Collaborative Quilt: Echoes of Pride

In the 1970s, Faith Ringgold collaborated with her mother, Willi Posey, a well-known tailor in Harlem, to make a number of textile works. *Echoes of Harlem* was Ringgold's first quilt and her final collaborative project with her mother. The composition unifies four distinct fabrics in a recurring rhythm and frames thirty faces, which display a variety of individual expressions. Seen together, the faces represent the many life stories present in Harlem. In subsequent years, Ringgold began constructing narrative quilts that portray different aspects of African American life in the United States.

Five years after Ringgold created *Echoes of Harlem*, the AIDS Memorial Quilt was conceived. Activist, author, and lecturer Cleve Jones established the AIDS Memorial Quilt to document and honor the lives lost to AIDS, cementing legacies many feared would be erased by history. Word of the project spread across the United States, and cities such as Atlanta, New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco mailed their panels to be sewn together by volunteers and community members. Over 1,930 panels of the AIDS Memorial Quilt were displayed for the first time during the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1987. Since the Quilt’s historic debut, panel-making programs, such as “Call My Name,” continue to name and honor loved ones lost to HIV/AIDS.

“Call My Name” is a panel-making program reflecting the AIDS epidemic’s impact within the Black community. The program is an ongoing digital exhibition of panels highlighting the Quilt’s power as a tool for storytelling and healing. The exhibition also brings awareness to how the virus has disproportionately affected Black and brown communities in the United States.

Faith Ringgold, *Echoes of Harlem, 1980*
AIDS Memorial Quilt

Description

This DIY Guide is presented as part of the Studio Museum in Harlem's participation in Harlem Pride 2023. Taking inspiration from Faith Ringgold’s Echoes of Harlem and The AIDS Memorial Quilt, this activity encourages participants to honor LGBTQIA+ ancestors of African descent while showing love and appreciation to living community members by making a collaborative quilt. The creation of this collaborative quilt, Echoes of Pride, represents the perseverance of queer and trans people.

No prior art-making experience is necessary.

For more information visit studiomuseum.org/event/harlem-pride-2023

Essential Questions

How might you represent community members through colors, shapes, and symbols?

How could this activity transform how we show care and dignity to our community members?

Materials

- Scissors
- 4-inch fabric squares
- Glue
- Assorted markers
- Pipe cleaners or ribbon
- 2 to 2 ½ inch square printed images of LGBTQIA+ ancestors
Vocabulary

**Quilt**
A multilayered textile, traditionally composed of two or more layers of fabric or fiber.

**Block**
A square that is often repeated, from which many quilts are composed.

**Composition**
The nature of something’s ingredients or constituents; how a whole thing or mixture is made up.

**Symbol**
A mark, character, or glyph representing an idea, concept, or object.

**Transcestor**
A blend of the words “transgender” and “ancestor.” The term transcestor was coined in 2009 by Lewis Reay.

**Advocate**
A person who publicly supports a particular cause or policy.

Methods

1. Prior to selecting materials, consider an LGBTQIA+ ancestor you would like to honor in your artwork. This ancestor can be someone you knew personally or someone you do not know but admire. Browse through the Dropbox folder of images of LGBTQIA+ icons and activists for inspiration.

2. Select a fabric square and glue a photograph of your chosen ancestor to the square. You may choose to write their names if you do not have a photograph.

3. With markers, decorate your square. Consider the colors, shapes, and symbols that best represent ways you want to honor this ancestor.

4. Once your artwork is complete, use scissors to cut a hole at each corner of the fabric, roughly ½ inch from the edge.

5. Repeat steps one through three with as many fabrics squares as desired.

6. To assemble the quilt, lay the squares on a flat surface, corner to corner. Consider the design and sequence of the artworks before piecing them together.

7. Start by joining two squares and threading a ribbon or pipe cleaner through the holes at the corners. Tie the material in a bow or knot to secure the seams. Repeat in each corner until all artworks are connected.

Reflections

What feelings arise for you when viewing your quilt square? What feelings arise when viewing the assembled quilt?

Sources

