
Press Release

New Exhibition Explores Faith Ringgold’s Story Quilts in Dialogue with Modernist and Contemporary Masters

This marks the first presentation of Ringgold's *Tar Beach* at the Guggenheim

Exhibition: *Collection in Focus: The Reach of Faith Ringgold*
Venue: Guggenheim New York, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Location: Tower Level 4, Mapplethorpe Gallery
Dates: May 9–September 14, 2025

(NEW YORK, NY—May 7, 2025) The Guggenheim New York presents the *Collection in Focus* exhibition centering one of the most important works by the renowned artist, writer, and activist **Faith Ringgold**. *The Reach of Faith Ringgold* will spotlight *Woman on a Bridge #1 of 5: Tar Beach (1988)*, the first in a series of five monumental quilts that tells the story of a young girl who soars from her Harlem rooftop, celebrating her own freedom and self-possession. **Looking to one key work, the exhibition explores Ringgold’s critical position in the canon of art history, building off the modernists who preceded her, and inspiring those who followed.**

Marking the Guggenheim’s first presentation of *Woman on a Bridge #1 of 5: Tar Beach (1988)*, *The Reach of Faith Ringgold* will investigate her artistic forerunners and the lasting impact she has had on subsequent generations of artists. *Tar Beach* will be contextualized within the broader narrative of modern and contemporary art through works from the Guggenheim New York’s collection and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. **The exhibition will include pieces by modernists such as Marc Chagall, Jacob Lawrence, and Pablo Picasso**, who preceded or were contemporaries of Ringgold, and contemporary American artists such as **Sanford Biggers, Tschabalala Self, Mickalene Thomas, and Carrie Mae Weems** whose work reflects her legacy.

“Ringgold left an indelible imprint on the art world through her practice and activism,” states Naomi Beckwith, Deputy Director and Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator, “and she also activated millions of children’s imaginations through her contributions as an author. The Guggenheim New York is utterly thrilled to center one of Ringgold’s iconic artworks, which was the subject of one of her award-winning books, in an exhibition that is sure to delight our visitors of every age.”

Another highlight of this exhibition is a painting by Jacob Lawrence, *Tragedy and Comedy (1952)*, the first work by the artist acquired by the Guggenheim and one of the earliest modernist works by a Black artist in its collection. This exhibition marks its debut at the Guggenheim.

Ringgold is known for her distinctive artistic technique that blends a variety of media and styles, most famously through her “story quilts.” She often combines painting, fabric, and quilting, resulting in a unique fusion of fine art and craft. Ringgold paints her scenes onto large, quilted canvases using bold colors, intricate patterns, and layered textures. The quilts themselves are not only visually striking but are deeply symbolic, reflecting the African American tradition of storytelling through fabric. The process involves hand stitching and sewing, a craft historically associated with women and often tied to cultural heritage, which Ringgold reinvents to explore themes about race, identity, gender, and history.



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In addition to quilting, Ringgold employs painting and collage, incorporating text and imagery to narrate ends. Her style draws from both folk art and modernist traditions, bringing together abstraction with figurative elements. Ringgold's work is influenced by her desire to merge art with activism, offering social commentary on issues like civil rights, feminism, and the African American experience. This blend of techniques allows her to create powerful visual statements that engage viewers both emotionally and intellectually. In *The Reach of Faith Ringgold*, visitors will have the opportunity to see the museum's permanent collection, speaking to Ringgold's unique position in the history of American art.

This exhibition is the third installment in a new exhibition series, *Collection in Focus*. The series is part of a reinvigorated effort to make the Guggenheim's world-renowned holdings more accessible to the public.

The Reach of Faith Ringgold is organized by Naomi Beckwith, Deputy Director and Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator.

About Faith Ringgold

(b. 1930, New York; d. 2024, Englewood, New Jersey) earned a bachelor's degree from City College of the City University of New York in 1955 and a master's degree from City College in 1959. Her artwork resides in over fifty prominent public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Smithsonian Institute of Art, Washington, DC; Baltimore Museum of Art; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Newark Museum; Art Institute of Chicago; and St. Louis Art Museum. Her achievements as an artist, teacher, author, and activist have been recognized with numerous honors, including the National Endowment for the Arts awards in sculpture and in painting; a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship; an NAACP Image Award; a Caldecott Honor; a Peace Corps Award bestowed by former President Barack Obama; and 16 honorary doctorates.

Support

Visionary support for *Collection in Focus* is provided by Aleksandra Janke and Andrew McCormack.

The Leadership Committee for *The Reach of Faith Ringgold* is gratefully acknowledged for its generosity, with special thanks to Laura Clifford.

About the Guggenheim New York

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation was established in 1937 and is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of modern and contemporary art through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The international constellation of museums includes the Guggenheim New York; the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; Guggenheim Bilbao; and the future Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. An architectural icon and "temple of spirit" where radical art and architecture meet, the Guggenheim New York is now among a group of eight Frank Lloyd Wright structures in the United States recently designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. To learn more about the museum and the Guggenheim's activities around the world, visit guggenheim.org.

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Artwork List

Romare Bearden

b. 1911, Charlotte, North Carolina; d. 1988, New York

Evening 9:10, 461 Lenox Avenue, 1964

Gelatin silver print (photostat) on fiberboard

edition 2/6 (full edition unrealized)

27 1/8 x 35 9/16 inches (68.9 x 90.3 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Purchased through prior gift of Julian J. Aberbach and Joachim J.

Aberbach, Dr. and Mrs. Samuel S. Mandel, and Mr. and Mrs. Nathan L.

Halpern with additional funds contributed by the Photography Council,

2017

2017.76



Sanford Biggers

b. 1970, Los Angeles

Poly, 2023

Antique quilt, with assorted textiles and paint

90 x 51 x 6 1/2 inches (228.6 x 129.5 x 16.5 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Purchased with funds contributed by the Young Collectors Council and

the International Directors Council, with additional funds contributed by

an anonymous donor, 2023

2023.87



Marc Chagall

b. 1887, Vitebsk, Russian Empire (now Belarus); d. 1985, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, I

Paris through the Window, 1913

Oil on canvas

53 9/16 x 55 7/8 inches (136 x 141.9 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Solomon R.

Guggenheim Founding Collection, By gift

37.438



Marc Chagall

b. 1887, Vitebsk, Russian Empire (now Belarus); d. 1985, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, I

Green Violinist, 1923–24

Oil on canvas

77 3/4 x 42 3/4 inches (197.5 x 108.6 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Solomon R. Guggenheim Founding Collection, By gift

37.446



Jacob Lawrence

b. 1917, Atlantic City; d. 2000, Seattle

Tragedy and Comedy, 1952

Tempera on gessoed panel

23 7/8 x 30 inches (60.6 x 76.2 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Gift, Elizabeth R. and Michael M. Rea Collection, 2023

2023.45



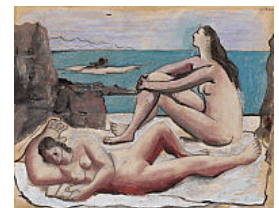
Christopher Myers
 b.1974, New York
Curtain Caul, 2019
 Appliqué fabric
 85 × 59 1/2 inches (215.9 × 151.1 cm)
 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
 Gift, Adam Shopkorn and Carolyn Tate Angel, 2021
 2021.16



Pablo Picasso
 b. 1881, Málaga, Spain; d. 1973, Mougins, France
On the Beach, February 12, 1937
 Oil, conté crayon, and chalk on canvas
 50 13/16 x 76 3/8 inches (129.1 x 194 cm)
 The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation
 Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, 1976
 76.2553.5



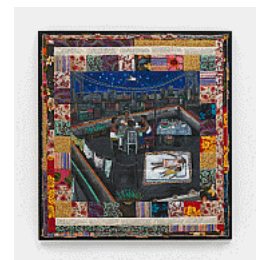
Pablo Picasso
 b. 1881, Málaga, Spain; d. 1973, Mougins, France
Three Bathers, Juan-les-Pins, August 1920
 Pastel, oil, and graphite on paper
 18 13/16 x 24 3/16 inches (47.8 x 61.4 cm)
 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Thannhauser Collection,
 Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser, 1978
 78.2514.49



Howardena Pindell
 b. 1943, Philadelphia
Untitled, 1974-1975
 Mixed media on canvas
 48 1/2 × 94 1/2 inches (123.2 × 240 cm)
 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
 Purchased with funds contributed by the International Director's Council
 and through prior gifts of Thomas Messer and John G. Powers Fund,
 2022
 2022.9



Faith Ringgold
 b. 1930, New York; d. 2024, Englewood, New Jersey
Woman on a Bridge #1 of 5: Tar Beach, 1988
 Acrylic paint, canvas, printed fabric, ink, and thread
 74 5/8 x 68 1/2 inches (189.5 x 174 cm)
 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
 Gift, Mr. and Mrs. Gus and Judith Leiber, 1988
 88.3620



Tschabalala Self
 b. 1990, New York
Sprewell, 2020
 Acrylic, vinyl paint, denim jeans, silk, cotton, solvent transfer, paper,
 and newspaper on canvas
 84 1/8 × 72 1/4 inches (213.7 × 183.5 cm)
 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,
 Gift, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich and New York, and the artist,
 2021
 2021.3



Alan Shields

b. 1944, Herington, Kansas; d. 2005, Shelter Island, New York

Nina Got It for 100 Francs, 1971

Cotton yarn, acrylic paint, wood, metal, glass, and plastic

88 x 82 inches (223.5 x 208.3 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Purchase and by exchange, 1973

73.2036



Mickalene Thomas

b. 1971, Camden, New Jersey

Tamika sur une chaise longue, 2008

Chromogenic print

edition 2/5

24 x 29 1/2 inches (61 x 74.9 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Purchased with funds contributed by the Photography Committee, 2009

2009.61



Carrie Mae Weems

b. 1953, Portland, Oregon

Untitled (Peanuts), 1991–92

Two gelatin silver prints and two screenprint text panels

edition 3/10

20 x 20 inches (50.8 x 50.8 cm) each

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Purchased with funds contributed by the Photography Committee and

Noel Kirnon, 2014

2014.72



Carrie Mae Weems

b. 1953, Portland, Oregon

Pyramids of Rome—Ancient Rome, 2006

Chromogenic print

edition 1/5

73 1/4 x 61 1/2 inches (186.1 x 156.2 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Purchased with funds contributed by the Photography Committee and

Angelo Chan, 2014

2014.73



Collection in Focus

The Reach of Faith Ringgold

Summers in New York are famously hot and sticky, and they must have felt even more so to a young Faith Ringgold (1930–2024), growing up in the city in the 1930s and '40s, when air conditioning was not common. On the hottest nights many families sought relief outdoors, dining and resting in public parks, or even on the roofs of their homes. Ringgold celebrated this makeshift form of outdoor living, a time of togetherness and leisure, in her iconic *Tar Beach* works. *Woman on a Bridge #1 of 5: Tar Beach* (1988) is the first in this cycle of painted quilts that tell the story of the fictitious Cassie Louise Lightfoot, a girl in Harlem with the ability to fly, who takes to the skies to soar above the city. Colorful, vibrant, and deceptively naive, the series is radical in its depiction of Black working-class families—their joys, struggles, and ambitions—as a subject of art history.

Echoing the format of the *Tar Beach* quilts, Ringgold patched together numerous aesthetic and cultural traditions to make the series, refashioning folklore (including stories of “flying Africans”), tall tales, and craft practices to expand the definition of modern American art. She also found inspiration in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French modernist paintings, which took the novel approach of depicting common people going about their daily lives, rather than the rich and powerful.

This exhibition spans 125 years of art across two continents, bringing together a range of artists whose works are in striking dialogue with Ringgold’s innovations. Created by her forerunners, her peers, and younger artists inspired by her example, the works on view reflect the extent of Ringgold’s reach as a pivotal and quietly revolutionary figure in American art. Together, they demonstrate how Ringgold helped redefine the subjects that were considered acceptable for art while finding possibility in the unexpected and magic in the everyday.

This exhibition is organized by Naomi Beckwith, Deputy Director and Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator, with support from Saria AlMidani, Assistant to Chief Curator. It is the third exhibition in the series *Collection in Focus*.

The curator wishes to thank every Guggenheim team member who worked to give shape to this exhibition and the Estate of Faith Ringgold and the Anyone Can Fly Foundation for their loan of archival materials.

Visionary support for *Collection in Focus* is provided by Aleksandra Janke and Andrew McCormack, and Laura Clifford.

Find exclusive content about this exhibition on the Guggenheim’s Digital Guide.



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Contemporaries

Originally a painter, Ringgold began to make quilts in the early 1980s as she looked to move away from the formal conventions of academic oil painting and sculpture. She embraced craft traditions such as quilting and doll making to uplift forms of art that were not traditionally valued within the established canon of fine art. In doing so Ringgold recentered the material intelligence of mediums and practices often seen as the reserve of women, as well as Black and Indigenous people, within the story of Western art. Many of Ringgold's contemporaries shared this anti-academic instinct, using craft and folklore as the basis of their art practices. Howardena Pindell (b. 1943) and Alan Shields (1944–2005) cut and sewed their canvases, much like Ringgold's patchwork quilts. Romare Bearden (1911–1988) also abandoned painting to work in paper collage and montage. And Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000), like Ringgold, became an avid storyteller, taking as his subjects the small dramas of everyday life.

A Generation Above

Among the groundbreaking innovations introduced by the modernist art movement of the nineteenth century, particularly among painters in France, was the elevation of moments from everyday life as subjects of works of art. Artists depicted people working or at leisure—walking through the city, relaxing at the beach, reading quietly at home—in a departure from the heroic images of the wealthy, the aristocracy, or other larger-than-life figures who had, until then, been the primary subjects of works of fine art. Ringgold drew inspiration from these images, radical in their day, and realized that her life and those of the working- and middle-class African Americans in her community provided a rich and vibrant source of creative subject matter. The *Tar Beach* works originate from the genre of “bather” paintings by artists such as Pablo Picasso (1881–1973). They also borrow from the whimsical Symbolist imagery of Marc Chagall (1887–1985), whose paintings frequently feature characters flying over abstract landscapes and cityscapes.

The Next Generation

Patchwork quilting is an enduring American tradition, dating to the mid-1700s. “Story quilts” such as *Tar Beach*, which have narratives literally sewn into their fabric, hold particular significance for Black communities in the American South. Ringgold had a further personal connection to the tradition as the great-great-great-granddaughter of an enslaved woman who had been a quilter. The artist’s embrace of handicraft and storytelling through quilts established a model for future generations seeking alternative modes of art making. Sanford Biggers (b. 1970), Christopher Myers (b. 1974), and Tschabalala Self (b. 1990) continue Ringgold’s interest in textile works, advancing the medium as a means for dynamic storytelling embedded with rich symbolism. Carrie Mae Weems (b. 1953) evokes Ringgold’s *Tar Beach* protagonist by imbuing her often dreamlike photographic works with narratives centered on female characters. And, like Ringgold, Mickalene Thomas (b. 1971), who was inspired to become an artist after encountering the work of Weems, responds to the legacy of French modernism by including self-possessed Black women in her artworks.

Romare Bearden

b. 1911, Charlotte, North Carolina

d. 1988, New York

Evening 9:10, 461 Lenox Avenue

1964

Gelatin silver print (photostat) on fiberboard,
edition 2/6 (full edition unrealized)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,
Purchased through prior gift of Julian J. Aberbach
and Joachim J. Aberbach, Dr. and Mrs. Samuel S.
Mandel, and Mr. and Mrs. Nathan L. Halpern, with
additional funds contributed by the Photography
Council 2017.76

Sanford Biggers
b. 1970, Los Angeles

Poly
2023

Antique quilt and fabric
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,
Purchased with funds contributed by the
Young Collectors Council and the International
Director's Council, with additional funds
contributed by an anonymous donor 2023.87

Marc Chagall

b. 1887, Vitebsk, Russian Empire (now Belarus)

d. 1985, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France

Paris par la fenêtre

(Paris through the Window)

1913

Oil on canvas

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Solomon R. Guggenheim Founding Collection,

By gift 37.438

Marc Chagall

b. 1887, Vitebsk, Russian Empire (now Belarus)

d. 1985, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France

Violiniste

(Green Violinist)

1923–24

Oil on canvas

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Solomon R. Guggenheim Founding Collection,

By gift 37.446

Jacob Lawrence

b. 1917, Atlantic City, New Jersey

d. 2000, Seattle

Tragedy and Comedy

1952

Tempera on masonite

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Gift, Elizabeth R. and Michael M. Rea Collection

2023.45

Christopher Myers
b.1974, New York

Curtain Caul

2019

Fabric

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,
Gift, Adam Shopkorn and Carolyn Tate Angel
2021.16

Pablo Picasso

b. 1881, Málaga, Spain

d. 1973, Mougins, France

On the Beach

February 12, 1937

Oil, conté crayon, and chalk on canvas

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation,

Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice 76.2553.5

Pablo Picasso

b. 1881, Málaga, Spain

d. 1973, Mougins, France

Three Bathers

Juan-les-Pins, August 1920

Pastel, oil, and graphite on paper

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser

78.2514.49

Howardena Pindell
b. 1943, Philadelphia

Untitled
1974–75

Acrylic and paper on canvas

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Purchased with funds contributed by the
International Director's Council and through
prior gifts of Thomas Messer and John G. Powers
Fund 2022.9

Faith Ringgold

b. 1930, New York

d. 2024, Englewood, New Jersey

Woman on a Bridge #1 of 5: Tar Beach

1988

Acrylic paint, canvas, printed fabric, ink, and thread

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift,

Mr. and Mrs. Gus and Judith Leiber 88.3620

Tschabalala Self
b. 1990, New York

Sprewell
2020

Acrylic paint, denim jeans, fabric, painted paper, newsprint, wood block print, transfer print with gel medium, felt-tip pen, and thread on canvas
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich and New York, and the artist 2021.3

Alan Shields

b. 1944, Herington, Kansas

d. 2005, Shelter Island, New York

Nina Got It for 100 Francs

1971

Cotton yarn, acrylic paint, wood, metal, glass,
and plastic

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Purchase and by exchange 73.2036

Mickalene Thomas
b. 1971, Camden, New Jersey

Tamika sur une chaise longue
(*Tamika on a Deck Chair*)

2008

Chromogenic print, edition 2/5
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,
Purchased with funds contributed by the
Photography Committee 2009.61

Carrie Mae Weems
b. 1953, Portland, Oregon

Untitled (Peanuts)
1991–92

Two gelatin silver prints and two screenprint
text panels, edition 3/10

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,
Purchased with funds contributed by the
Photography Committee and Noel Kirnon 2014.72

Carrie Mae Weems
b. 1953, Portland, Oregon

Pyramids of Rome—Ancient Rome
2006

Chromogenic print, edition 1/5

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Purchased with funds contributed by the

Photography Committee and Angelo Chan 2014.73

This presentation gathers together materials from Faith Ringgold's archive: sketches and mock-ups of *Tar Beach* works, fabric swatches, a handsewn doll, and pages from an art gallery guide that features her work. Also on view are intimate photographs, including one that captures the collaborative spirit and familial traditions of quilting shared by the artist and her mother. All materials are from the 1980s and courtesy of the Estate of Faith Ringgold and the Anyone Can Fly Foundation.