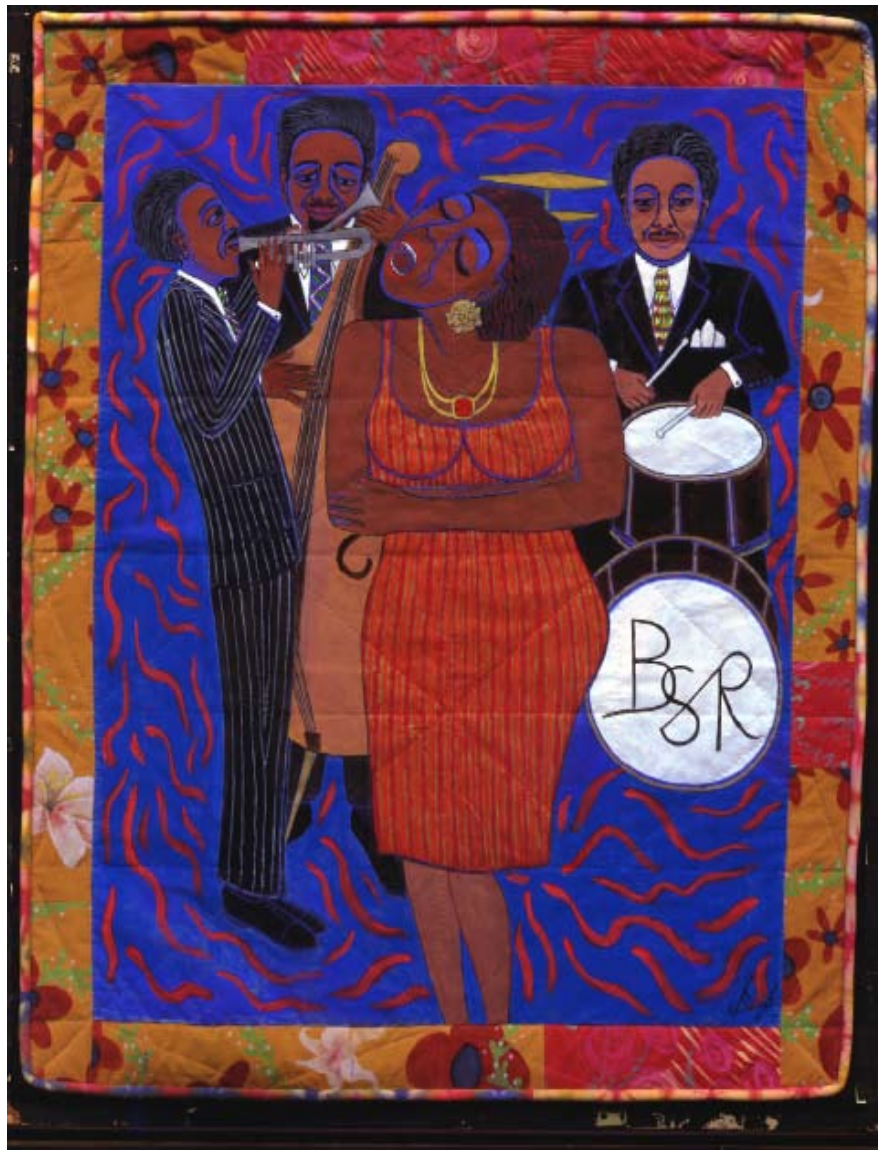


Fig. 38. *Jazz Stories, Mama Can Dance, Papa Can Blow #4: Nobody Will Ever Love You like I Do*, 2004
Acrylic on canvas with pieced border, 82 x 68 inches



Fig. 39. *Jazz Stories: Mama Can Sing, Papa Can Blow #3: Gonna Get On Away from You*, 2004
Acrylic on canvas with pieced border, 84 x 70 inches

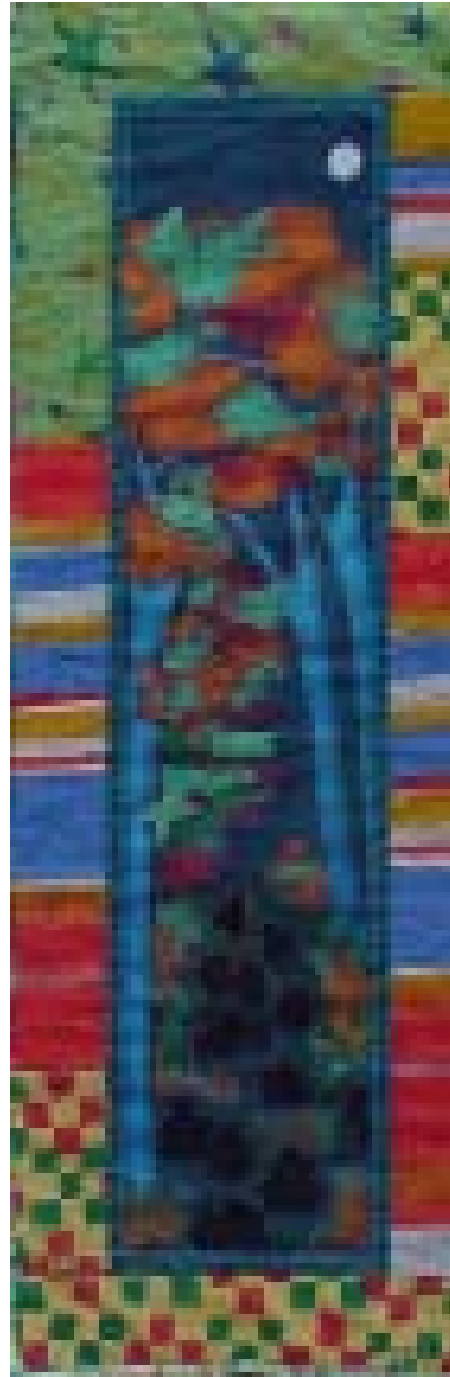


Fig. 42. *Coming to Jones Road Print #2: Under a Blood Red Sky*, 2001
 Silkscreen on canvas quilt, 41 x 47 inches, Edition of 20; 4/20

Left: Fig. 40. *Coming to Jones Road Banner Quilt #1: Under a Blood Red Sky*, 2000
 Acrylic on canvas, 55 ½ x 19 ½ inches

Right: Fig. 41. *Coming to Jones Road Banner Quilt #3: We Jus Keep a Comin*, 2000
 Acrylic on canvas, 55 ½ x 19 ½ inches



Fig. 43. *Coming to Jones Road Study #1: We Jus Keep a' Comin'*, 1999
Acrylic on watercolor paper, 30 x 22 inches



Fig. 44. *Coming to Jones Road Study #3: A Long and Lonely Night*, 2000
Acrylic on watercolor paper, 30 x 22 inches



Fig. 45. *Coming to Jones Road Study #5: We Jus Keep a' Comin'*, 2000
Acrylic on watercolor paper, 30 x 22 inches



Fig. 48. *Coming to Jones Road Print #3: Under a Blood Red Sky*, 2001
Color etching, 12 x 9 inches, Edition of 40; 4/40



Fig. 50. *Coming to Jones Road: Under a Blood Red Sky #6*, 2005
Silkscreen, 22 1/2 x 30 inches,
Edition of 40; 24/4



Fig. 46. *Coming to Jones Road #7: We Jus Keep a' Comin'*, 2000
Acrylic on canvas pieced with fabric border, 78 x 55 1/2 inches



Fig. 49. *Coming to Jones Road: Under a Blood Red Sky #9*, 2007
Acrylic on Paper, 22 x 22 inches



Fig. 47. *Coming to Jones Road Study #7: A Chalk-White Moon in a Blood Red Sky*, 2000
Acrylic on watercolor paper, 22 x 30 inches



Fig. 51. *Coming to Jones Road #4: Under a Blood Red Sky*, 2004
Collagraph, 35 x 45 inches, Edition of AP; 9/30/AP

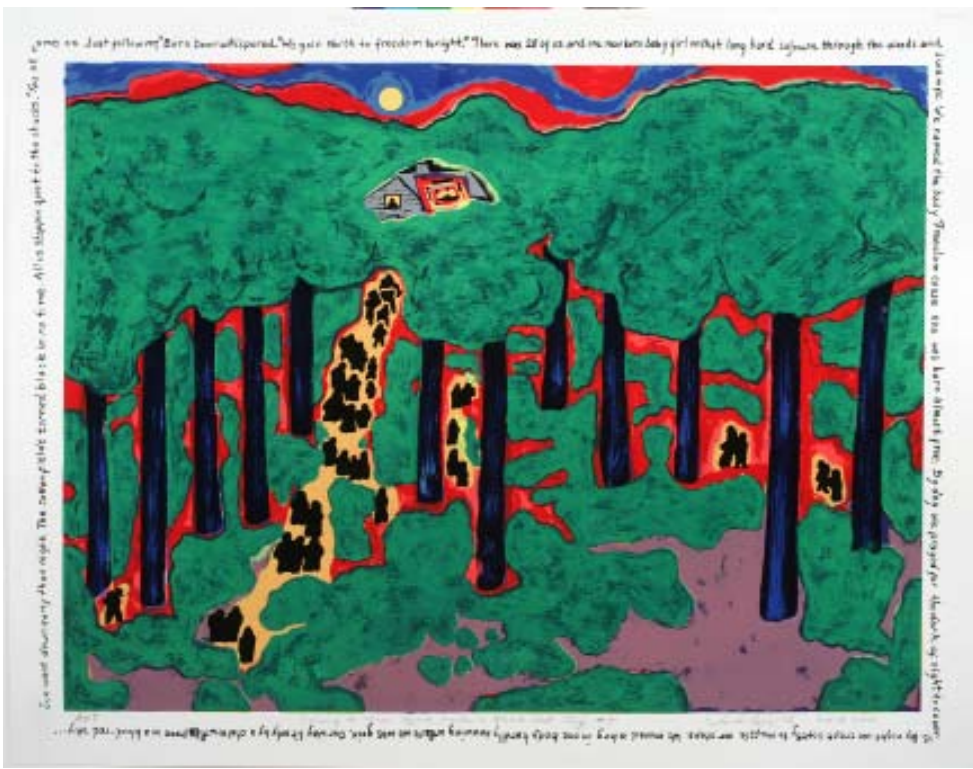


Fig. 52. *Coming to Jones Road: Under a Blood Red Sky #5*, 2004
Serigraph, 35 x 45 inches, Edition of AP; 7/AP



Fig. 53. *Tar Beach #2*, 1990-92
 Silk-screen on silk, 66 x 65 inches
 Edition of 24; 3/24



Fig. 54. *Tar Beach #2*, 2003
 Silk-screen, 32 x 32 inches,
 Edition of 195; 36/195



Fig. 55. *Anyone Can Fly*, 2007
 Silk-screen, 15 x 17 1/2 inches
 Edition of 50; 23/50

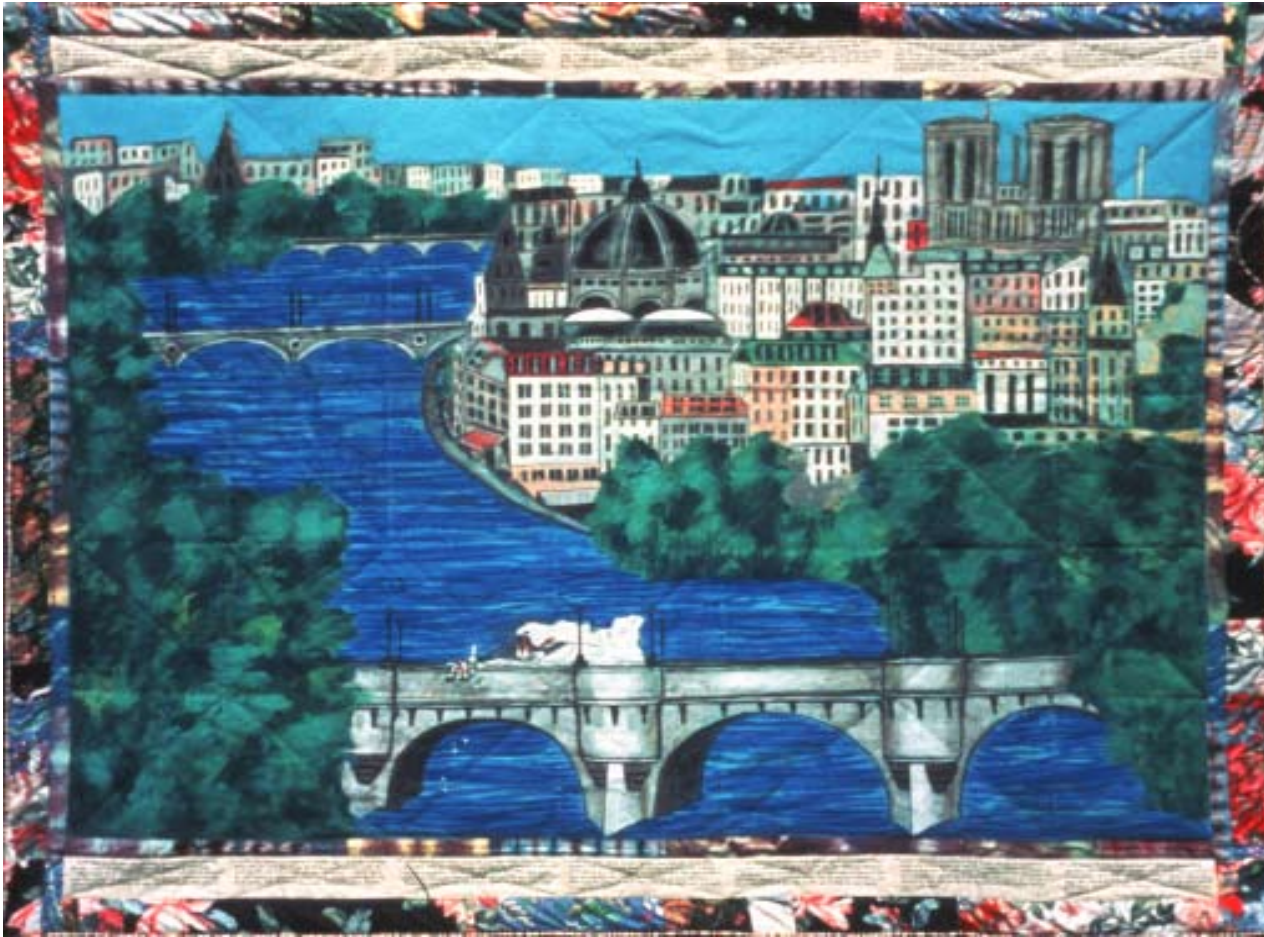


Fig. 56. *Wedding on the Seine, Part 1: #2* The French Collection, 1991
Acrylic on canvas with pieced fabric border, 74 x 89 inches



Fig. 57. *Study for Dinner at Gertrude Stein's*, 1990
Marker on paper, 16 x 20 inches



Fig. 58. *Study for Moroccan Holiday*, 1996
Pen on paper, 18 x 23 ½ inches

- 1 Madeline Walker
- 2 Sojourner Truth
- 3 Ida Wells
- 4 Fannie Lou Hamer
- 5 Harriet Tubman
- 6 Rosa Parks
- 7 Mary McLeod Bethune
- 8 Ella Baker
- 9 Vincent Van Gogh



French Collection #4: The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles
 © Faith Ringgold 1991
 74 x 80 inches / acrylic on canvas / private collection



Fig. 60. Study #2 for *On the Beach at St. Tropez*, 1990
 Marker on paper, 9 x 11 ¾ inches

Fig. 61. *Study of Matisse's Model*, 1990
 Marker on paper, 9 x 11 ¾ inches



Fig. 59. *The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles*, 1997
 Silkscreen, 33 ¼ x 35 inches
 Edition of 425; 93/425



Fig. 62. *Aunt Edith*, 1974
Mixed media, 64 x 19 x 13 inches



Fig. 63. *Aunt Bessie*, 1974
Mixed media, 65 1/2 X 19 X 12 inches



Fig. 64. *Aunt Emmy*, 2005
Lithograph, 30 x 22 inches
Edition of 50; 3/50



Fig. 65. *Evelyn*, 1978
Soft sculpture, 35 ½ inches



Fig. 66. *Yvonne*, 1978
Soft sculpture, 36 inches



Fig. 67. *Little Joe*, 1978
Soft sculpture, 43 x 10 x 10 inches



Fig. 68. *Malti and Buddha*, 1978
Mixed media sculpture, 15 inches (Malti)
16 ½ inches (Buddha)



Fig. 69. *A Man Kissing His Wife*, ca. 1964
Oil on masonite, 19 x 12 inches



Fig. 70. *American People Series 001: Between Friends*, 1963
Oil on canvas, 40 x 24 inches

Exhibition checklist

All images courtesy of the Faith Ringgold and ACA Galleries, NY.

Yes I Can, 2009

Playing Cards (illustrations show back of single card and full deck), published by IWA, printed by Ad Magic.Netcong, NJ, Figs. 4 and 5

Jack of Diamonds, 1948

Tempera on card stock

3 ¾ x 3 inches; framed 12 ¼ x 11 ¼ inches, Fig. 6

All Men are Created Equal, from the series,

Declaration of Freedom and Independence, 2008-09

Acrylic on Paper

1 of 6; 9 x 13 inches, Fig. 9

And Women? from the series,

Declaration of Freedom and Independence, 2008-09

Acrylic on Paper

2 of 6; 9 x 13 inches, Fig. 10

Absolute Tyranny, from the series,

Declaration of Freedom and Independence, 2008-09

Acrylic on Paper

3 of 6; 9 x 13 inches, Fig. 11

Taxes on us Without our Consent, from the series,

Declaration of Freedom and Independence, 2008-09

Acrylic on Paper

4 of 6; 9 x 13 inches, Fig. 12

We have Appealed to Their Native Justice and Magnanimity,

from the series, Declaration of Freedom and Independence, 2008-09

Acrylic on Paper

5 of 6; 9 x 13 inches, Fig. 13

As Free and Independent States, from the series,

Declaration of Freedom and Independence, 2008-09

Acrylic on Paper

6 of 6; 9 x 13 inches, Fig. 14

Declaration of Freedom and Independence Quilt, 2009

Acrylic on Canvas with Painted and Pieced Border

65 x 52 inches, Fig. 15

Flag #01, 2003

Felt pen and gouache on paper

8 ½ x 10 inches, Fig. 16

Flag #06, 2003

Felt Pen and Gouache on Paper

8 ½ x 10 inches, Fig. 17

Flag #10, 2003

Felt pen and gouache on paper

8 ½ x 10 inches, Fig. 18

Flag #11, 2003

Felt pen and gouache on paper

8 ½ x 10 inches, Fig. 19

The Flag is Bleeding #2 (The American Collection #6), 1997

Acrylic on Canvas with Painted and Pieced Border

79 x 76 inches, Fig 20

Yes We Did, 2009

Acrylic on Paper

12 x 9 inches, Fig. 21

Woman Freedom Now (Political Posters), 1970

Cut Paper

30 x 20 inches, Fig. 22

Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima?, 1983
Acrylic on Canvas with dyed, painted, and pieced fabric
90 x 80 inches, Fig. 23

Working Women, 1996
Acrylic on canvas with pieced fabric
41 x 31 inches, Fig. 24

Fight to Save Your Life, #13 of 16, Slave Rape Series, 1973-93
Acrylic on linen with pieced fabric border tanka
39 x 22 ½ inches, Fig. 25

There Was One of Two Things, #06 of 20, Feminist Series, 1972
Acrylic on canvas framed in cloth
46 ½ x 34 inches, Fig. 26

Nobody Will Ever Love You Like I Do, 2006
Serigraph AP Edition of 10; 2/10
30 x 22 inches, Fig. 27

Somebody Stole My Broken Heart, 2007
Serigraph, Edition of 60; 28/60
30 x 22 inches, Fig. 28

Groovin' High, 1996
Silkscreen, Edition of 425; 138/425
32 ½ x 44 inches, Fig. 29

Sonny's Bridge, 1986
Acrylic on canvas
84 ½ x 60 inches; Framed 90 ¼ x 65 ¼ inches, Fig. 30

Jazz Stories: Sonny Blows 3/3, 2001-2004
Acrylic on paper
19 ½ x 13 ½ inches, Fig. 31

Papa Can Blow, 2005
Silkscreen, Edition of 70; 37/70
28 ½ x 22 ½ inches, Fig. 32

Mama Can Sing: You Put the Devil in Me, 2004
Serigraph, Edition of 100; 64/100
30 x 22 inches, Fig. 33

Jazz Stories: Mama Can Sing 7/7, 2001-2004
Acrylic on paper
23 x 17 ½ inches, Fig. 34

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Acrylic on paper
22 ½ x 17 ¼ inches, Fig. 35

Mama Can Sing Papa Can Blow, 2003
Serigraph, Edition of 50; 45/50
20 x 29 inches, Fig. 36

Wynton's Tune, 2004
Silkscreen, AP 23
30 x 22 inches, Fig. 37

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Nobody will ever love you like I do*, 2004
Acrylic on canvas with pieced border
82 x 68 inches, Fig. 38

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Acrylic on canvas
55 ½ x 19 ½ inches, Fig. 40

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Silkscreen on canvas quilt, Edition of 20; 4/20
41 x 47 inches, Fig. 42

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Acrylic on watercolor paper
30 x 22 inches, Fig. 43

Coming to Jones Road Study #3: A Long and Lonely Night, 2000
Acrylic on watercolor paper
30 x 22 inches, Fig. 44

Coming to Jones Road Study #5: We Jus Keep a' Comin', 2000
Acrylic on watercolor paper
30 x 22 inches, Fig. 45

Coming to Jones Road #7: We Jus Keep a' Comin', 2000
Acrylic on canvas pieced with fabric border
78 1/2 x 55 ½ inches, Fig. 46

*Coming to Jones Road Study #7:
A Chalk-White Moon in a Blood Red Sky*, 2000
Acrylic on watercolor paper
22 x 30 inches, Fig. 47

Coming to Jones Road Print #3: Under a Blood Red Sky, 2001
Color etching Edition of 40; 4/40
12 x 9 inches, Fig. 48

Coming to Jones Road: Under a Blood Red Sky #9, 2007
Acrylic on Paper
22 x 22 inches, Fig. 49

Coming to Jones Road: Under a Blood Red Sky #6, 2005
Silkscreen, Edition of 40; 24/40
22 ½ x 30 inches, Fig. 50

Coming to Jones Road #4: Under a Blood Red Sky, 2004
Collagraph, Edition of AP; 9/30/AP
35 x 45 inches, Fig. 51

Coming to Jones Road: Under a Blood Red Sky #5, 2004
Serigraph, Edition of AP; 7/AP
35 x 45 inches, Fig. 52

Tar Beach #2, 1990-92
Silkscreen on silk, Edition of 24; 3/24
66 x 65 inches, Fig. 53

Tar Beach #2, 2003
Silkscreen, Edition of 195; 36/195
32 x 32 inches, Fig. 54

Anyone Can Fly, 2007
Silkscreen, Edition of 50; 23/50
15 x 17 ½ inches, Fig. 55

Wedding on the Seine, Part 1: #2, The French Collection, 1991
Acrylic on canvas with pieced fabric border
74 x 89 inches, Fig. 56

Study for Dinner at Gertrude Stein's, 1990
Marker on Paper
16 x 20 inches, Fig. 57

Study for Moroccan Holiday, 1996
Pen on Paper
18 x 23 ½ inches, Fig. 58

The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles, 1997
Silkscreen, Edition of 425; 93/425
33 ¼ x 35 inches, Fig. 59

Study #2 for On the Beach at St. Tropez, 1990
Marker on Paper
9 x 11 ¾ inches, Fig. 60

Study of Matisse's Model, 1990
Marker on Paper
9 x 11 ¾ inches, Fig. 61

Aunt Edith, 1974
Mixed media
64 x 19 x 13 inches, Fig. 62

Aunt Bessie, 1974
Mixed media
65 ½ X 19 X 12 inches, Fig. 63

Aunt Emmy, 2005
Lithograph, Edition of 50; 3/50
30 x 22 inches, Fig. 64

Evelyn, 1978
Soft sculpture
35 ½ inches, Fig. 65

Yvonne, 1978
Soft sculpture
36 inches, Fig. 66

Little Joe, 1978
Soft sculpture
43 x 10 x 10 inches, Fig. 67

Malti and Buddha, 1978
Mixed media sculpture
15 inches (Malti)
16 ½ inches (Buddha), Fig. 68

A Man Kissing His Wife, ca. 1964
Oil on masonite
19 x 12 inches, Fig. 69

American People Series 001: Between Friends, 1963
Oil on canvas
40 x 24 inches, Fig. 70

Faith Ringgold and Rutgers University: A Selected Chronology

Compiled by Tanya Sheehan

- 1971 Lecture, “Women in the Arts” panel series, Douglass College (New Brunswick)
- 1973 Solo exhibition and ten-year retrospective, “Faith Ringgold: Black. Woman. Artist. 1963-1973,” Rutgers University Art Gallery (New Brunswick)
- Lectures, “Black Art” (Camden) and “Black and Feminist Art” (New Brunswick)
- 1977 Group exhibition, “Primitivism in Women’s Art,” Douglass College Art Gallery (New Brunswick)
- 1978 Solo exhibition of “Woman on a Pedestal” in group series, “Women Artists Year 7” (later renamed the Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series), Douglass College Art Gallery (New Brunswick)
- 1980 Group exhibition, “fragments of myself/the women: An Exhibition of Black Women Artists,” Douglass College Art Gallery (New Brunswick)
- 1981 Group exhibition, “Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series, 1971-1981: 10th Year Retrospective,” Douglass College Art Gallery (New Brunswick)
- Performance, “Being My Own Woman,” Douglass College (New Brunswick)
- 1983 Group exhibition, “The Artist and the Quilt Show,” Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum (New Brunswick)
- 1984 Solo exhibition, “California Dah” (New Brunswick)
- Performance, “No Name Performance #2” (New Brunswick)
- 1991 Group exhibition, “Designing Women,” Douglass College Art Gallery (New Brunswick)
- 1995 Lecture, “Faith Ringgold: 30 Years of Making Art” in Honors Colloquium, “Women Artists, Public and Private Spheres,” Douglas campus (New Brunswick)
- Ringgold collaborates with Eileen M. Foti on print edition, *The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles*, Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions, Mason Gross School of the Arts (New Brunswick)

- 1996 Group exhibition, “Mary H. Dana Women Artist Series, 1971-1996: 25th Year Retrospective” (New Brunswick)
- 1999 Group exhibition of sculptors from the National Association of Women Artists, “The Enduring Figure, 1890s-1970s,” Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum (New Brunswick)
- 2003 Ringgold donates professional papers to Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives
- Inaugural lecture, “Remembering Childhood: Meet the Authors, Hear Their Stories” series, Rutgers University Center for Children and Childhood Studies (Camden); see fig. 7
- 2005 Ringgold collaborates with Randy Hemminghaus on print edition, *Somebody Stole My Broken Heart*, Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions, Mason Gross School of the Arts (New Brunswick); see fig. 8
- 2007 Group exhibition, “Alone Together: People in American Prints,” Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum (New Brunswick)
- Ringgold collaborates with John C. Erickson on print edition, *Coming to Jones Road: Under a Blood Red Sky #8*, Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions, Mason Gross School of the Arts (New Brunswick)
- 2008 Group exhibition, “Inspired by Literature: Art and Fine Books,” Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum (New Brunswick)
- 2009 Group exhibition, “A Parallel Presence: National Association of Women Artists, 1889-2009” Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum (New Brunswick)
- Lecture, “Etched in Memory: Legacy Planning for Artists” conference, Institute for Women and Art (New Brunswick)
- Solo exhibition, “A Declaration of Independence: 50 Years of Art by Faith Ringgold,” Mason Gross School of the Arts Galleries (New Brunswick)
- Rutgers awards Ringgold a doctor of letters honorary degree

Works in Publication: Books By or About Faith Ringgold
(arranged chronologically)

- Tar Beach*
ISBN 0-517-58031-4
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Random House Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991
- Aunt Harriets Underground Railroad in the Sky*
ISBN 0-517-58768-8
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Random House Crown Publishers, Inc., 1992
- French Collection Part I*
Library of Congress 124424
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Being My Own Woman Press, 1992
- Dinner at Aunt Connie's House*
ISBN 1-56282-426-0
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Hyperion Books for Children, 1993
- Faith Ringgold Portraits of Women Artists for Children*
ISBN 0-316-85652-5
Author : Robyn Montana Turner
Little Brown and Company, 1993
- My Dream of Martin Luther King*
ISBN 0-517-59977-5
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Random House Crown Publishers, Inc., 1995
- Talking to Faith Ringgold*
ISBN 0-517-70914-7
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold, Nancy Roucher, Linda Freeman
Random House Crown Publishers, Inc., 1995
- We Flew Over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold*
ISBN 0-8212-2071-3
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Little Brown and Company, 1995
- Bonjour Lonnie*
ISBN 0-7868-2062-4
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Hyperion Books for Children, 1996
- Dancing at the Louvre: Faith Ringgold's French Collection and Other Story Quilts*
ISBN 0520-21429-3
Author: Dan Cameron
University of California Press, 1998
- Invisible Princess*
ISBN 0-517-80025-x
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Random House Crown Publishers, Inc., 1998
- Counting to Tar Beach*
ISBN 0-517-80022-5
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Random House Crown Publishers, Inc., 1999
- Cassie's Colorful Day*
ISBN 0-517-80021-7
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Random House Crown Publishers, Inc. 1999
- If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks*
ISBN 0-689-81892-0
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Simon and Schuster, 1999

Art on Fire: The Politics of Race and Sex in the Paintings of Faith Ringgold
ISBN 0-9667345-0-5
Author/ Illustrator : Lisa Farrington
Millenium Fine Arts Publishing Inc., 1999

Coming to Jones Road
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Good Stuff Press, 2000

Cassie's Word Quilt
ISBN 0-375-91200-2
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Random House Crown Publishers, Inc., 2002

O Holy Night
Includes a CD of Christmas Carols sung by the Boys Choir of Harlem
ISBN 0-06-051819-7
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Harper Collins , 2004

Faith Ringgold: David Driskell Series of African American Art Volume 111
ISBN 0-7649-2761-2
Author/ Illustrator : Lisa Farrington
Pomegranate, 2004

A View From the Studio
ISBN 1-593730454
Author/ Illustrator : Curlee Raven Holton
Bunker Hill Publishing, 2004

We Flew over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold
ISBN 0-8223-3564-6
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Duke University Press, 2005

The Three Witches
ISBN 10 0-06-000650-1
Author/ Illustrator : Zora Neale Hurston/Faith Ringgold
Harper Collins, 2006

Bronzeville Boys and Girls
ISBN 10-0-06-029506-6
Author/ Illustrator : Gwendlyn Brooks/Faith Ringgold
Harper Collins, 2007

Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists Faith Ringgold
ISBN 10 0-531-18526-5
Author/ Illustrator : Mike Venezia
Children's Press Scholastic, Inc., 2007

Dinner at Aunt Connie's House
ISBN 0-590-13713-1
Author/ Illustrator : Faith Ringgold
Scholastic, Inc., 2007



Estelle Lebowitz, Untitled, 1992, oil on canvas

This exhibition is made possible in part by funds from the Estelle Lebowitz Fund. Estelle Lebowitz (1930-1996) was born and raised in New York. She attended the High School of Music and Art and Brooklyn College. Her work has been exhibited in Sommers Town Gallery, Sommers, NY; Coster's Gallery, Highland Park, NJ; The Gallery at Busch Campus Center, Piscataway, NJ; the Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series, New Brunswick, NJ; and the Art Library at Rutgers, New Brunswick, NJ. In her artist's statement she wrote, "My work(s) may be described as women's feminine objects with overtones of nature. They are semi-abstract images that are mostly fantasies, influenced originally by Impressionism and brought into Modernism by my own style and technique. Light and color are very important in my work...and they each mean something."



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