

## Important Black Women in History Through the Eyes of Faith Ringgold



Ulrich Museum of Art

### Object:

Faith Ringgold, *Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles*, 1996. Color lithograph on paper, 22 ½ x 30 inches. Ulrich Museum of Art, Museum purchase by exchange of the Gifts of Daniel Spiegel, Frederick Ziman and Sol Roth

### Description:

Students will learn about artist Faith Ringgold and her work *Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles*. They will then select an African American woman activist depicted in this artwork to research. They will then use background knowledge and close looking to answer questions about the artwork.

**Grade level:** 9-12

**Subject:** Studio Art, US History, English

**Length of Lesson:** Independent worksheet, 2 hours

### Standards:

VA:Re7.1.6 Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value.

VA: Re7.2.6 Analyze ways that visual components and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotion, and actions.

VA:Re8.1.6 Interpret art by distinguishing between relevant and non-relevant contextual information and analyzing subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.

VA:Re8.1.7 Interpret art by analyzing art-making approaches, the characteristics of form and structure, relevant contextual information, subject matter, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.

VA:Re7.1.7 Explain how the method of display, the location, and the experience of an artwork influence how it is perceived and valued.

VA:Re7.1.8 Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment and impact the visual image that one conveys to others.

VA:Re8.1.8 Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art-making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.

### Materials:

Worksheet

Access to the internet/books on the activists

### Resources:

The Ulrich Museum of Art collection portal of this artwork: <https://de1.zetcom-group.de/MpWeb-mpWichitaUlrich/v?mode=online&objectId=5013>

More on Faith Ringgold: <https://www.faithringgold.com/>

### Important Black Women in History Through the Eyes of Faith Ringgold

Faith Ringgold is an African American artist known for combining African American and European Modernist symbols in her works. European Modernism is a period of time that includes artists like Henri Matisse and Vincent Van Gogh. An example of such a work is *Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles*, part of her *French Collection, Part I* series.



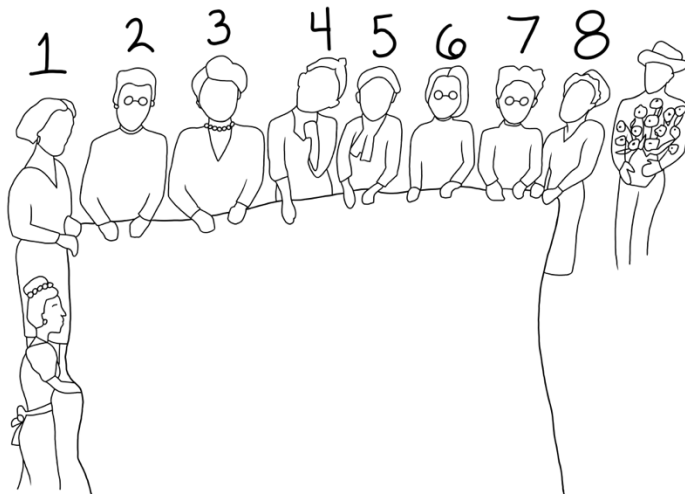
Faith Ringgold, *Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles*, 1996. Color lithograph on paper, 22 ½ x 30 inches. Ulrich Museum of Art, Museum purchase by exchange of the Gifts of Daniel Spiegel, Frederick Ziman and Sol Roth

### Key terms to know for this work:

- A **quilting bee** is an American tradition with a group of family and friends making a quilt together
- **Arles** is a town in France

- **French Collection, Part I** is a series about Willia Marie Simone (pictured in the bottom left), a character that Ringgold created who. The series follows her journey to Paris in the 1920s to study art.
- **High art** is a term given to mediums that are seen as “more skillful” and valuable in the European art tradition, like painting and sculpture. These mediums are historically used by men more than women.
- **Low art** is a term given to mediums that are seen as “less skillful” than high art, like quilting and embroidery. These mediums usually had a functional purpose and historically were more often created by women.

*Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles* contains eight African American activists:



1. Madam C.J Walker
2. Sojourner Truth
3. Ida B. Wells
4. Fannie Lou Hammer
5. Harriet Tubman
6. Rosa Parks
7. Mary McLeod Bethune
8. Ella Baker

(With Van Gogh in the right corner)

**Assignment 1:** These women may or may not be familiar to you. Select one of the eight women to research. See when she was alive and what she did for the African American community. What did she look like? How did Ringgold portray her in this artwork?

**Assignment 2:** Now that you have become familiar with this artwork, answer the following questions:

Question 1: We have established that Ringgold combines African American and European Modernist symbols in her works. What are the European Modernist symbols in this artwork? The African American symbols?

Question 2: Why do you think Ringgold chose to combine these two symbols?

Question 3: Based off this artwork, how do you think Faith Ringgold feels about the distinction between “high art” and “low art?”

Question 4: Imagine what it would be like if all of these women lived during the same time and had a quilting bee like this. What do you think they would have discussed? What kind of quilt do you think they would have made?