



FEBRUARY 2008

A Quilt to Warm the Heart



VISIT THE BMA

and see a modern quilt by
Faith Ringgold in the BMA's
Berman Textile Gallery on the
main floor.

Baltimore Album Quilt, 1846-1847 Friends and family of Samuel Williams

Lizzie Morison and other Baltimore quilt makers had nimble fingers for sewing and a good eye for fabric. They could sort through odds and ends of cloth and imagine how each color or printed pattern might be cut and stitched into the shape of a flower, bird, or ornamental vase. In this quilt square, a piece of yellow cotton printed with wavy lines creates the fluttering wings of two turtledoves that flank a heart-shaped wreath. Dashes of red on the same fabric suggest the birds' speckled breast.

This stitchery, signed by Lizzie Morison, is just one of forty-two squares that were assembled as a bed covering and presented as a gift to a gentleman named Samuel Williams (see full quilt on page 2). The remaining squares were sewn and signed by members of Mr. Williams' family and faithful friends. Like an old-fashioned autograph album with pages inscribed with sentimental verses, this "album quilt" is a lasting remembrance from friends who showed their affection for Mr. Williams though long hours spent with needle and thread.

The three central rows of the quilt covered the top of a bed. Look for an anchor, a golden lyre, a patriotic American eagle, a steam engine with curtained passenger car, wreaths of grape and holly, the insignia of Delaware, and Baltimore's Battle Monument bedecked with flowers and flags. The four rows on either side are oriented in a different direction so that they would appear properly when folded over the side of a bed. Look for a squirrel in a tree, a red Bible, an acorn wreath, and Lizzie Morison's heart with turtledoves.

Challenge for Students

Using scraps of fabric or markers on sturdy cloth, make a class quilt about how your community looks today. Each student should create and sign one square.

Print the image on page 2 for your students.

Please Note: Textiles are fragile and light sensitive.
This work is not currently on view at the BMA.

American, Maryland, Baltimore. Friends and family of Samuel Williams. Detail, *Baltimore Album Quilt*. 1846-1847. 107½ x 119½ inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Serena O'Laughlen Wagner, Baltimore, BMA 1988.206.

For visitor information: artbma.org

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