

## Black Light (1967 – 1969) and Political Posters

As the 1960s progressed, Ringgold became increasingly active in the Black Power movement, dedicating both her time and art to the cause. With *Black Light*, Ringgold wanted to emphasize dark colors and Black skin tones, all but abandoning white paint. Intrigued by the work of abstract painter Ad Reinhardt whose subtly shaded all-black paintings bordered on unseeable, Ringgold devised her own technique for this series that is notable for its emotional range. *Party Time* (1969) depicts four exuberant African-American women rendered in a palette in which pure white is absent and dark colors are free to reveal depth and nuance. For the first time, she experiments with triangulating faces in a compositional style that echoes quilting and Kuba textiles of the Congo.

Ringgold returned to incorporating words and symbols with *Flag for the Moon* (1969), which signals Ringgold's disdain for a federal government more committed to winning the Space Race than caring for its citizens. Like other vocal critics in the Black community, she believed those funds would have better served struggling communities in the United States, especially those that suffered most during the race riots of 1968.

Soon after painting *Flag for the Moon* - and fourteen years before the Supreme Court would rule flag burning as First Amendment protected speech - Ringgold was arrested on charges of flag desecration for co-organizing The People's Flag Art Show. Part exhibition, part artistic dissent, the show was held at Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village, New York, and featured dozens of works depicting the American flag; these works were made in protest of the arrest and conviction of an art dealer for showing a work containing the American flag that authorities deemed to be vandalism. Alongside her co-organizers Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche,

Ringgold was arrested and forced to pay a fine. Consisting of muted colors equally evocative of the Pan-African flag and the American flag, the silkscreened poster *Judson 3* (1970) commemorates the cause celebre and is among Ringgold's best known works.

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Statement for *Black Light Series #10: Flag for the Moon*, 1969 oil on canvas

“Nobody was thinking about the physical and emotional safety of Black communities during the late 1960s. Instead of investing in its citizens and their needs, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement the United States government was spending billions of dollars racing the Soviets to put a man on the moon. People were rioting in 1968. People were dying, and for what? Basic human rights. This painting reflects my anger about the message I felt Black people were receiving from their government—and too often, still receive. The title of the painting reflects that message.” –Faith Ringgold

At Glenstone, we value diverse perspectives, inclusive practices, and mutual respect. Because the language in this work may be disturbing to some viewers, we ask that you refrain from saying the full title aloud.