

SCHOLASTIC

# ART

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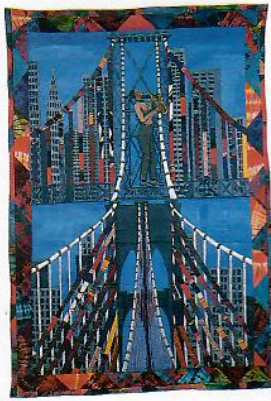
FORMERLY ART & MAN

## narrative art

FAITH RINGGOLD

SCHOLASTIC





COVER: *Sonny's Quilt*, © 1986, Faith Ringgold. 91" x 72" Acrylic on canvas, printed, tie-dyed, and pieced fabric.

# SCHOLASTIC ART

Maurice R. Robinson, founder of Scholastic, Inc., 1895-1982

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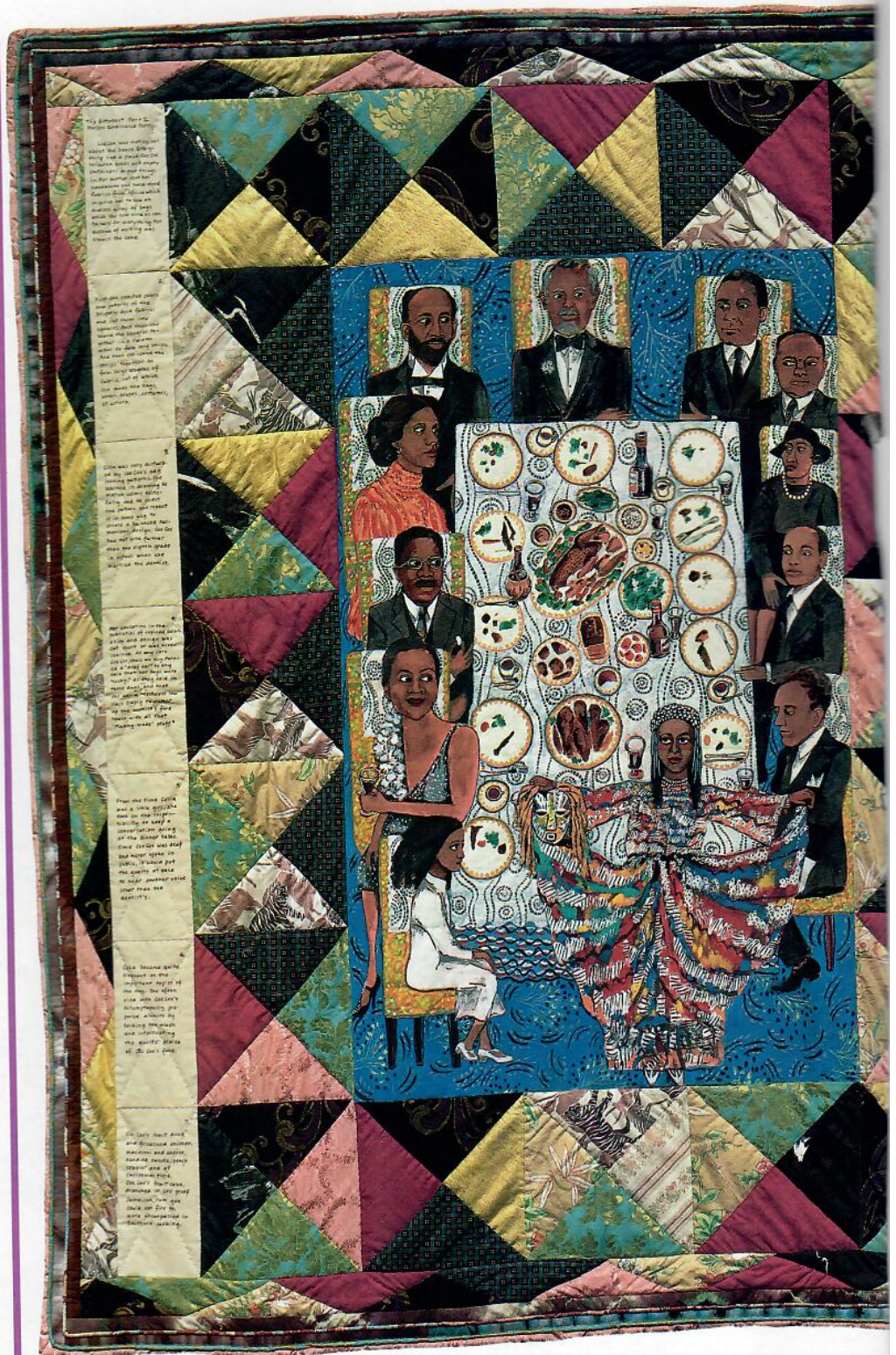
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2 SCHOLASTIC ART



"I'm a painter who works in the quilt medium."

—FAITH RINGGOLD

*Bitter Nest Part II: Harlem Renaissance Party*, © 1988, Faith Ringgold. 94" x 82" Acrylic on canvas, printed, tie-dyed, and pieced fabric.

"I became an artist for the same reason

I became a writer: I wanted to tell my story."

—FAITH RINGGOLD



# stories in cloth

**"Ever since I was little I've had a need to communicate my ideas through art. Being an artist and writer of children's books fulfills my ambition. I cannot imagine spending life any other way."**



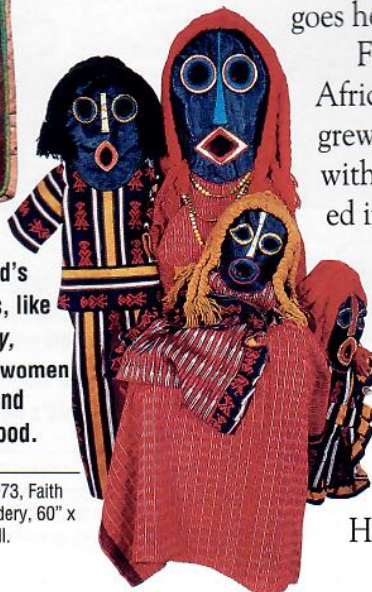
Photo by C. Love. Courtesy Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, N.Y., N.Y.

For the last 25 years, contemporary American Faith Ringgold has told visual stories about her life as a black female artist. She began as a painter, but then developed her own unique form of expression, the "story quilt." The artist says, "I felt painting was cold and distant. I was inspired by African art and I wanted to write stories. The quilt seemed to accept all these things together." And in almost all of her work, she uses her own life and that of her family for ideas and inspiration.

In her quilt series called *The Bitter Nest*, the artist tells the story of a middle-class black family. *Harlem Renaissance Party* (left) shows a fictional dinner attended by well-known African-American artists and writers who lived and worked in Harlem (a section in New York City) during the 1920s. Faith Ringgold identifies with two of her characters—the daughter she was (lower left) and the mother she is now (lower right). The daughter enjoys being with all these famous guests, but is embarrassed by her mother's "odd-looking" African costumes. As an artist and nonconformist, the mother goes her own way, "dancing to music only she could hear."

Faith Ringgold's quilts are bordered by fabrics combining African and American patterns. The artist says, "The story-quilt grew out of my need to tell stories not with pictures alone, but with words." The words of *Harlem Renaissance Party* are included in the text panels integrated into the quilt's border.

Like many of Ringgold's quilts, this one offers a short lesson in African-American history. The artist has included portraits of famous black Americans involved in the arts such as Florence Mills, entertainer; Aaron Douglas, painter; Meta Warwick Fuller, sculptor; W.E.B. DuBois, writer and educator; Alain Locke, philosopher and critic; Countee Cullen, poet; Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, all writers.



Many of Faith Ringgold's early fabric sculptures, like *Mrs. Jones and Family*, (right) were based on women the artist had known and admired in her childhood.

*Mrs. Jones and Family*, © 1973, Faith Ringgold. Fabric and embroidery, 60" x 12" x 16" Photo by Karen Bell.



**"I wanted to discover the classical traditions of African design that would become my classical art form.—FAITH RINGGOLD**

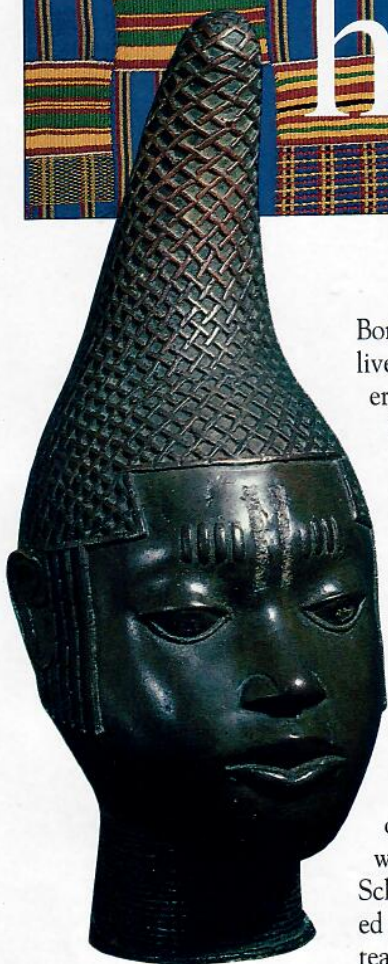


**Tar Beach is one of Faith Ringgold's best-known story quilts.**

Tar Beach, ©1988, Faith Ringgold. Acrylic on canvas, tie-dyed, pieced fabric. 74" x 69" Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY, NY.



# african heritage



**African sculpture (above) and the patterns in African Kente cloth (top) have had a great influence on Faith Ringgold's story quilts.**

Benin head, Nigeria. British Museum.  
Kente cloth, Ghana.

Born in Harlem in 1930, Faith Ringgold has lived there most of her life. Ringgold's mother, a dressmaker and fashion designer, took her son and two young daughters to museums and cultural events and to see the great performers of the time. She also taught her youngest daughter, Faith, to sew and to love fabrics.

Ringgold graduated from high school in 1948 and went on to New York's City College. Remembering her time at school, the artist says, "We were evaluated not so much on originality as on how well we could copy from Greek busts and the great masters of European painting." At that time, women were not allowed to go to the School of Liberal Arts, so Ringgold graduated from the School of Education. And since teaching was a tradition in her family, she became an art teacher as well as an artist.

As the artist puts it, "Now the struggle began to create an art form out of my own experience, to find my own role models—the masters of African and African-American art such as Meta Warwick Fuller [sculptor; see pages 2-3], Sargent Johnson, and Jacob Lawrence." She decided to forget all the art "rules" she had learned and to begin over in order to find her own unique voice. Ringgold says, "The voice I found was the voice of a child, and the child was in me."

"Everyone was a storyteller when I was a child," the artist says. "The women's stories were of family history: a marriage, a birth, a death, a love affair, an unfortunate turn of events, a shameful and shrouded secret, spoken about in hushed tones so we kids could

only imagine what really happened. The men talked about the often adventurous episodes surrounding their migration north from the South in the early 1900s, about hard times and inequality, and about the war...both wars took our men to Europe, where they got a taste of the equality and freedom denied them at home."

The story-quilt *Tar Beach* (facing page) was done in 1988, but the story is set in the Harlem of the 1930s. The artist remembers summer nights that were so hot that families had to move to their apartment roofs (the tar beach) to cool off. She has expressed her memories of a time "when it was safe to be on the roof under the open sky." Every family was up there, eating, sleeping, playing games; it was like an all night picnic.

The story Faith Ringgold tells is American and she uses a traditionally female art form—the quilt—to tell it. But in order to express her African heritage, many of the techniques she uses echo those that characterize African art. Compare the **stylized, masklike** face, features, and headdress of this African queen (left) with those of the characters in Ringgold's quilts. The **flattened perspective** and **simplified shapes** in *Tar Beach* are also found in most African sculptures. The scene in the center of the quilt is **painted** in a **realistic** European-American tradition. The **abstract, geometric** border is **sewn** of fabric that resembles both American quilts as well as the patterns in woven African *kente* cloth (above). The African-American *oral tradition* of story-telling is reflected in the handwritten panels incorporated into the quilt's border.

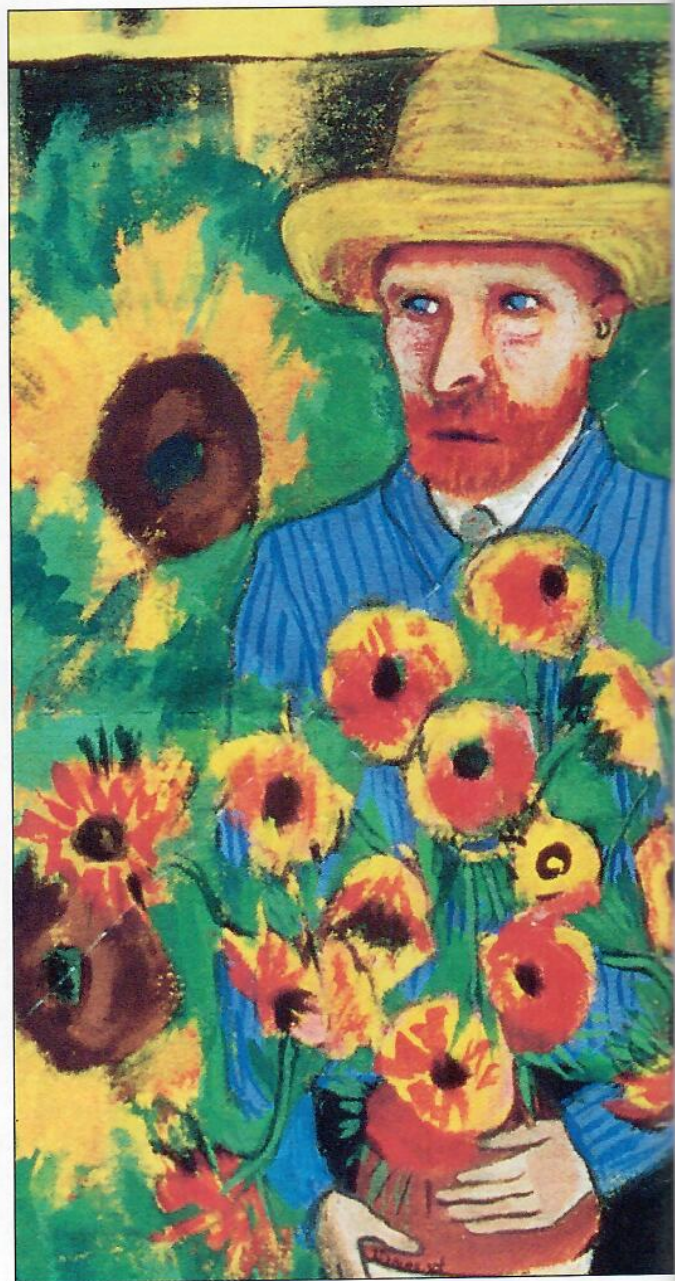
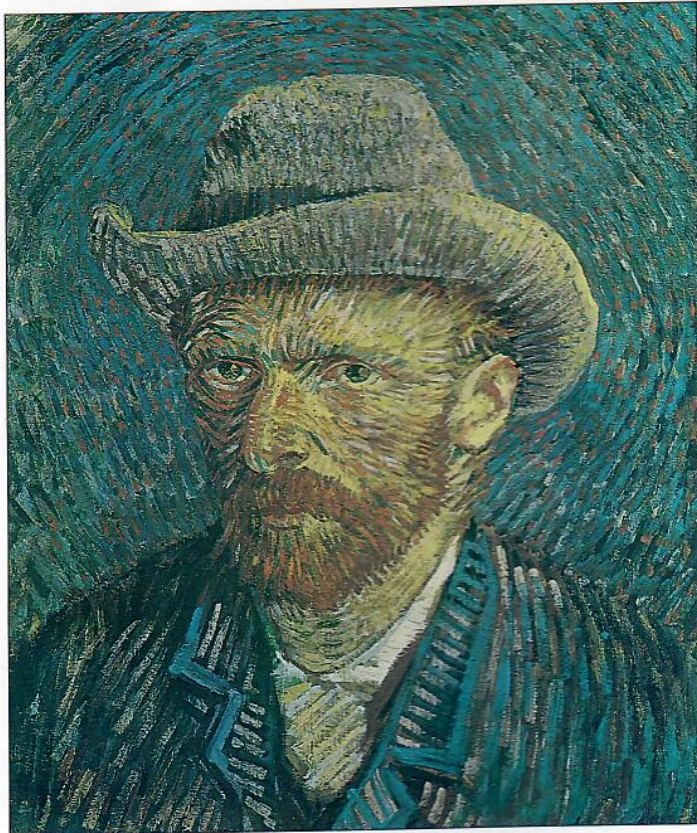


**MASTERPIECE  
OF THE MONTH**



This month's Masterpiece (pages 8-9) reflects Faith Ringgold's interest in traditional European art.

Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890). *Self-portrait With Straw Hat*, 1887. Vincent Van Gogh Foundation, Amsterdam.



**"As an artist, you can communicate things that you feel and see. You are a voice. You have a power to create."**

—FAITH RINGGOLD

# rewriting art history



**"We artists are alone, poor, treated like madmen and because of it, becoming so."**—VINCENT VAN GOGH



Compare the detail (above, center) from Faith Ringgold's story quilt (pages 8-9) with the two paintings on either side by Dutch artist Vincent Van Gogh. Although Van Gogh was a white European male who lived and worked more than a century ago, Faith Ringgold identifies with his hard life as a struggling artist.

Above, left: *The Sunflowers Quilting Bee at Arles*, (detail). © 1991 Faith Ringgold.

Above, right: Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890). *Vase With Sunflowers*, 1889. Vincent Van Gogh Foundation, Amsterdam.



In the summer of 1961, Faith Ringgold traveled with her mother and two daughters to Europe. Faith was 30 years old, a high school art teacher, and a black divorced mother of two young children. She had just finished getting a masters degree in fine art at New York's City College and now she wanted to devote her time to creating art. To help her decide what to do, she went to Europe to see the great works of the old masters.

Not only did this trip help her choose her career, it was also the inspiration for a series of eight story quilts. These quilts, called *The French Collection*, are like a fantastic visual novel. In them, the main character, named Willia, challenges the white, European, male-oriented art world.

One of these quilts (see pages 8-9) called *The Sunflowers Quilting Bee at Arles* refers to some of the best-known images in Western art—the paintings of sunflowers (above) by 19th-century Dutch artist Vincent Van

Gogh [van-GO]. In Ringgold's story, a quilting bee (a gathering of quilters) is being held in Arles, a region in southern France where Van Gogh did his most important paintings. The women are all well-known African-Americans (left to right): Madame Walker, a businessperson, gave jobs to thousands of people; Sojourner Truth advanced women's rights during slavery; Ida Wells exposed the horrors of lynching in the South; Fannie Lou Hamer registered many people to vote; Harriet Tubman led more than 300 slaves to freedom; Rosa Parks sat in the front of a segregated bus, beginning the civil rights movement; Mary McLeod Bethune was adviser to two presidents; Ella Baker improved housing, jobs, and consumer education.

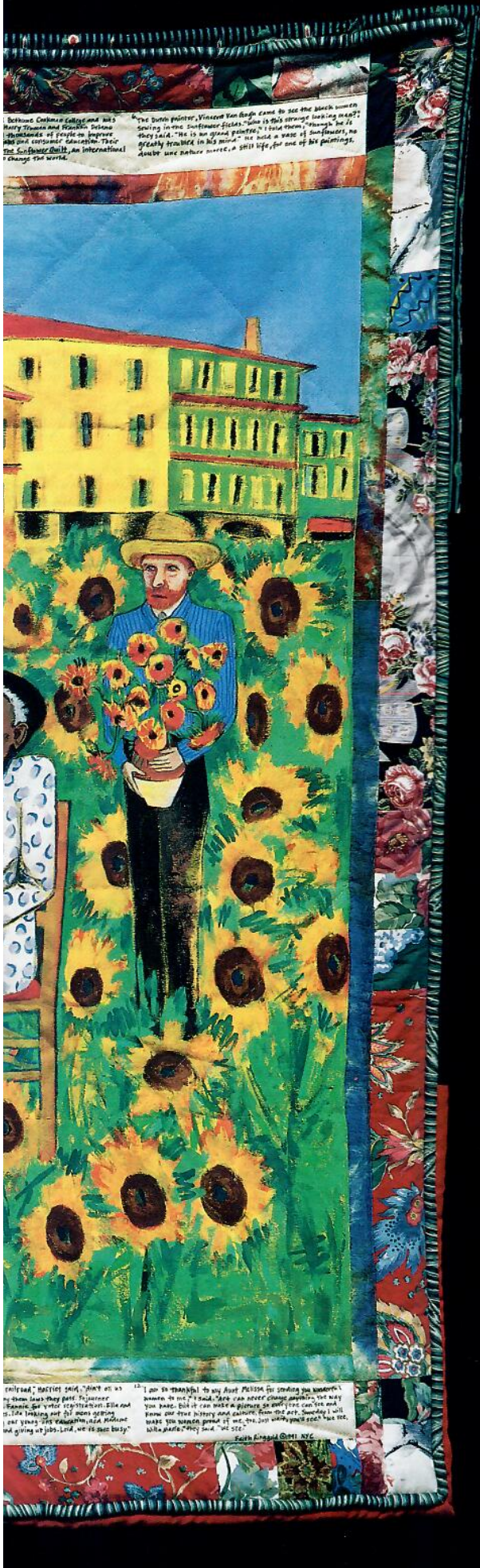
In the text of this story quilt, the women ask Willia what she is doing in Europe, hinting that she may be as disturbed as this man Van Gogh (Van Gogh had periods of intense creativity interrupted by attacks of mental illness). Willia answers, "I came to France to seek opportunity. It is not possible for me to be an artist in the States." The women reply, "We are all artists. Piecing is our art. We brought it straight from Africa."

In *The Sunflowers Quilting Bee at Arles*, as in all her story quilts, Ringgold combines African art traditions with European and American influences. Her **asymmetrical composition** (not the same on each side, but visually balanced) is divided into two areas. The figures and quilt in the lower left are done in an African tradition characterized by **simplified, stylized shapes** and **flat, repeat patterns**. The European-influenced area in the upper right echos Van Gogh's more **naturalistic style**, emphasizing **perspective** and **individual brushstrokes**. The two areas are joined by the **horizontal** row of faces leading to one of the painting's **focal points**, the **vertical** figure of Van Gogh. The composition is **unified** by the **repeated circular shapes** of the faces and sunflowers. The **bright colors** (yellows, greens, blues) echo Van Gogh's intense color schemes as well as the bright hues in African fabrics.









**"Everything about my life has to do with the fact that I am a black woman."**—FAITH RINGGOLD

Faith Ringgold, b. 1930. *The French Collection, Part I: #4 Sunflowers Quilting Bee at Arles*. © 1991, Faith Ringgold. Acrylic on canvas, pieced fabric border, 74" x 80". Collection: Oprah Winfrey.

SCHOLASTIC  
**ART**

**THE  
SUNFLOWERS  
QUILTING BEE  
AT**

**ARLES**  
faith  
ringgold

**MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH # 6**



## What story does 19th-century painter Winslow Homer tell?

Winslow Homer (1836-1910).  
*Blackboard*, 1877. Watercolor. The National Gallery of Art. Gift (partial and promised), Jo Ann and Julian Ganz Jr.



### *The Drawing Lesson*

Until the beginning of the 20th century, visual stories were told in a very *realistic* style. In the watercolor above, late 19th-century American painter Winslow Homer has presented a very lifelike picture of the way art was taught over a century ago. Students learned drawing by copying examples the teacher put on the black-

board—only *vertical*, *horizontal*, *diagonal*, and *circular* lines were to be used in simple combinations such as squares, triangles, and semicircles.

Homer may have planned this painting according to these drawing rules, limiting his composition to **horizontal lines**, the **vertical line** of the figure, and the **rectangular**

**shape** of the blackboard. The blackboard becomes the **focal point** of the painting, **framing** the teacher's head and the **diagonal line** of the pointer she is holding. The blackboard and the symbols written on it serve as a *painting within a painting*; As you can see, the artist has even signed and dated its lower right-hand corner.



## WORDS AND PICTURES



How can a comic strip be considered a work of art?

Roy Lichtenstein b. 1923. *Look Mickey*, 1961. The National Gallery of Art. Gift (partial and promised), Dorothy and Roy Lichtenstein.





Three artists who include words and symbols in their art



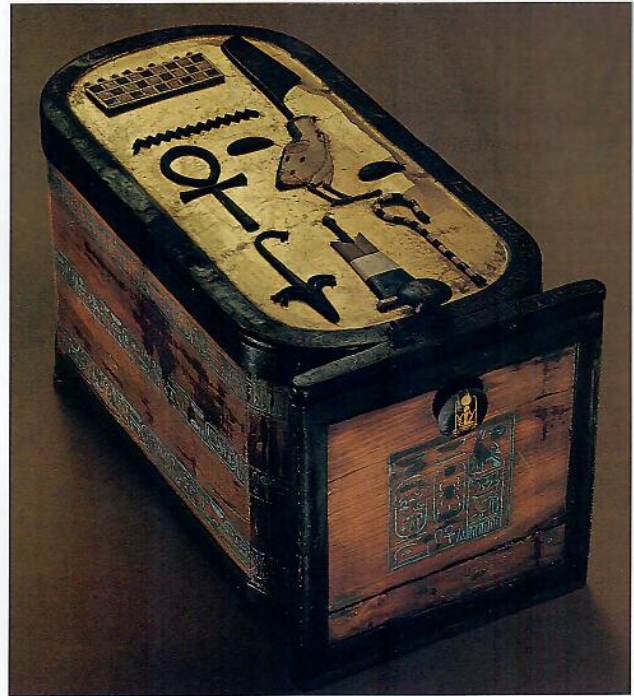
### Comic Tales

Do you recognize the figures in the painting above? When *Look Mickey* was first shown at the beginning of the 1960s, many people were outraged. They didn't consider Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, or any other comic-strip character to have anything to do with art.

Contemporary painter Roy Lichtenstein and other *Pop* artists of the time felt they were surrounded by exciting visual images that were being taken for granted. So they began painting objects like soup cans, fast food, advertis-

ing signs, and comic books. In *Look Mickey*, the artist didn't just copy a comic. By enlarging its scale and exaggerating the printing techniques—black lines, “speech balloons,” and bright, flat colors—Lichtenstein caused people to see a “popular” image like a comic strip in an entirely new way.

The lettering in this painting is larger and more noticeable than actual comic strip lettering. Perhaps the artist was suggesting that he was playing a joke on the art world with his new “comic book” style.



### A King's Story

This jewelry box (above) was last opened by its owner, 18-year-old king Tutankhamun (Toot-an-KAHM-on), more than 3,320 years ago. It held the Egyptian king's many rings, bracelets, and earrings. The figures on the top and sides are not only decorative, they also tell stories about King Tut.

To communicate with each other, the ancient Egyptians developed a complex system of picture-writing called **hieroglyphs** (HI-ro-gliffs). The symbols on top of the box are read right to left and spell out Tutankhamun's name. To show respect, the name of the god Amun was written first, but is read after “Tut” and “ankh.” The other symbols are the king's royal titles.

In the square panel on the front, Tut's name appears three times—his personal name (left), his throne name (center), and the secret name he used to contact the gods (right). The symbols under the names say: “Given life like [the God] Ra for ever.”

The hieroglyphs carved into the box above spell out the name of its owner, an ancient Egyptian king.

Cartouche-shaped box, c. 1325 B.C., 25" x 12" x 12 5/8" Cairo Museum.

	Amun,
	Tut,
	ankh
	ruler,
	of On,
	of Upper Egypt.



# Angela Bellomy:

Do any of the symbols in the print on the right look familiar? Angela Bellomy, 17, was inspired by ancient Egyptian art (see page 11) when she did this Scholastic Art Award-winning piece. Angela is currently a senior at Avon High School in Avon, Ohio, and is trying to decide whether to go on in art. "I don't know if I want to make art a career. I do it when I feel like it—I'm confident when I'm drawing. I don't feel like I'm going to fail. You can't fail at art. There isn't only one right way to do it. I like that."



Photographed by Bruce Zake

**We select** our Artist of the Month from among Scholastic Art Award winners. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, 555 Broadway, New York, NY 10012-3999 for entry deadlines and rules books. *Scholastic Art* magazine does not have a separate competition.

## ■ When did you first get interested in art?

I always liked art but I began to take it seriously in 6th grade. That was when we started to draw people and faces. Since then, I've taken art every year.

## ■ What made you do this award-winning work?

It was a 9th-grade art project. We had to look through magazines and find a facial reference to use as a guide—it couldn't be a movie star's picture or anything. We had to simplify the image, transfer it to linoleum, and make a block print. We had to print it on eight different backgrounds and select the best one.

## ■ Where did you get your idea?

At the time I was studying different cultures and nationalities. As I looked

through magazines, I found a full-face view of a woman from Indonesia. I also came across some ancient Egyptian jewelry which looked like something she would wear. I cut it out and put it down as a background.

## ■ What do you like especially about ancient Egyptian art?

I love Egyptian art because it's so different. I'm into makeup, so I put eyeliner on the woman in my print the way I think a mythical Egyptian goddess might wear it. I wore my eyes that way for a while.

## ■ How did you make the print?

First I selected the woman's picture, then I kept simplifying her shape. The goal was to use the picture as a reference but totally change her identity. I changed her eyes, stylized her face, changed her hair, and added coins. Once I got the

image I wanted, I traced it onto a piece of linoleum and carved out all the light shapes. I inked the linoleum block and printed the dark areas.

## ■ Then what did you do?

I had to create an interesting background, so I cut out my Egyptian jewelry and pasted it on a piece of paper. I inked the block and printed the face over the jewelry. We could use any ink color. I chose black so I could make the figure a bold simple outline that would stand out against the bright background patterns.

## ■ What were people's reactions to your print?

There were people who looked at this work and said, "What is that? Why are you doing it?" Their opinion didn't stop me. I did what I wanted. My print ended up being dramatically



# PICTURES AND WORDS

ARTIST OF  
THE MONTH

different from everyone else's. Many of the other prints were clear and perfectly put together, with sharp outlines and definitions. Things seem to work together in mine, but it's totally mixed and matched in terms of shapes, textures, and colors. There's a lot of stuff going on in it.

■ **Were you satisfied when you were done?**

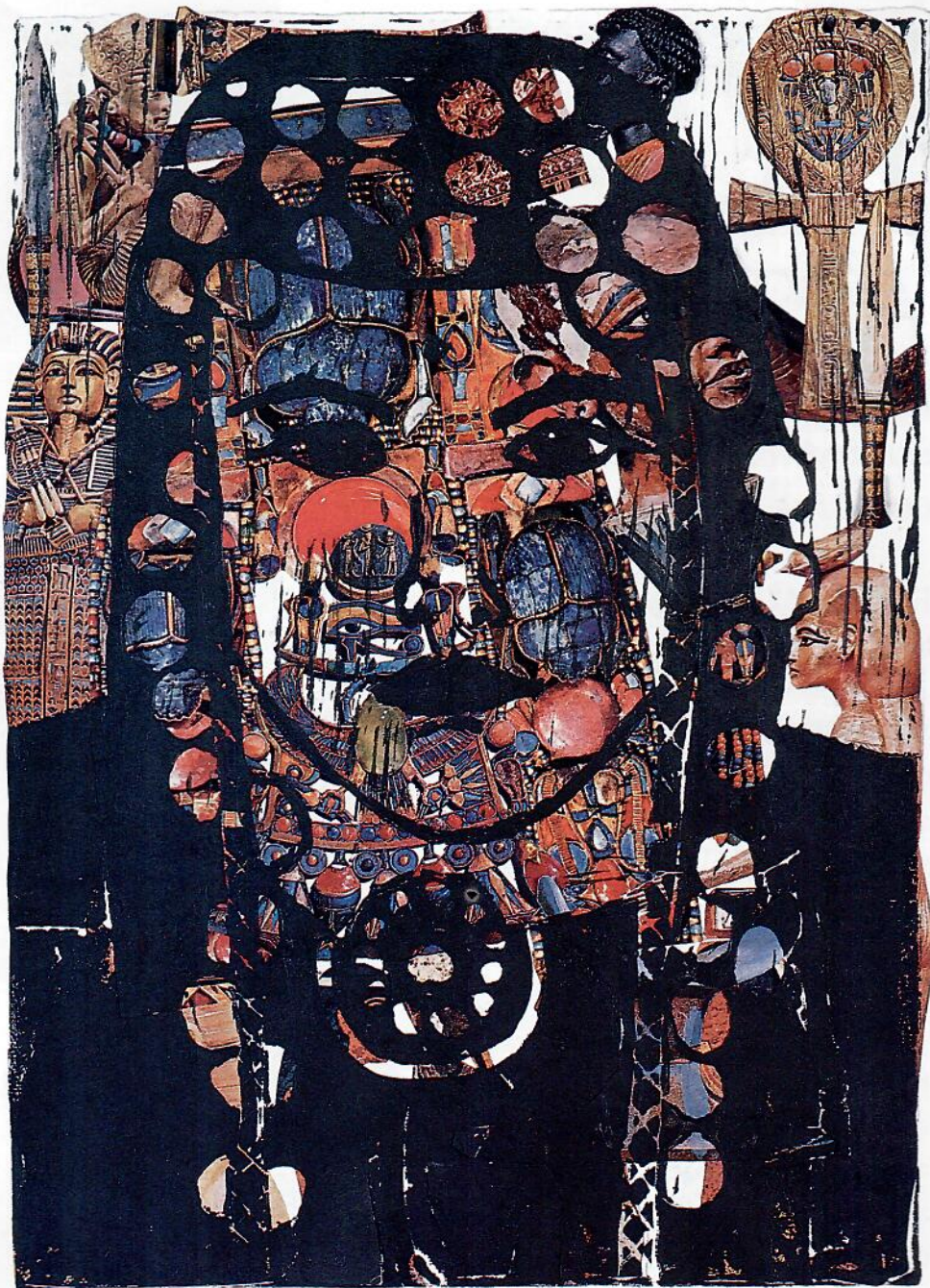
I was then. I look at it now and see things I would change. I still like the picture, but I'm a more mature artist now and I see things I don't like.

If I was to redo the print today, I would add detail to the coins to give the image more character. I would also change the woman's face. Because block printing was new to me, I think I went carve-happy. I carved out every detail in areas that would look better if they weren't so overworked—like the nose. I think today I would carve less lines, so most areas would just be suggested.

■ **Do you have any advice for other art students?**

Basically, don't concentrate on what other people say about your art. If you like it, it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks.

I think kids often won't take risks because they're too busy asking: "What do you think about this, what looks right?" Who cares? Some people are afraid to do something because it doesn't look right. That shouldn't matter. My print stood out because it was different. Your art won't impress everyone. If one person doesn't like it, someone else is going to think it looks beautiful. Draw what you like and be happy with it.



*There were people who looked at this work and said, "What is that? Why are you doing it?" Their opinion didn't stop me. I did what I wanted anyway.*

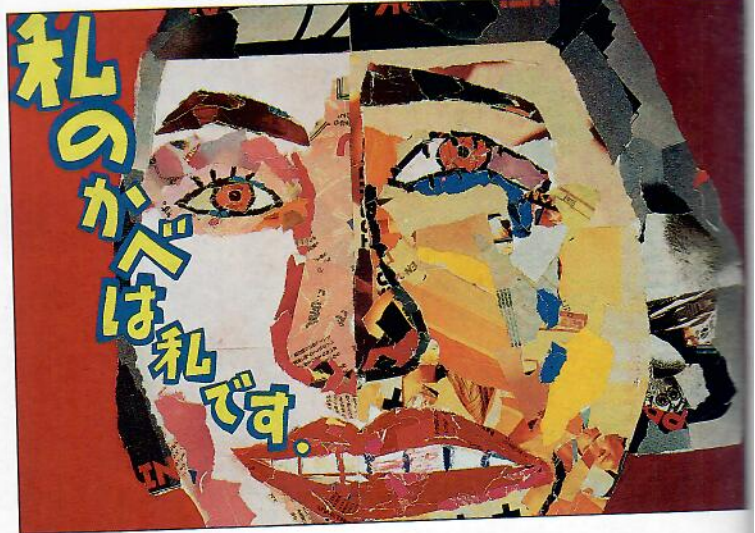


# YOU BE THE ART CRITIC

*How successfully do these award-winning designs combine words and images?*

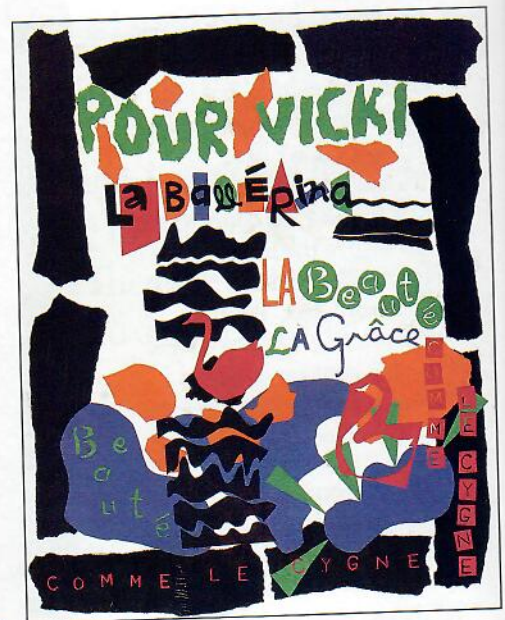
Fabric artist Faith Ringgold invented her own art form, the story-quilt, to tell stories about her family and people who have been important in her life. She incorporates the words of her tales into her quilts so they become part of the design. Other artists like the ancient Egyptians (page 11) told stories with symbolic pictures. Roy Lichtenstein (pages 10-11) includes “speech balloons” with his comic images, while Jenny Holtzer (page 16) creates images using words alone.

As you can see, there are many ways to use words or letters to tell a visual story. In this workshop you’ll do something a little different—you’ll have a chance to be an art critic. On the opposite page are some design assignments using words. On the right are six solutions created by Scholastic Art Award-winning students. Read each assignment, then circle the letter you think goes with the solution (there may be several possibilities). How well was the assignment carried out? Did the artist fulfill all requirements? What grade would you give each solution?



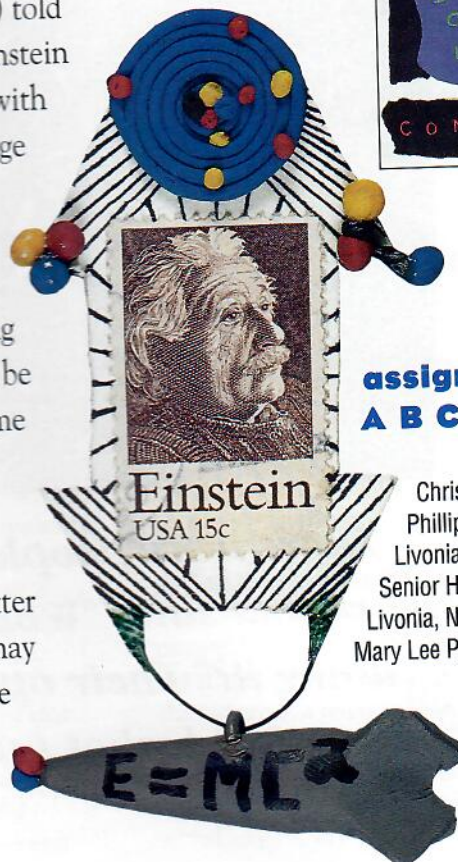
**assignment**  
**A B C D E F**

Narumi Nahamura,  
16. Saga-Kenritsu-  
Arita-Kogyo High  
School, Japan.



**assignment**  
**A B C D E F**

Tenny Chang, 17.  
Farragut High  
School, Knoxville,  
TN. Teacher:  
Melynda Whetsel



**assignment**  
**A B C D E F**

Christopher  
Phillips, 17.  
Livonia Junior/  
Senior High School,  
Livonia, NY. Teacher:  
Mary Lee Page

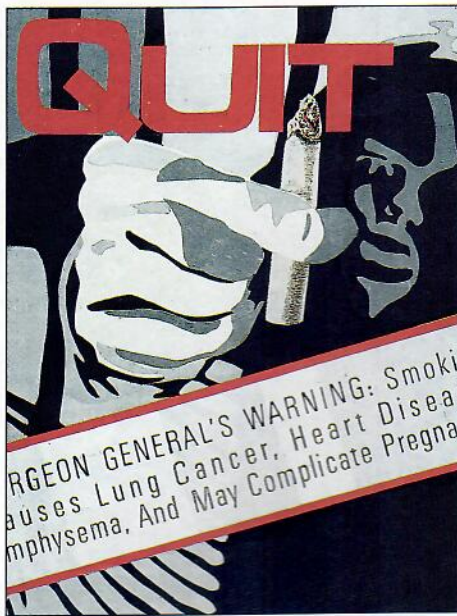
**Circle the letter of the assignment that goes with the design.**

Answers on page 16



**assignment**  
**A B C D E F**

Shannon Simmons,  
17. Walt Whitman  
High School,  
Bethesda, MD.  
Teacher: Marjorie  
Scott



**assignment**  
**A B C D E F**

Amber Korpak, 17. Montrose  
High School, Montrose, PA.  
Teacher: Robert Smith

**assignment**  
**A B C D E F**

George Hatke, 13.  
Oneida High School,  
Schenectady, NY.  
Teacher: Patricia  
Breiter



# ASSIGNMENTS

## A. 3-D Design

Choose a well-known person and tell the story of his or her most famous achievement(s). Include the person's name or picture and illustrate the achievement(s) by using at least *three* elements of design such as *space* (can extend in either two or three dimensions), *line* (short, long, continuous, straight, curved, thick, or thin), *shape* (geometric, or organic), *color*, or *texture* (rough, smooth, coarse, fine, shiny, or dull).

## B. Self-Portrait

Create a self-portrait incorporating type in a way that will express your personality. If you are feeling confident, you can crop in on the face, filling the entire *format*; a very small image will communicate timidity or shyness. *Bright, bold colors* and *heavy, dark lines* can express power and strength; *thin lines* can suggest the opposite. You can include type as a speech balloon, a caption, handwriting, or as part of the features. The *larger, thicker, heavier, brighter* the type, the more forceful your message.

## C. Poster Design

Pick a concept you feel strongly about or that carries a message, and reduce it to a single word. Do a design that illustrates the word. You can use just letters or combine them with an illustration. Use an appropriate typeface (will it be thick/thin, dark/light, tall/narrow, short/wide?). Limit colors to black, white, gray, and one appropriate color.

## D. Cubist Painting

At the start of the 20th century, *Cubist* artists wanted to show all aspects of reality. They flattened their images and presented each side of an object as a geometric plane. In order to heighten the feeling of reality, Cubists were the first to put actual type (labels, newspaper clippings, headlines) into paintings.

Select objects and/or people and create a Cubist painting, incorporating any type elements you feel will clarify your images.

## E. 2-D Design

Emphasizing the design element of *space*, design a card for a friend, relative, or someone you admire. Personalize the card by including the person's name or picture and suggest at least one distinctive characteristic (an interest in music, dance, favorite colors). Combine type and images, stressing/contrasting *positive shapes* (interior area of an object) and *negative space* (area surrounding or between shapes).

## F. "How I Spent the Last 24 Hours"

Design a creative mixed-media solution to the above statement. You may integrate handwriting, type, and/or photographic images. Use at least *three* of the following design principles: *repetition*; *progression*; *theme and variation*; *rest areas*; *rhythm*. Develop an imaginative and appropriate framework to unify all these different visual elements.



These contemporary American artists use words in unusual ways.



### More Stories in Cloth

Contemporary American artist Jenny Holtzer (who did the T-shirt below, right) uses words to tell stories, but her works are not usually found in museums or art galleries. Her messages are flashed on scoreboards at sports events, printed on buses, found in phone booths, and broadcast on TV. She uses advertising techniques to get attention, but her “Holtzgrams” carry other messages.

The artist feels strongly about a number of issues—the environment, governmental power, AIDS, the poor. She sends out short, attention-getting, sometimes controversial statements related to these subjects. Sometimes her messages turn words around in an ironic way—MONEY CREATES TASTE or SELF-AWARENESS CAN BE CRIPPLING or (right) ABUSE OF POWER COMES AS NO SURPRISE.

Many artists who use words in their art combine the letters with images. Holtzer thinks of her words as images in themselves, and changes their size, type, color, and surroundings to fit each statement.



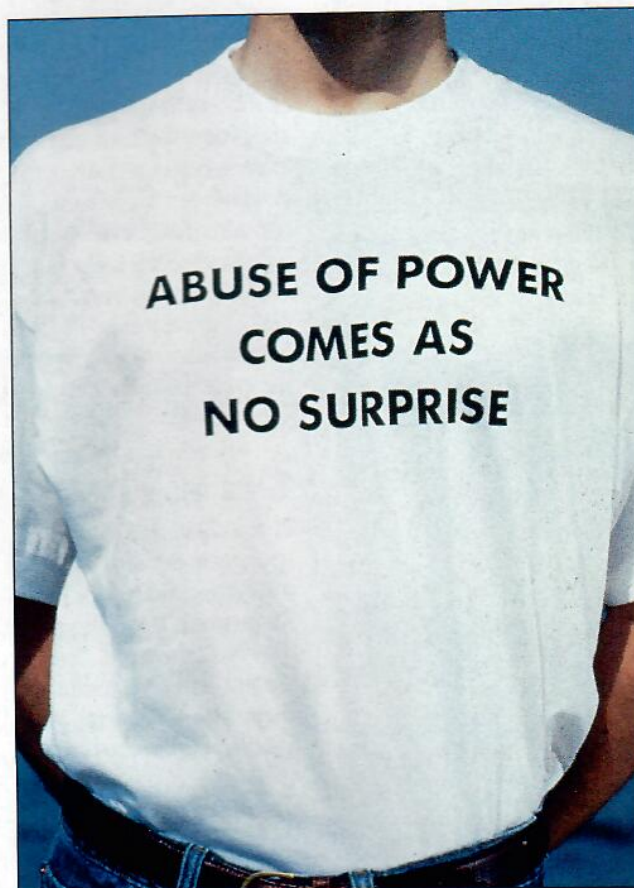
What kind of story does the construction on the left tell?

Ashley Bickerton, b. 1953. *Tormented Self-Portrait (Susie at Arles) #2*, 1988. Mixed-media construction. 90" x 69" x 18" Sonnabend Gallery. N.Y., N.Y.

### A Modern Consumer

What do you make of the construction (above, left) by contemporary artist Ashley Bickerton? Do you recognize any of the symbols the artist has used? Does the piece take on more meaning when you know it is titled *Tormented Self-Portrait*?

Ashley Bickerton was born on the island of Barbados (in the Caribbean, off the South American coast), grew up in Hawaii, and went to school in Southern California—all areas in which popular culture intrudes heavily on nature. In this self-portrait, the artist defines himself in terms of the commercial products he uses, eats, and reads. The pleasing design, which includes lettering and circles, squares, ovals, and rectangles, seems more accepting than critical of today's consumer-oriented society. Which of the products included here might the artist feel are “tormenting” him?



“I want to make art that's understandable, that becomes part of people's lives.”—JENNY HOLTZER

Jenny Holtzer b. 1950. Selection from *Truisms*, 1977-1979. Text on T-shirt. Venice Biennale. © 1990. Barbara Gladstone Gallery.