



Gee's Bend Quilts



UIMA K-12 School Programs Collections | Gee's Bend Quilts

"Gee's Bend Quilts" is the geographically-inspired name for works crafted by a multigenerational group of African-American women that include a combination of traditional forms and innovation. The quilts had a unique historic and stylistic development due to the community of Gee's Bend's almost complete isolation from the outside world for the better part of the 20th century. Gee's Bend, Alabama, is a small, remote, rural community of 275 people (according to the 2010 census).

Historically, the quilts were first created out of necessity and used for warmth. Using whatever material was available to them, the women quilted together. One quilter, Bettie Bendolph Seltzer, recalls the materials her mother and mother's friends used, "At the start all they was making them out of was old clothes, pants, fertilizer sacks, dress tails, and meal and flour sacks, too." The women taught their daughters, who taught their daughters. Thus, the quilting community of Gee's Bend became something of an informal art school, passing down their own forms of beauty.

What started off as a practical necessity has grown into a thriving tradition. The quilts of Gee's Bend are not likely to decrease in value as the renewed interest in what used to be called "low art" or "craft art." The style is ever fluid, mistakes are explored not fixed, and there is a group effort behind each masterpiece. Today, Gee's Bend quilts are hung in major museums across the United States (including The Whitney Museum of American Art and the American Craft Museum) and considered one of the great examples of American art.

The following pages show examples of objects in the collection.





China Pettway (American, b. 1952)

2004, n.d.

Quilt, 84 x 74 in.

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Mary Ann Pettway (American, b. 1956)
May Day, 5/1/2012
Quilt, 27 x 51 in.
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Mary Leatha Pettway (American, b. 1961)
Coming Together, n.d.
Quilt, 44 ½ x 41 in.
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African Art

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Art of India: Folk Art

Art of India: Hindu Icons

Gee's Bend Quilts

Graphic Novel & Comic Art

