

Faith Ringgold (American 1930-) was born in Harlem, New York City. Quilting has a rich and deep history in African American history. Her great grandmother made quilts as a slave on a plantation. Her mother was a well known dress designer and seamstress. Ringgold learned her sewing and quilting skills from her mother. As she developed her art and moved from painting to sewing quilts, her mother frequently helped her with some of the sewing.



Ringgold discovered that large quilts were easier to move from art show to art show rather than large paintings in wooden frames. She decided that quilting was an interesting way for her to express her thoughts and feelings. Her quilts not only use colorful fabric pieces but she also incorporates words and paints on them.

In 1991, Ringgold completed a series of 5 quilts that she called *Women on a Bridge*. There is text at the top and the bottom of each quilt to guide the story along.

A few years later, Ringgold wrote and illustrated a book about the story she told in this series of 5 quilts. She called the book *Tar Beach*, which was also the title of one of the quilts. It is the story of a girl named Cassie Lightfoot growing up in New York City. Ringgold has said there are many similarities between Cassie Lightfoot and her own life as a girl in New York City.

Ringgold made several series of quilts throughout her career. She taught art at UCSD in La Jolla for several years. Currently she lives in New Jersey - close to the George Washington Bridge that Cassie flies over in *Tar Beach*.