

Bisa Butler: Portraits

Dear educators,

We are thrilled to introduce you and your students to the outstanding artist Bisa Butler and her unique portrait quilts. Bisa Butler is an American artist of Ghanaian descent who uses fabric as her medium, quilting as her technique, and African American figures as her subjects. Often sourcing vintage photographs from United States Farm Security Administration (FSA), she transforms unnamed African Americans from the past into majestic figures with compelling identities and narratives to share with viewers. The images she selects, the titles she provides and fabrics she chooses add layers of meaning to her artwork.

Drawing from the important tradition of quilt making that has deep roots in histories of slavery and African-American artistry, Butler combines jewel-like colors and meaningful fabrics such as kente cloth and African wax prints, to create powerful portrait images that give new life to African-American individuals who have been lost in history. Also featured are portraits created in honor of family members, friends and public figures she admires. On tours of this exhibition, students will engage in inquiry-based conversations that will help them to carefully observe, discover new meanings, and offer windows into African American life and culture in different time periods and communities.

The materials found in this packet will help you and your students begin to consider some of the important topics and themes of this exhibition:

- **Three images from the exhibition:** Use the images and questions to start a conversation about the artworks.
- **Textiles Tell a Story:** Think about fabrics as a unique artistic medium that carries with it many layers of meaning.
- **Interpreting Photographs:** What can we learn about subjects by carefully observing the expression, gesture and pose in portraits.
- **African American quilting traditions:** Use these resources to introduce this important American tradition to your students.
- **Interview with the artist:** Get a sense of the power and impact of Bisa Butler's "portrait albums" from reading her own words. How has Bisa Butler used her unique artistic process to transform photos of the past and help us see her African American subjects, identities and histories in new ways?

In lieu of an on-site, hands-on activity, we suggest a follow-up collage portrait project. The subjects for this artwork may be family photos; individuals related to other curriculum subjects such as historical figures, women's history, scientists, etc.; or other individuals the students admire such as athletes, public figures, or personal heroes. A video demonstrating this project made by artist Tijay Mohammad may be shared with your students:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfYkbPgQaMQ&feature=youtu.be>. Or a PDF of a similar project can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/KMA-CollagePortrait>

This packet is designed with upper elementary school students in mind; please adjust for your grade level. Please share these materials with all classroom teachers. They can also be downloaded from our website: www.katonahmuseum.org under "Teacher Resources."

Special curriculum goals or project ideas you wish to connect with your tour? Feel free to reach out to discuss the specifics of your museum experience. We look forward to working with you and your students.



Margaret Adasko
Curator of Education

Bisa Butler: PORTRAITS

An artist's first solo museum exhibition at the Katonah Museum of Art

BY JEAN SHEFF

Bisa Butler refers to herself as “simply an artist.” For those that have seen her works of art “simply” would be an understatement. Her art has been described as “stunning works that transform family memories and cultural practices into works of social statement.”

Fortunately, Westchester families can see Butler's first solo exhibition “Bisa Butler: Portraits” when it opens at the Katonah Museum of Art on March 15, 2020.

The West Orange, New Jersey-based artist is often referred to as a fiber artist.

Butler says, “I use fiber as a medium and quilt techniques, but I have been known to paint and draw as well.” It has taken years for Butler to complete the approximately 25 vivid and larger than life quilts in this exhibit.

“Most of my pieces take 300 to 400 hours to complete so there are many, many long hours of work that went into this exhibition,” says Butler, who will also have a solo exhibition at the Claire Oliver Gallery in Harlem in March.

We recently spoke with Butler about her artwork and her upcoming exhibition at the Katonah Museum of Art.

Q: How would you summarize this project in your own words?

This project is a quilted fabric album of everyday people of African descent inspired by vintage photographs. My goal is to not only provide a simple snapshot of a person but also to communicate an entire story in one piece of artwork. I create portraits of people that include many clues of their inner thoughts, their heritage, their actual emotions, and even their future.

Q: Where did the idea to create a series like this originate?

I started creating this series in 2017 after I left my full-time teaching position to pursue art full time. I didn't necessarily set out to only create images of African Americans, but I started out making portraits of the people who were in my life; my friends and family. I wanted to create images of the people in my life to honor them and show them how much I admired and loved them. All of my figures have dignity, pride, and beauty because that is the way I see them.

Q: It appears that these portraits are representations of black people from the early-mid 20th century. You've chosen to present them as opulent and quite regal during a historical period where society treated them as anything but. Could you shed more light on your choice in color schemes and patterns for these portraits?

I represent all of my figures with dignity, and regal opulence because that is my actual perspective of humanity. It is true that African Americans were not treated equally

See the Exhibition

Katonah Museum of Art

134 Jay St., Katonah, NY 10536
914-232-9555
katonahmuseum.org

Exhibition Dates: March 15 through June 14, 2020

Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.; closed Mondays.

Admission: \$10 adults, \$5 seniors and students. Children ages 12 and under enter for free. The #ThirdThursdays program offers free admission for all on the third Thursday of every month.

Parking: Free on-site parking available.

The Learning Center: Families can enhance their experience at the Museum's Learning Center. Drop-in to explore, play, create, and discover with free art materials during Museum hours. Projects in the Learning Center complement the exhibitions on view.

Nearby: The nearby town of Katonah offers several family-friendly restaurants. There's also Little Joe's, a kid-friendly bookstore serving coffee and snacks, quaint shops, and the Katonah Village Library with a Children's Room. Cap off the day with a visit to Muscote Farm, an early-1900's interpretive farm, which is free and open daily to visitors.



Four Little Girls, September 15, 1963, 2018. Cotton, silk and lace 61 x 78 in. (154.9 x 198.1 cm) Courtesy of Michelle and Pete Scantland.

See Bisa Butler's stunning artwork in her first solo exhibition at the Katonah Museum of Art that opens on March 15, 2020.

or even as full human beings in the past but I am showing my perspective in my artwork - it's hard for me to imagine that anyone could meet a person and not see them the way I do. I see African Americans as the standard, not a marginalized subgroup. I actually didn't consciously set out to portray people so regally, but others pointed out that was what I was doing.

I choose bright Technicolor cloth to represent our skin because these colors are how African Americans refer to our complexions. We may be brown, but we use terms like blue black to refer to someone who has very, very dark skin, or high yellow if the person is very fair, and red bone if the person is fair and blushes easily. I also use color to communicate a mood. If a figure is shades of cool blue, I am trying to communicate that this person has a laid back, even temperament. If a subject is bright crimson and deep burgundy, I am communicating that this person is passionate and can be fiery.

I use West African wax prints, Kente cloth, and Dutch wax prints to communicate that all of my figures are of African descent and have a long and rich history behind them. When the first Africans were forced into slavery, they were not allowed to speak their native languages, call themselves by their birth names, or keep any part of their past identity. Slavers justified their inhumane treatment of Africans by pretending that they had no past at all. I want all of my figures to have their heritage back because at the time these photos were taken many of the subjects would not have ever even referred to themselves as Africans.

Q: How would you say your own identity as an African American woman of Ghanaian heritage is represented by the patterns, colors, and materials used?

I grew up seeing my grandmother, mother, and aunts wear brightly printed African cloth. My father is from Ghana and

my mother, while being African American, was raised in Morocco. My mother's Moroccan djebellas and caftans were brightly colored silks woven with sparkly embroidery and were an ordinary mode of dress in our home. There was never a time when I did not see wax prints being worn and used as decoration at home.

Kente cloth was woven in Ghana for the wealthy dignitaries, and special occasions. I was raised to recognize the different colors and weaving patterns and meanings. Similar to Scottish plaids, certain Kente patterns and colors signify different tribes and regions. A bright orange red and yellow cotton silk blended Kente is from a southern Ghanaian tribe. Northern tribes wear thick cottons in bold black, white, and navy stripes.

Q: How did you become interested in working with quilting and fiber art? Why are these your chosen materials?

I became interested in working with

quilting in fiber art during graduate school. I have a BFA degree in painting but I didn't feel inspired after I finished school.

I became pregnant my senior year in school and the smell of oil paint and transporting heavy canvases became overwhelming for me. I stopped painting for a few years and when I was in graduate school for an art education degree I made a small quilt, the size of an oven mitt, with a landscape design. I realized at that moment that I could use all fiber as a medium. My grandmother and mother sewed every day making clothing and home decor and they taught me the power of being able to make something for yourself. I have always loved fashion and with sewing I could design any outfit I wanted.

Fiber and fabric appealed to me because I could manipulate them and work while sitting next to my small children. I could explore the intense colors of my background and create something new.

Q: Could you briefly explain the technique used to create the portraits?

I use the techniques taught to me while at Howard University; I start with a subject or inspiration and make a line sketch. My drawings are highly detailed because this will become my pattern. I put down layers of cloth the way a painter puts down layers of glazes. Carefully cutting each piece to match my sketch.

After about 200 hours of laying down progressively smaller and smaller pieces I stitch everything together on a long arm quilting machine. My machine is on a 12-foot-long frame and allows me to effectively draw with the threads. I use stitches to show texture like the kinks and curls of African American hair.

Q: Is there anything you consider to be important that you feel we might have missed?

I feel like I am carrying on the tradition of African American quilting into a new form of expression. It is important to learn our traditions, or they will be lost to history. African Americans originally quilted out of the necessity to stay warm in places unlike their homelands and we had very little resources. Our quilts were made of patches because those small rags were all we had to spare in a time when we wore our clothes until they literally fell apart.

My quilts are reminders of those times but they are artwork, not quilts to be used. The fabrics I use are new and very expensive,



Anaya with Oranges, 2017. Cotton, organza, chiffon, lace and netting 36 x 20 in. (91.4 x 50.8 cm)
Courtesy of the Dimmitt Davies Collection



I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, 2019. Cotton, wool and chiffon, quilted and appliqued 50 x 129 in. (127 x 327.6 cm)
Private collection, promised gift on long-term loan to the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

To make a quilt Butler makes a very detailed line sketch that will become her pattern. She then puts down layers of cloth the way a painter puts down layers of glazes.

but the tradition is still carried on because mixed in my new fabrics are pieces of cloth given to me by my mother and grandmother. I am making something with my own two

hands just like my forbearers.

Jean Sheff is co-publisher and editor of Westchester Family.



Looking Closely: Reading Portraits

A **portrait** is a work of art that represents a person. Portraits usually show what a person looks like as well as reveal something about the subject's personality or mood.

Describe what you see in this artwork.

Think about the portrait of the person:

Describe his **facial expression**.

Describe his **gaze** (where is he looking?)

What is he wearing?

What details do you notice?

Think about how the artist depicted this person's face.

Describe the

colors

Shapes

Patterns

Layers

Textures

In this **portrait**, what looks realistic and what surprises us in how the artist depicts the person?

This is the artist's grandfather.

Why might she make this artwork about her grandfather?

Do the colors Bisa Butler used to depict this person elicit an emotional response?

Based on this portrait, how would you describe her grandfather's personality?

Bisa Butler says about this artwork:

This is for all those strong black grandfathers, pop-pops, papas, and uncles who watch over us and keep us on the right path, a contrast of the most delicate materials illustrating the strongest of men. I look to the older generation for guidance and advice, they've been where we are going and have a story to tell.

Bisa Butler, *Pops*, 2017

Vinyl netting, chiffon, lace, silk and cotton quilted and appliqué

42 x 28 in. (107 x 71 cm)

Private Collection, North Yarmouth, ME



Looking Closely: Artistic Process

What's going on in this image? Describe what you see.

Let's look more closely at the figures:

- Describe their **poses**. How is each child standing?
- What are they wearing?
- What details do you notice about each child?
- How would you describe their **facial expressions**?
- Pick one child and imagine what they might be thinking.

Let's think about the artist's process:

- What material is the artist using?
- What steps do you think she took to make this?
- Describe the **composition** (how are the parts of the picture arranged on the background?)
- Describe the **colors** and **patterns** you see.

The artist, Bisa Butler often selects archived photographic images that she uses as inspiration for her **quilts**. She has said she wants to pay tribute to the everyday person. Butler says, *These people represent people who are familiar to me. They are mothers, fathers, friends and neighbors and it's amazing even to me that when I create a color image of an old black and white photo the people look so contemporary. I feel like my images erase the years between us and make us all peers."*



Compare this photo from 1947 to the quilt she created.

How has she transformed the image?

What has she changed and what has she kept?

Do your feelings about the subjects change when you look at the **photograph** versus the quilt?

Charles "Teenie" Harris (1908-98)
Boy school crossing guard holding back group of children (1947)
[Photographed in Pittsburg, PA.]

Bisa Butler, *The Safety Patrol*, 2018
Quilted and appliquéd cotton, wool and chiffon
82 x 90 in
Art Institute of Chicago



Looking Closely: Layers of meaning

What's going on in this artwork? What strikes you first?

Let's look at the women

- Describe their poses
- Describe the expressions on their faces
- Describe what they are wearing. Look from their heads to their toes.
- What time period could they be from?

Looking carefully at the **fabrics**, describe some of the **symbols**, icons and **patterns** you see. What could they mean?

Putting the clues together

- How has the artist presented these four women?
- The artist titled the piece, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Can you make any connections between the title and the artwork?
- As we learn about Bisa Butler's work, what kind of message is the artist communicating to viewers?
- What is she telling us about these college graduates?
- Read below to learn more.

Bisa Butler, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, 2019

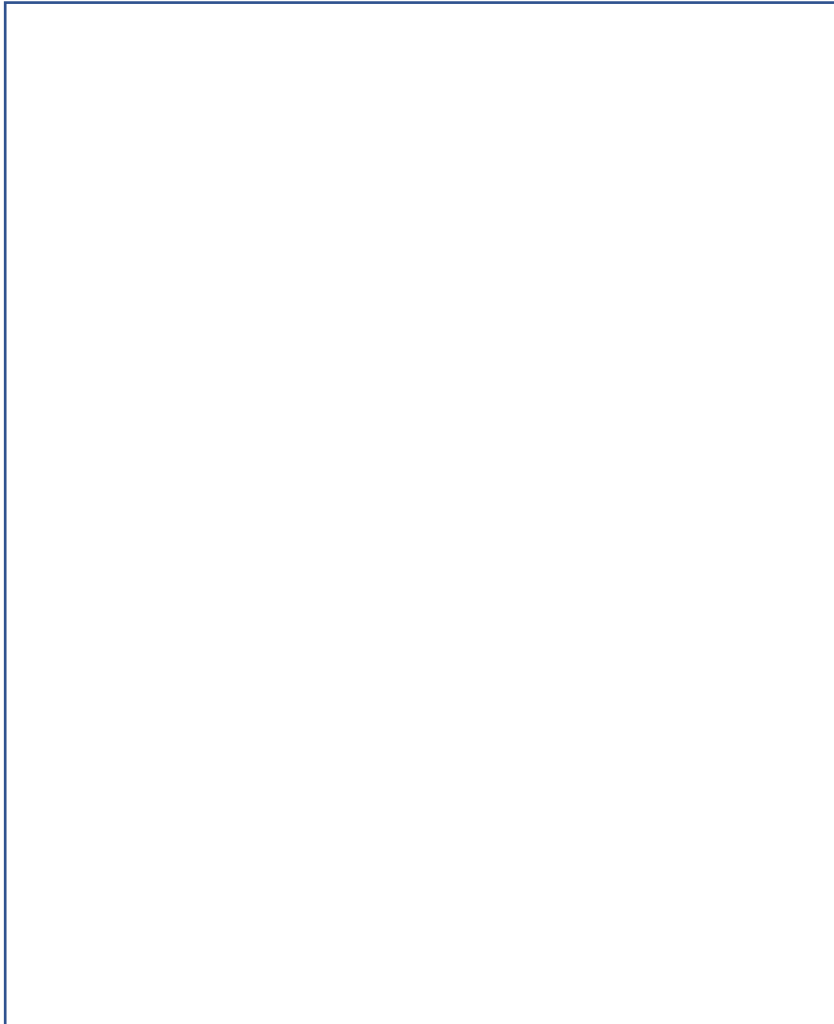
Cotton, wool and chiffon, quilted and appliquéd, Private Collection, New York

This work is based on a photograph of four young African American women sitting confidently on the steps of Atlanta College in 1900. The title is taken from Maya Angelou's autobiography and is a metaphor for the way in which education will set these women free. Butler has carefully selected her fabrics to communicate what the four women represent to her. Their hats depict symbols such as the Speed Bird fabric, which refers to change, property, freedom and transition. By being educated in college, these young women were going places their parents and grandparents could not have dreamed of. The many shiny earrings on one skirt symbolize the culture of wealth in West Africa: the more wealth one has, the bigger one's earrings. The strength exuded by these women is vividly depicted with the red shoes print, which is meant as a symbol of power. This print is called "Michelle Obama's Shoes" and was commemorated after the Obama's visited Ghana in 2009. Butler notes, "It is no accident that Michelle Obama, our most highly educated first lady walked in these young women's footsteps."

Textiles Tell a Story

Bisa Butler is very deliberate in the fabrics that she chooses to use in her quilts. The fabrics relate to the subject of the portrait in various ways: they may speak to the person's identity, their personality, or their hopes for the future. For example, Bisa often uses kente cloth in her quilts—this textile traditionally was reserved for royalty and is still seen as a mark of high status, so Bisa's use of this textile serves to elevate her subjects to the level of royalty. Her use of African fabrics and textiles also speaks to her heritage and ancestry as an African-American woman of Ghanaian descent.

We can also think about fabrics that are significant to us or have special meanings. Look around your classroom or home and collect one unique fabric. Cut a sample of it (with adult permission), take a photograph of it and print it, or draw an illustration of it here and then write about it:



1. Describe the color / pattern / design

2. What is this fabric used for?

3. Where did it come from?

4. Tell us something this fabric has seen, experienced, or lived through.

5. What might happen to this fabric in the future?

Pre-Visit Activity 2: Investigating Photographs

Bisa Butler often uses black and white **photographs** from the 30s as the source material for creating her large-scale **quilts**. The photographs that Bisa Butler uses are **portraits**, which means that her work focuses primarily on people. Many of the photographs she uses were taken as part of an initiative created by the United States Farm Security Administration (FSA), which aimed to document life and living conditions during the Great Depression. As an **African-American** artist, Bisa Butler has focused on Africans and African Americans who were alive during these tumultuous times in American history. Looking closely at these photographs, Bisa Butler imagines a **narrative** for the subjects and aims to tell that story through her artworks.

Before your visit to the museum, look at some photographs and complete your own deep examination to see what it is like to learn information and create a story about someone by looking closely at a photograph.

Have students select a photo. Some suggestions:

- Photos from a time period or culture you are studying in class
- An old family photo
- Photo of a person you admire
- For older students, consider exploring the United States Farm Security Administration (FSA), website (LOC.gov) to find photos.

Students may work independently or in pairs and exchange photographs. Take a few minutes to examine the photo and think about these questions:

- What is going on in this picture?
- Who do you think is in the photo?
- How are the people **posed**?
- How would you describe their facial **expressions**?
- Describe their clothing and anything they are holding.
- What do you notice about the background?
- When do you think the photo was taken (what time period)? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can you find?

If you are looking at personal photographs, or if the subjects are known to your students, follow this next section.

Share your findings with each other. Ask each other:

- Who is in the photograph?
- Where and when was the photograph taken?
- How did you get it? Did someone give it to you? Do you display the photograph?
- Why is it important to you?
- How well did each of you “read” the photo? What was surprising?

BONUS: Use these photos for a special art project at home.

- See the [Transform a Photo](#) activity on our website
- Or use the Transform a Photo activity attached to this packet

Picture Book Bibliography – Quilts

Prepared by Helena Vidal

Most books available from the Westchester Public Library

If you or any of your students are interested in learning more about the history of quilting in America, specifically with regards to the African American community, feel free to click on some of the links below to be connected with various resources and information.

<https://www.blackartinamerica.com/index.php/2018/11/09/the-quilting-tradition/>

<https://www.quilting-in-america.com/african-american-quilts.html>

http://www.womenfolk.com/quilting_history/afam.htm

http://wcqn.org/references_links.html

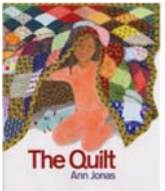
<https://www.soulsgrowndeep.org/gees-bend-quiltmakers>

QUILT STORIES



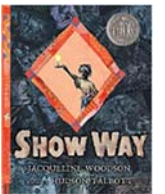
The Patchwork Quilt by Valerie Flourney and Jerry Pinkney

Using scraps cut from the family's old clothing, Tanya helps her grandmother and mother make a beautiful quilt that tells the story of her family's life.



The Quilt by Ann Jonas

In this story a little girl tells all about her new quilt and later uses it to tell an imaginative story. (Ages 3 and up)



Show Way by Jacqueline Woodson

'Show Ways' or quilts, once served as secret maps for freedom-seeking slaves. This is the story of seven generations of girls and women who were quilters and artists and freedom fighters.



Stitchin' and pullin': A Gee's Bend Quilt by Pat McKissack

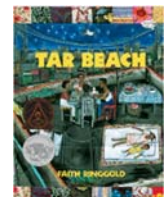
As a young African American girl pieces her first quilt together, the history of her family, community, and the struggle for justice and freedom in Gee's Bend, Alabama unfolds.



Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt by Deborah Hopkinson

For older readers, this book shares the story of Clara, a slave and seamstress on Home Plantation, who dreams of freedom. When she overhears a conversation about the Underground Railroad, she has a flash of inspiration for how to help. Listen to the story here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLmiRkdIWIO>



Tar Beach by Faith Ringgold

The dream adventure of eight-year-old Cassie Louise Lightfoot, who flies above her apartment-building rooftop, the 'tar beach' of the title, looking down on 1939 Harlem. Listen to the artist and author tell the story here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9RKJleFdBu>



The Patchwork Path: A Quilt Map to Freedom by Bettye Stroud

The images stitched into Hannah's quilt lead to secret signposts on the Underground Railroad as she and her father take flight from slavery on a perilous path to freedom.

Bisa Butler: Portraits

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

LOOKING AT PORTRAITS:

Portrait: A work of art that represents a specific person, a group of people, or an animal. Portraits usually show what a person looks like as well as reveal something about the subject's personality.

Expression: The look on someone's face that conveys a particular emotion. Also, the process of making known one's thoughts or feelings.

Gaze: A steady or intent look in one's eyes. The gaze in a portrait can show feeling or emotion.

Gesture: An expressive movement of the body or part of the body.

Pose: A particular way of standing or sitting, usually adopted in order to be photographed, painted, or drawn.

African-Americans: An ethnic group of Americans with total or partial ancestry from any of the black racial groups of Africa. The phrase generally refers to descendants of enslaved black people who are from the United States.

Ancestry: One's family or ethnic descent, the origin or background of something.

Historical Context: Refers to the social, religious, economic, and political conditions that existed during a certain time and place. Historical context can help us understand what motivated people to behave the way they did and give us further insight into why events may have occurred in specific ways.

Narrative: A story. Bisa tells a story through her choices of fabrics, subject matter, and composition, wanting to tell the audience information about the subjects of her pieces.

Photograph: A picture made using a camera, in which an image is focused onto film or other light-sensitive material and then made visible and permanent by chemical treatment, or stored digitally.

QUILT TERMS:

Appliqué: Small fabric pieces are sewn onto a background fabric.

Binding: A technique for finishing the raw edges of a quilt to make them smooth and strong.

Fabric: Material produced by weaving, knitting, crocheting, spreading, or bonding textile fibers that may be used in the production of further goods.

Fiber: A thread or filament from which textile is formed—for example, thread or yarn.

Long Arm: A special quilting machine that is used for machine quilting a quilt. The quilt is held taut on a large frame while the machine arm moves freely to perform a manual or preprogrammed quilting design using free motion (in which the quilter controls the movement of the fabric under the needle).

Patchwork or Pieced: Pieces of fabric are sewn side-by-side to create the top layer of a quilt.

Quilt: A coverlet for a bed, made of two layers of fabric with some soft substance, as wool or down, between them and stitched together, usually in a decorative crisscross design.

Quilt Parts:

Backing: the fabric used as the bottom layer of the quilt "sandwich"

Batting: the filling in a quilt, or the middle layer of the "sandwich"

Block: a basic unit of quilt construction; usually a square of patchwork that is put together with other blocks to make a quilt

Border: a strip of fabric that is joined to the outside of the quilt to enhance it.

Top: the part of the quilt with the greatest design features; the part we see.

Sewing: To join, fasten, or repair (something) by making stitches with a needle and thread or a sewing machine.

Sewing Machine: A machine with a mechanically-driven needle for sewing or stitching cloth. It was invented in the late 1700s and makes the process of sewing much faster.

Stitch: A loop of thread or yarn resulting from a single pass or movement of a needle.

Textile: A type of cloth or woven fabric; any material made of interlacing fibers.

Thread: A long, thin strand of cotton, nylon, or other fibers used in sewing.

Thread painting: A way of embellishing quilts by “painting” images on the quilt top with contrasting thread.

ART & DESIGN TERMS:

Color: The hue produced when light reflects off a surface. Color is an important element of art that can affect mood, feeling, balance, energy, and memory.

Primary, Secondary & Tertiary colors: Blue, red, and yellow are **primary colors**. **Secondary colors** are made from mixing two primary colors: green, orange, and violet. **Tertiary colors** are made from mixing two secondary colors.

Color value: The relative lightness or darkness of a color.

Complementary color: Colors that sit opposite each other on the color wheel. Because they are opposites, they tend to look especially lively when used together.

Analogous color: Analogous colors sit side by side on the color wheel. They blend well together.

Warm / Cool Colors: The warm colors: reds, pinks and yellows; are often associated with fire and sun; may suggest warmth and high energy. Cool colors: blues and greens, are often associated with water and sky and suggest coolness and calmness.

Composition: The plan, placement or arrangement of individual elements in a work of art.

Elements of art: The basic components used by the artist when producing works of art; especially line, shape, color.

Line: A continuous mark between points. Line defines space, and may create an outline or contour, define a silhouette, create patterns, or movement, and the illusion of mass or volume. Lines can be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, straight, curved, jagged, thick, thin, etc.

Motif: A decorative design or pattern.

Pattern: the repetition of an element (or elements) in a work.

Scale: The size of an object relative to something else, or the relative size of an object in a work of art in relation to the whole work of art.

Shadow: A dark image cast on the ground or other surface by an object blocking light. Also, shade or comparative darkness in an area. When used by artists, shadow creates the illusion of three-dimensional space and can be used to create atmosphere.

Shape: A flat, two-dimensional area enclosed by line.

Geometric shapes such as circles, squares, or triangles can be measured with a ruler or compass.

Organic shapes do not have specific names; they are free-form and may resemble forms found in nature.

Symbol: A design or an object that represents something else.

Texture: Characteristic surface of a material; how it feels to the touch, or the visual appearance of texture on a 2D surface.

Value: The relative lightness or darkness.

LOOK AT THIS



Bisa Butler
Southside Sunday Morning, 2018
Silk and cotton
Courtesy of the Bill and Christy Gautreaux Collection, Kansas City Missouri

THINK ABOUT THIS

Look closely at this artwork and this photograph.

What is the difference between the photograph and Bisa Butler's artwork? How does the artist transform the photograph?

How do you think the artist made this artwork? What materials did she use?

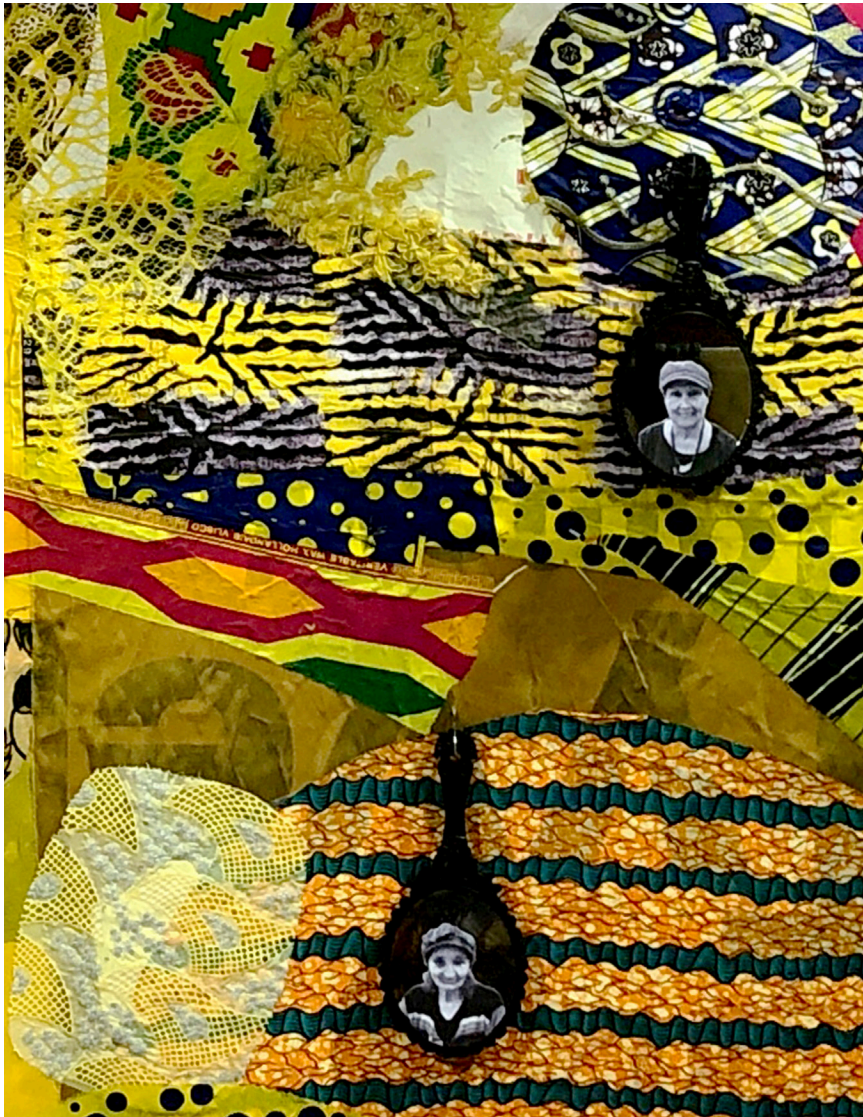
What colors and patterns do you see in the boys and the background in the artwork?

Why do you think Bisa Butler used these colors and patterns?



Russell Lee
Negro Boys on Easter Morning, Southside, Chicago, Illinois, 1941

LOOK AT THIS



Tijay Mohammed
An-Nisaa I: The Women (detail), 2020
Fabric, Mirrors, Paper, Tyvek
Courtesy of the artist

THINK ABOUT THIS

Look at this detail of the Learning Center installation.

How do you think the artist Tijay Mohammed made this artwork? What materials did he use? What colors, patterns and details do you notice?

How did the artist incorporate photo portraits into this artwork? How did he transform the photos? Why do you think are they on mirrors?

Do you want to be part of this installation? Email education@katonahmuseum.org a photo of a woman you want to honor and we will prepare a mirror portrait of her and add it to the installation.



An-Nisaa I: The Women installation by Tijay Mohammed. Photo by Margaret Fox

TRY THIS

Transform a photo to create a portrait.

- Both Bisa Butler and Tijay Mohammed transform photos and use fabric in their work.
- Who would you like to make a portrait of? Find a photo of a person on your phone or computer and print it in black and white.
- Cut out the people from the background.
- Use a piece of thick paper or cardstock for the background.
- Find small fabric pieces or colorful paper such as magazine paper, construction paper or wrapping paper scraps to make a background design. Think about choosing colors and patterns that relate to the person in your photo.
- Using a gluestick, cover the background paper and attach the fabric or paper pieces.
- Use the gluestick to attach the photo to the background.

TRANSFORM A PHOTO

Materials needed:

A photo printed in black and white
Thick paper or cardstock
Small fabric pieces or colorful paper
Scissors
Gluestick
Colored Pencils (optional)

Sample:

