

Early Quilts (1983 – 1990)

Faith Ringgold and her mother Willi Posey collaborated for the last time in 1980, the year before Posey's death, to create the artist's first quilt. A few years later, Ringgold honored Posey with *Mother's Quilt* (1983), an elegiac homage which consists of pieces of fabric the duo had set aside for future collaborations. Ringgold would go on to create over 100 quilts spanning a wide spectrum of autobiographical and fictional themes. With these quilts, storytelling became increasingly vital to Ringgold's practice, taking the form of detailed handwritten narratives as integral to the work as the images themselves. Her first story quilt, *Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima?* (1983), created on the occasion of the artist's first solo exhibition at The Studio Museum in Harlem, recasts Aunt Jemima as a feminist icon and entrepreneur.

One of her most beloved story quilts, *Tar Beach* (1988) depicts a nighttime scene of a family gathering on the roof of a New York City building. Two children dream on a nearby blanket, enthralled by the magic of the stars, as an airborne girl glides over the George Washington Bridge. This quilt and text served as the genesis for Ringgold's Coretta Scott King Award- and Caldecott Honor-winning children's book, *Tar Beach*. Ringgold is known for revisiting motifs throughout her artistic practice. For the first time, multiple variations on a theme are on view together: *Tar Beach* (1988) and *Tar Beach 2* (1990). Additionally, two meditations on the artist's changing body are shown side-by-side: *Change 2: Faith Ringgold's More Than 100 Pound Weight Loss Performance Story Quilt* (1988) and *Change 3: Faith Ringgold's Over 100 Pound Weight Loss Performance Story Quilt* (1991), both of which provide an intimate view into the artist's relationship to her body.