

Faith Ringgold, Changed the 20th Century Art World Forever
b. October 8, 1930 – d. April 13, 2024.



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Faith Ringgold was born Faith Willi Jones to Louis Andrew Jones and Willie Posey Jones in Harlem in 1930. Her father was a New York City Sanitation truck driver. Her mother was a seamstress who became a fashion designer and couturier under her professional name, Madame Willi Posey designing exquisite and original styles for family and friends in the Harlem community. It was only natural that Faith would develop an innovative use of quilting and storytelling to revolutionize the art world and that she would bridge the gap between fine art and craft traditions. As a young child she was always encouraged to aspire to greater heights, and so she did.

Faith married a childhood friend Robert Earl Wallace in 1950 and had two daughters, Barbara Faith and Michele Faith in 1952. The marriage ended in an annulment in 1957. Faith earned a Bachelor's Degree in Art at City College in 1955 and a Masters in Art in 1957. She traveled to Europe with her mother and daughters in 1962 then, in 1963, married another childhood friend, Burdette Ringgold (d. February 1, 2020). She

followed an art teaching career in the New York City Public School System at all levels – elementary, middle and high school. Later in her career she taught art in college. In 1984 Faith became a full professor in the art department at the University of California in San Diego. She retired Professor Emeritus in 2001.

Ringgold painted her first political paintings, the American People series from 1963 to 1967 and had her first and second one-person exhibitions at the Spectrum Gallery in New York in 1967 and 1970. She began to style her artwork after Tibetan thangkas she saw at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam after her second European trip in the early 1970s. And she continued making feminist and political statements in her art. Michele Wallace published writings in support of the protests against the bias shown at major New York museums. Women artists and Black artists were not being represented. Faith, Michele and Barbara organized picket lines outside of the museums in protest. The family joined a sit-in at the President's Office at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. These were political times and Faith Ringgold led the group demanding change at the largest museums in New York. When black artists were shown, Faith Ringgold was not included, but change was accomplished in response to her demands. Black artists have been increasingly exhibited at the major museums and exhibited more prominently with one person shows. Faith Ringgold made that change. She demanded change.

Faith Ringgold also founded The Anyone Can Fly Foundation, Inc. in 1999 with the mission to expand the art establishment canon to include artists of the African Diaspora and to introduce the Great Masters of African American Art and their art traditions to children and adult audiences. The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization supported by people devoted to the visual arts. The art world is not the same since Faith Ringgold and will never be after her. Her art is now in the collections of all the largest museums in New York, the Smithsonian National Gallery of Art and major museums across the country and the world. She was the author and illustrator of 17 children's books including the award-winning *Tar Beach* in 1991 which is still in print. She was the recipient of 26 honorary doctorate degrees and more than 100 other awards and honors including membership in the American Academy of Arts & Letters, and the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.

Faith Ringgold died April 13, 2024 at her home with her daughter Michele in Englewood, NJ of natural causes. She is survived by her two daughters, Dr. Michele Faith Wallace, Ph.D. and Barbara F. Wallace, three granddaughters, Martha Underwood, Theodora Wallace-Orr, and Dr. Faith Wallace-Gadsden, Ph.D. (Ganser), her husband Dr. Tim Ganser, Ph.D., and three great-grandsons, Boreas Ganser, Silas Ganser, and Leonidas Ganser, and a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins.