

There Is a Woman in Every Color Black Women in Art

African American History

Subjects: African and African Diaspora Studies; Art History; English; History; Women's and Gender Studies

Activity

1. **In the exhibition gallery:** Students will view and learn about the art in *There Is a Woman in Every Color: Black Women in Art*. They will each select a work that depicts an event, figure, or social dynamic related to African American history.
2. **Outside of class:** Using the object's visual information and interpretive text, content they have learned in class, and additional research, students will prepare a 4-minute class presentation about the object and the part of African American history it illuminates.
3. **In the classroom:** Students will present to the class.

Ways to Adapt

-Student presentations can be accompanied by either PowerPoint slides or a poster. The Mulvane can help supply space and materials for poster-making if desired.

-If your class is large, students could present in groups.

-The presentations could be converted to different assignment forms such as:

- A short research paper
- A timeline or flowchart about the historical event, figure, or social dynamic to which their object is related
- A short podcast episode

Note: There are about 15-20 works in the exhibition that visualize events, figures, movements, or social dynamics in African American history (see examples on back).

For assistance with facilitating or adapting this activity, contact:

Sara Stepp
Academic Curator, Mulvane Art Museum
sara.stepp@washburn.edu
385-670-242

Selected examples of works *with excerpts from interpretive texts*



Desiderio Lagrange
Wet Nurse of African Descent and White Infant, Monterrey, Mexico, mid-to-late 19th century
cabinet card
Bowdoin College Museum of Art

This image, taken in Mexico, demonstrates the widespread use of African American and Black women to care for white families and their children. Oftentimes, adult women had children and families of their own to care for in addition to their obligations to the enslaver's family. Historian Marcus Wood suggests that one-fifth of white women relied on enslaved women for wet-nursing. Although there are few extant records of the lives of these enslaved caretakers, their roles were documented through portraits commissioned of their white charges.

Louis H. Draper
Fannie Lou Hamer Standing in the Freedom Farm, 1971
gelatin silver print
Bowdoin College Museum of Art

Fannie Lou Hamer was a civil rights leader working towards political and social equality in Mississippi. She established the Freedom Farm Cooperative (FFC) in 1968. As a grassroots organization, the FFC brought together poor Black families to work the nearly 700 acres of land they collectively owned, making them economically independent from the sharecropping industry that was still present in 1960s Mississippi.



Faith Ringgold
The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles, 1996
lithograph
Bowdoin College Museum of Art

This work depicts several prominent African American women constructing a sunflower-patterned quilt: Madam CJ Walker, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Ella Baker. Artist Faith Ringgold celebrates the contributions of Black women to abolition, civil rights, and women's rights while centering the collective, traditionally female art of quilting. Black women since the 19th century have participated in the tradition of quilting, resourcefully creating elaborate and abstract quilt compositions.