

Flag Story Quilt

Alex Seigfried :: 4/1/2025



Maker Faith Ringgold

Date of Creation 1985

Location New York, New York

Materials Cotton canvas, tie-dye fabric (made by Marquetta Johnson), piecing, applique, ink

Institution [Spencer Museum of Art](#)

Credit Line Museum purchase: Peter T. Bohan Art Acquisition Fund, Faith Ringgold © 1985

Accession Number 1991.004

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The work of the late Faith Ringgold has been a powerful force in American culture for the past 50 years. Her influence is especially strong in the realm of story quilts, which she pioneered for the modern era along with other Black women. The Spencer Museum is fortunate to have Ringgold's *Flag Story Quilt*, one of the most requested and sought-after works in the region. In 1972, Ringgold abandoned canvas as a medium and turned to cloth, drawing on her own heritage in quilting, traced to her great-great-grandmother, Betsy Bingham, and her great-grandmother, Susie Shannon, both enslaved women whose duties included making quilts for plantation owners. In this powerful work, Ringgold uses the form of the U.S. flag and alternates tie-dyed fabric with written text. Centered on a tragic Black male hero, *Flag Story Quilt* alternates hand-written texts in the white stripes with tie-dye fabric made by Marquette Johnson, to narrate the wrenching tale of a quadriplegic Vietnam War veteran wrongly accused of the rape and murder of a white woman. The work plays on the political and textile characteristics of the flag and the tensions between the traditional quilt medium and contemporary violence and racism. It connects to revolution in directly employing the form and symbolism of the American flag, re-invented and infused with words, as the platform for this heart-breaking tale. What freedoms did the revolution bring? The story quilt also has ties to Harlem in New York where Faith Ringgold lived when she made it and which was always the backdrop to her work and ideas.