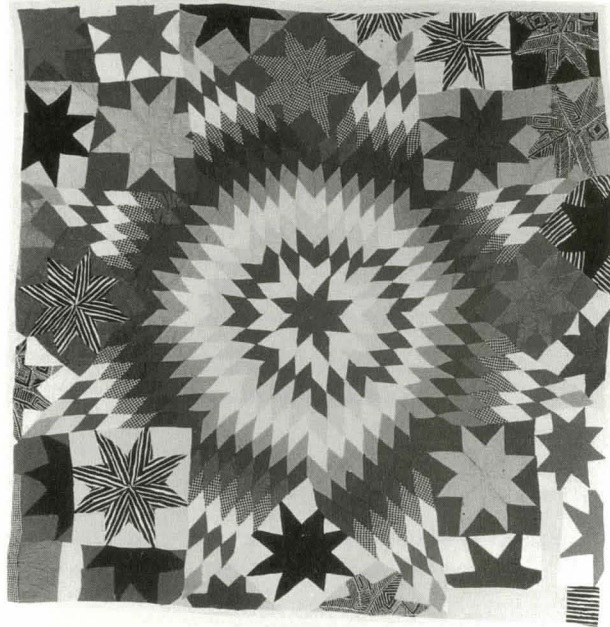


african-american art

THREE EXHIBITIONS
EARLY IN 1994
WILL CELEBRATE
AFRICAN-AMERICAN
ART TRADITIONS.



TEXAS STAR
PIECED BY MATTIE PICKETT,
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA,
1986. QUILTED BY WILLIA
ETTE GRAHAM, OAKLAND,
CALIFORNIA, 1987.

who'd a thought it: improvisation in african-american quiltmaking

Quilts "improvised" by African-Americans from the large collection of Eli Leon of Oakland, California, will be shown in the *Who'd A Thought It* exhibition. Leon collects quilts and unquilted tops that show an aesthetic quite different from quilts in the European-American tradition. He calls these quilts "Afro-traditional" and believes they exemplify a distinct tradition in American quiltmaking. "Afro-traditional" quilts show a strong preference for improvisation in color and formal design which Leon relates to the better-known aesthetic of African-American music.

In the *Who'd A Thought It* exhibition, organized by the San Francisco Craft & Folk Art Museum, the quilts are presented with photographs and biographical sketches of the African-American women (and one man) who made them. When Leon interviewed the quilters, he found they used revealing verbs to describe their work. They speak of "building" a quilt, a verb signifying shelter, or of the work as "playing" the fabric. Leon finds "the unexpected, the unique, and the personal" in African-American quilts.

covering our heritage: african-american quilts of champaign-urbana

Quilts made by Champaign-Urbana residents in the *Covering Our Heritage* exhibition have the same qualities of improvisation and uniqueness as those gathered from around the country for the national exhibition.

The local exhibition is a cooperative effort. Members of the Douglass Annex Seniors helped to collect the quilts for the exhibition. A group of sixty sub-freshmen at University High School interviewed the quilters as part of an oral history project under the direction of Barbara Wysocki and Philippa Kaplan, social studies teachers. Community Radio Station WEFT trained students in the use of equipment and helped them create finished programs from their raw interview tapes. These programs will air on WEFT and will be available on headsets at the exhibition.

Project organizers are Linda Duke, director of education, Krannert Art Museum; Barbara Wysocki, head of social studies, University High School; Linda Neuman, station manager, WEFT Community Radio; Barbara McGee, director of senior programs, Douglass Center Annex, Champaign Park District; and members of the Black History Committee, Douglass Center Annex.



LOCAL QUILT PROJECT MEETING AT DOUGLASS ANNEX OF THE CHAMPAIGN PARK DISTRICT.
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: BARBARA WYSOCKI, PHILLIPPA KAPLAN, LINDA DUKE, LINDA NEUMAN, BARBARA MCGEE, DOROTHY MORELAND, ANNA WALL SCOTT, PAULINE G. PELMORE, AND MARY MCCOY.

rivers and memories: two african-american artists

Rivers and Memories is an exhibition at two sites, the result of a collaboration between the University of Illinois Library and the Krannert Art Museum. Rosemary Stevenson, Afro-Americana bibliographer at the Library, conceived the exhibition and, with Linda Duke, co-curated the exhibition.

Each portion of *Rivers and Memories*, named for a poem by Langston Hughes, reveals some aspect of African-American heritage and experience. The "Rivers" of the title are metaphors for individual lives and collective human history. The "Memories," both cultural and personal, are evoked through the work of writers, poets, and visual artists exhibited at both the Library and the Museum.

Photographs, books, and book illustrations from the Library collection are displayed in the Main Hall of the Library. The work of two contemporary artists—Muneer Bahauddeen, and Barbara Prezau—are shown in the Museum portion of the exhibition. The works are loaned by the Isobel Neal Gallery, Chicago.

Muneer Bahauddeen's commitment to Yoruba thought and religious practice gives a rich source of imagery to his unique personal expressions in altar sculptures, prints, and collages.

Haitian-born Barbara Prezau is a painter and mixed media artist. Her imagery draws on African and Afro-Caribbean traditions. In her "Indigo Series" she works with hand-made paper, using traditional textile techniques.

COMPLEMENTARY EVENTS

A number of events including lectures and demonstrations by local quilters will complement the three exhibitions of African-American art. (See listings in the Calendar.)

ON JANUARY 30, Robert Farris Thompson, master of Timothy Dwight College and professor of African and African-American Art History at Yale University, will give a public lecture. Its title is "From the First to the Final Thunder: African-American Quilts, Monuments of Cultural Assertion," which is also the title of his essay in the catalogue of the *Who'd A Thought It* exhibition. Thompson, a well-known scholar, recently curated an exhibition, *Face of the Gods: Art and Altars of Africa and the African Americas*, at the Museum for African Art in New York.

ON FEBRUARY 20, Gregor Williams, a scholar of the dual African and Native Caribbean heritage of his native island of St. Lucia, West Indies, will talk about the survival of African culture in the festivals, art, and costumes of St. Lucia.

ON FEBRUARY 23, the Museum presents Kazuko Fujimoto Goodman, a leading Japanese scholar and translator of the writings of African-American women. She will talk about her current collaboration with noted American anthropologist Sidney Mintz on a book, *The Creation of African-American Culture*, and Japanese reactions to writings by African-American women.