



For release – October 21, 2020

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**Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) joins *We Are the Story* initiative with presentation of L'Merchie Frazier's solo quilt exhibition *Freedom Rising: I Am the Story***

Frazier's exhibition features selected moments that confront racism and the relationship dynamics of ownership, becoming property-less, of being deemed property, and the question of belonging

(Minneapolis, MN) – Textile Center and Women of Color Quilters Network (WCQN) are pleased to announce that the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) is joining the *We Are the Story* initiative with the presentation of L'Merchie Frazier's solo quilt exhibition *Freedom Rising: I Am the Story* from November 21, 2020, through September 19, 2021.



*Freedom Rising: I Am the Story* is one of seven group and solo quilt exhibitions that make up the *We Are the Story* initiative curated by Carolyn Mazloomi, founder of WCQN and a member of Textile Center's National Artist Advisory Council.

L'Merchie Frazier. "I Matter", 2016. Pieced nylon fabrics and machine stitching. 40 in. x 30 in.

© L'Merchie Frazier.

Photo: Craig Bailey/Perspective Photo. L2020.129.10.

*We Are the Story* was created in response to the nationwide protest movement against police brutality and racism in America following the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis.

“Black and Indigenous people have a shared history of over 500 years in unwritten, unrecognized, and unacknowledged narrative about the spaces that they occupy physically, mentally, and spiritually,” Frazier writes. “*Freedom Rising: I Am the Story* exhibition features selected moments that confront racism and the relationship dynamics of ownership, becoming property-less, of being deemed property, and the question of belonging.

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“The journey to creating a sense of establishing selfhood and importance that is manifest in today’s protests is a trek of reclaiming the right to self-possession and ownership of elevated voice, story, and space. Importantly the direct action to embrace the right to exist, claim one’s own self-worth, beauty, and love is a marked effort that fuels the move from insignificance to significance.”

“I am thrilled to present L’Merchie Frazier’s work at the Minneapolis Institute of Art,” said Nicole LaBouff, associate curator of textiles at Mia. “Her quilts are cloth paintings that have to be seen to be believed, and her complex layering of transparent fabrics makes her works of art as nuanced and complex as the stories they convey. I encourage viewers to take their time in this exhibition—it carries a special significance in this place, this moment in history.”

A public fiber artist, quilter, historian, and poet, Frazier is Director of Education and Interpretation for the Museum of African American History, Boston and Nantucket. She is one of four artists featured in solo exhibitions for *We Are the Story*, which include:

- ***I Wish I Knew How it Feels to be Free (Quilts by Dorothy Burge, Chicago, IL)***, at Textile Center’s Community Gallery, September 29 – December 24, 2020.
- ***We Are the Story: The Protest Series (Quilts by Penny Mateer, Pittsburgh, PA)***, at Weisman Art Museum, October 15 – March 14, 2021.
- ***Sacred Invocations (Quilts by Sylvia Hernandez, Brooklyn, NY)***, at Textile Center’s Community Gallery, January 11 – March 14, 2021.

The Minneapolis Institute of Art joins Textile Center, the American Swedish Institute, and the Weisman Art Museum as exhibition venues. For a detailed list of exhibitions and special events, visit [textilecentermn.org/wearethestory](http://textilecentermn.org/wearethestory).

“George Floyd’s cry to his Mama for maternal help, mirrors a symbolic guttural cry for help from the belly of our nation,” Mazloomi says. “Our citizens are crying out for protection, comfort, and education. In response to that cry, and to help educate the public on brutality, inequities, and racism in America, Textile Center and the Women of Color Quilters Network (WCQN) and Friends moved quickly to create *We Are the Story*. Collectively the exhibition quilts tell the unsung stories that affect our understanding and inspire our resolve to end this unholy trinity of societal ills. The series is organized around the following themes: remembering those lost to police brutality, history of civil rights, and racism in America.

“Throughout history, Black liberation movements have been deeply influenced by our cultural gifts and have often birthed new and beautiful forms of creative expression,” Mazloomi adds. “Artistic production, as seen throughout the Civil Rights, Black Arts, and Black Power movements, has operated as a vehicle for change and consciousness raising alongside the protests and organizing efforts employed by Black communities across the U.S.

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“We at WCQN feel compelled to follow the blueprint of our ancestors, using the work of our hands as tools for storytelling and social change,” adds Mazloomi, who founded WCQN in 1985. “Quilting has long served as an act of self-determination and community support within African American history. The creativity and support manifested by enslaved women through quilting directly informed the work of the quilting bees of the 60s and 70s whose work funneled social, financial, and education resources into the fight for freedom and civil rights. As cultural stewards in today’s fight for justice, our mission is no different.”

#### **L’MERCHIE FRAZIER**

L’Merchie Frazier, a public fiber artist, quilter, historian, innovator, poet, and holographer, with her “*Art Out Loud*” has served the artistic community for over twenty-five years nationally and internationally with visual and performance art residencies in Boston, Brazil, Taiwan, Costa Rica, Africa, France, and Cuba. A public lecturer and community workshop presenter, her spatial and social justice artistic work activates youth and adults in a co-design model that reflects the participants as creative actors and their occupancy in democratizing the socio-economic political landscape. Frazier is a quilting member of Women of Color Quilter’s Network. Currently she is Director of Creative Engagement of Transformative Action Project/Violence Transformed for the Public Health Advocacy Institute initiative at Northeastern University.

#### **CAROLYN MAZLOOMI**

Historian, curator, author, lecturer, artist, mentor, founder, and facilitator — the remarkable and tireless Carolyn Mazloomi has left her mark on many lives. Trained as an aerospace engineer, she turned her sites and tireless efforts in the 1980s to bring the many unrecognized contributions of African American quilt artists to the attention of the American people as well as the international art communities. From the founding of the African-American Quilt Guild of Los Angeles in 1981 to the 1985 founding of the Women of Color Quilters Network (WCQN), Mazloomi has been at the forefront of educating the public about the diversity of interpretation, styles, and techniques among African American quilters as well as educating a younger generation of African Americans about their own history through the quilts the WCQN members create.

A major force as an artist in her own right, Mazloomi’s quilts can be found in private collections around the world as well in distinguished museum collections in the United States. To date she has published 12 books highlighting African American-made quilts. Her artistic work, as well as her defense of solid research, has disrupted long-standing myths about African American quilts, myths much debated among quilt historians and quilters alike, and thus moved the conversation about African American quilt history forward to more a solid academic footing. Visit:

[carolynmazloomi.com](http://carolynmazloomi.com).

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### **MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART**

Home to more than 90,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest art collections in the country—from all corners of the globe, and from ancient to contemporary—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration. General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee. For more information, call 612.870.3000 or visit [artsmia.org](http://artsmia.org).

### **WOMEN OF COLOR QUILTERS NETWORK (WCQN)**

For African American women quilts have always been at the core of artistic expression, taking form in the social, economic, and spiritual lives of the women who make them. Founded by Carolyn Mazloomi in 1985, WCQN is a non-profit national organization whose mission is to educate, preserve, exhibit, promote, and document quilts made by African Americans. WCQN showcases the work of its members through critically acclaimed traveling exhibitions that tour museums throughout the United States, including the Smithsonian. WCQN has exhibited quilts in Japan, England, South Africa, Italy, and Australia as part of art programs sponsored by the United States Department of State. For more information, visit: [wcqn.org](http://wcqn.org).

### **TEXTILE CENTER**

Textile Center is unparalleled as America's national center for fiber art. A nonprofit arts center, Textile Center's mission is to honor textile traditions, promote excellence and innovation, and inspire widespread participation in fiber art. The Center's facility includes exceptional fiber art exhibitions in four galleries, an artisan shop, the region's only accessible professional-grade dye lab, and one of the nation's largest circulating textile libraries open to the public. Textile Center partners with nearly 30 textile guilds, runs the Youth Fiber Art Guild™, and facilitates more than 400 classes a year for all ages and skill levels. A dynamic hub of fiber activity, celebrating our 25th Anniversary in 2019, Textile Center brings people together in community to learn, create, share, and be inspired by fiber art. For more information, visit: [textilecentermn.org](http://textilecentermn.org).