



Director's Statement

The Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum is pleased to present *Home Sewn: Quilts from the Lower Mississippi Valley*. This exhibition showcases a small selection of the museum's collection of African American quilts.

Hand-sewn quilts not only inspire us as objects of beauty and fascinate us with the intricacies of the techniques of fine needlework, but they also serve as storytellers, telling tales about the women who made them, the families for whom they were made, and reflections of the communities from which they came. Sometimes we forget that such quilts often provided a much needed economic opportunity for women in rural communities. These decorative, utilitarian objects were core to the fabric of families and communities.

Home Sewn is the first in an ongoing series of exhibitions that will feature items held in the museum's Legacy Collection. Please enjoy the exhibition and listen to the homespun and poetic voices of the quiltmakers and of their quilts.

Camille Giraud Akeju



Smithsonian
Anacostia Community Museum

1901 Fort Place SE
Washington DC 20020

GENERAL INFORMATION

202.633.4820 Monday-Friday
202.633.1000 Saturday-Sunday
202.287.3183 Fax

HOURS

Open daily 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Closed December 25

ADMISSION FREE

TOURS

For group tours, call 202.633.4870

PARKING

Museum parking lot and
on-street parking

Accessible to people with
physical disabilities



www.anacostia.si.edu

The mission of the Anacostia Community Museum is to challenge perceptions, broaden perspectives, generate new knowledge, and deepen understanding about the ever-changing concepts and realities of "community."



<http://www.facebook.com/SmithsonianAnacostiaCommunityMuseum>



<http://twitter.com/AnacostiaMuseum>

Cover Image:

Elizabeth Braxton, a member of The Daughters of Dorcas and Sons, a Washington, DC-based quilting group, works on a hoop to piece together "The love of sewing is our common thread."

Photographs by Susana A. Raab, Anacostia Community Museum



Smithsonian
Anacostia Community Museum

Home Sewn: Quilts From the Lower Mississippi Valley



December 9, 2013 through
September 21, 2014

Home Sewn highlights four of the eleven quilts of a collection acquired by the Anacostia Community Museum through the support of former board member Lynne Horning. The exhibition, curated by Jasmine Utsey, examines the generational, social, and economic fabrics of an African American quilting community in rural Mississippi.

African American traditional quiltmakers practice a craft passed down through the stories and cultural knowledge shared among family and community. This exhibition features quilts created by sisters Annie Dennis (1904-1997) and Emma Russell (1909-2004). Made between 1986 and 1990, the quilts represent classic American patterns and techniques passed down through five generations by one family in Mississippi. In addition, fieldwork and interviews with present-day African American women quilters give voice to the continuing tradition of quilting in these communities.



Annie Dennis
Double Wedding Ring quilt, 1986
Collection of the Anacostia Community Museum

African American quilts are diverse in style, color, and size, ranging from the *fancy* quilt to the *utilitarian* quilt. Fancy quilts are distinguished by recurring symmetrical motifs, decorative patterns, vibrant fabrics, and uniform stitches. The quilts on display in *Home Sewn* are fancy quilts.



Emma Russell
Circle of Stars quilt, 1990
Collection of the Anacostia Community Museum



Effie Bates Cooper
Baby quilt, 1987
Collection of the Anacostia Community Museum

The African American quilt collection at the Anacostia Community Museum strengthens the record of preserved textiles that highlight the contribution of African American practitioners of traditional arts. Quilts displayed in this exhibition support the research of textiles used for quilting in the 1980s, the entrepreneurship of African American women quilters, and the generational tradition of quilting in African American families.

Enriching the provenance of the textiles and enhancing the collection's capacity to document the entrepreneurial ventures of African American women quilters, the collection is accompanied by twenty-eight handwritten letters detailing the quilters' process of quilting and correspondence with a quilt collector.



Emma Russell
Grandmother's Flower Garden quilt, date unknown
Collection of the Anacostia Community Museum