

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Darcy Schuller
727-896-2667 ext. 252 (o)
dschuller@mfastpete.org

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG PRESENTS EXQUISITE QUILTS FROM PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

These powerful and poignant textiles dating from 18th through the early 20th centuries shine as examples of artistic expression, intellectual achievement, and consummate design.

ST. PETERSBURG, FL (September 2, 2021) — Ranging from brilliantly pieced starbursts to intricately stitched appliqués, more than 30 textiles featured in *Pieced & Patterned: American Quilts, c. 1800–1930* at the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, epitomize the extraordinary needlework, fascinating history, and remarkable designs of this quintessentially American art form.

The exhibition, on view from September 18, 2021 through January 23, 2022, is drawn from several private collections in Tennessee and Florida, including three from the Tampa Bay area. Most of the 32 quilts are decorative, and were used as display pieces in the home. To highlight their exquisite details and patterns, the quilts are installed upon large, custom-made slant boards. Visitors can also see several of these works displayed in a more traditional fashion, placed on antique beds throughout the galleries.

Pieced & Patterned is the first major quilt exhibition in the MFA's history. It is curated by MFA Senior Curator of Collections and Exhibitions Stanton Thomas, Ph.D. and Assistant Curator Erin Wilson.

“Many of these quilts, especially the early ones, were considered prestige items,” Thomas said. “They showcase not only that the makers had the time to design and sew them, but also were able to invest in costly fabrics. If you had the time to do something this complex and with really fine materials, it was a direct reflection of your socio-economic status.”

The quilts in the exhibition were designed by skilled, but often unknown female artists. In the United States from the eighteenth to early twentieth century, artistic expression was usually rather limited for women. Wilson noted that quilt making became a way

for them to express themselves artistically, as well as showcase their talents and knowledge, share their family history, or illustrate their political viewpoint.

“There’s a history and a story with each of these quilts, but unfortunately many of these have been lost with time,” Wilson said. “Visitors will have the opportunity to craft their own stories when they engage with the quilts, and truly discover, explore, and connect with these fascinating pieces.”

“One of the things that might surprise visitors is the shockingly modern quality of some of these quilts,” Thomas said. “There are ones reminiscent of Henri Matisse, others that look like Victor Vasarely’s Op art from the 1960s, and some that look like Jasper Johns...This exhibition will appeal to quilters and non-quilters alike. If you are intrigued by graphic design, composition, mathematics, or history, this exhibition will truly fascinate you.”

RELATED EXHIBITION PROGRAMS

[Virtual Cocktails & Collections](#)

Thursday, September 16 | 6:30–7:30 pm

MFA’s Senior Curator of Collections and Exhibitions Stanton Thomas, Ph.D. and Assistant Curator Erin Wilson take you inside the exhibition galleries of *Pieced & Patterned* as part of a live, Zoom tour. Attendees are encouraged to join with their exhibition-inspired cocktail/mocktail!

[Homeschool Hours: Quilts and Calculations](#)

Wednesday, September 29 | 10 am–12 pm

In our monthly youth program, homeschool students and parents are invited to learn about the history of quilt-making in America through the lens of mathematics and geometry. Discover how quilters turn equations into art and create a patterned quilt of your own.

[Explore More! Days: *Pieced & Patterned*](#)

Saturday, November 6 | 11 am–2 pm

Are you ready to go "crazy" for quilts? Join us as we explore the history and creativity of American quilts. Visitors will receive a pre-packaged exploration bag with a scavenger hunt, quilting puzzle, and all the materials needed to make a crazy quilt of their own!

[Quilts: A Conversation with the Curators](#)

Sunday, November 14 | 3–4 pm

Join MFA’s Senior Curator of Collections and Exhibitions Stanton Thomas, Ph.D. and Assistant Curator Erin Wilson for a lively Zoom discussion and learn more about how these treasured quilts have documented the social and cultural life in America.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive NE is St. Petersburg's first art museum, and houses the largest encyclopedic art collection in Florida. The collection includes works of art from ancient times to the present day and from around the world, including ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, Native American, European, American, and contemporary art. The photography collection is one of the largest and finest in the Southeast. Kristen A. Shepherd is the Executive Director and CEO. For more information, please visit mfastpete.org and follow @mfastpete on social media.

###