



Call for Quilts

In 2027, New York State will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of legal enslavement within its borders, which occurred on July 4, 1827. To commemorate and honor this bicentennial, the Mid-Hudson Antislavery History Project (MHAHP) – through its *Oh, Freedom!* Quilting Project - is calling for art quilts that reflect the history of this momentous occasion. Entries will be juried, and those chosen will be showcased in an exhibit at Marist University Steel Plant Art Gallery in Poughkeepsie, New York during September and October of 2027.

Entries must reflect themes related to New York's history of enslavement, antislavery, and abolition from 1627 to the beginning of the Civil War in 1861.

The *Oh, Freedom!* Quilting Project **Call for Quilts** is open to creators within the United States. Artists 18 years and older are welcomed to participate. We are open to exceptions for experienced quilters under 18, but let us know in advance so we can review appropriately.

Rules

Exhibition Concept: Quilts are to reflect the themes of freedom, enslavement, and abolition through the fiber arts. Quilts must be of an original design or an original execution of a traditional pattern and not previously exhibited. Artistic interpretations of historical figures, events, movements, landmarks, and buildings that highlight the struggle for freedom and human rights in the period noted above and located in New York State are welcome.

This exhibition will not include an interpretation of quilt codes as a tool of the Underground Railroad. This idea is considered a myth by most historians, due to lack of evidence. No quilts with verified provenance as "code Quilts" from the era survive, nor are they mentioned in the thousands of slave testimonies collected by the WPA in the 1930's. Escaping from enslavement was difficult, secretive, dangerous, and localized. Information was more likely to pass secretly at churches or other gathering places rather than openly through a display of quilts.

Parameters: Only quilts that follow the Studio Art Quilt Associates (SAQA) definition of an art quilt --- "a creative visual work that is layered and stitched or that references this form of stitched layered structure" --- will be considered. Integration of non-fabric items is acceptable; however, 3D pieces, altered books, and items mounted on stretcher bars or framed cannot be accommodated.

Any embellishments must not be fragile, must be securely attached, and must be unable to penetrate the mailing envelope, or to damage other quilts when stacked. No glitter embellishments are allowed.

Measurements of quilts can range from 18" x 18" up to 20" x 30". The shape does not have to be a square or rectangle.

Pre-Approval: To ensure the exhibit reflects a broad range of historical topics and ideas, we request a preliminary written description of your proposed quilt topic submitted by email to ohfreedomproject@gmail.com no later than November 30, 2026. **You will be notified promptly of approval and/or feedback.**

Entry Requirements:

The cost for the first quilt submission is \$35.00, non-refundable. One can submit up to three quilts with the second and third quilt each costing an additional \$20.00, non-refundable. Monies can be submitted via check or PayPal.

- Entries will be accepted through a digital platform
- Required with each entry: title, artist's name, contact information, name of the quilt and a full photo of the completed quilt top. Also include one or two photos of a detailed area.
- Each entry must also include an artist's statement of no more than 750 characters (including spaces) describing the story or the inspiration behind the quilt, materials, and techniques.
- Remember to include the name of the quilter if done by another.
- The quilt must not have been previously exhibited.
- The quilt must be an original artwork. Please refer to SAQA rules on copyright and quilting: www.saqa.com (copyright rules)

Jury Process:

- The jury process will be performed from digital images only.
- Entrants will submit two or three images per entry, one overall view and one or two detail views. All images must be of publication quality. Poor images may disqualify your piece from being considered.
- By submitting an entry, you give permission for the Mid-Hudson Antislavery History Project to publish your photos or other images of your quilt.
- If chosen for the exhibit, the quilt must have a firmly attached 4" hanging sleeve allowing for ¼" ease, and a label bearing the title, maker's name, date, and contact information.

Digital Images:

- Digital images must be saved as a high-quality JPEG file. The pictures can be no larger than 3MB -- not less than 1500 pixels and not more than 2400 pixels. Images must accurately reflect the appearance of the quilt, including full view of the front, including borders. Also include a clear image of a highlighted detail.
- Any digital image correction, aside from cropping, should be done only to ensure accuracy, and should not artificially enhance the image. Jurors reserve the right to refuse any quilt that differs significantly from the images submitted.

Notification of Acceptance:

- Artists will be notified of the jurors' decision by email.
- Accepted participants will receive shipping information.
- The number of works included in the exhibit will depend on the number of entries submitted and the space available.
- Once the actual work is received, the *Oh, Freedom!* Quilting Project reserves the right to disqualify any work from the exhibit which is soiled, torn, poorly crafted or if it differs from the original digital image submitted for jurying.

Shipping and delivery of Accepted Work:

- Works must be shipped to and from the exhibit at the quilter's expense with confirmation of tracking number and insurance. No C.O.D. deliveries will be accepted. All quilts must be shipped in a sturdy, reusable, well-labeled box. Artists will include a pre-paid return shipping label.
- The acceptance information will include instructions on packing your quilt for shipping. For individuals wishing to hand deliver and pick up their quilts, a place, time and date will be sent to you.

Waivers and Insurance: Entrants are responsible for insurance during shipping to and from the exhibition. Further information about waivers and/or insurance will be provided after the pre-approval process.

Timeline

- June 1, 2026, to November 30, 2026 - submission of preliminary written description of your proposed quilt topic
- July 1, 2026 - additional information on historical topics plus references available at <https://mhahp.vassarspaces.net>
- February 1, 2027 – April 30, 2027 - digital platform for quilt application will be open. It will include requirements for submission: payment, artist statement, payment, photos, and any other necessary documentation.
- May 1 - May 28, 2027 - Jury will make selections
- June 1 – 4 2027 - Quilters will receive juror decisions. Information for sending selected quilts will be available at that time.
- July 15, 2027 - Deadline for receipt of the quilts by mail and local drop off
- September 15, 2027 - Exhibition Opening
- Saturday, October 30, 2027 - Exhibition Closing
- Quilts will be returned following the show using the same process as quilts were received.

Email inquiries to: ohfreedomproject@gmail.com

Historic themes related to this exhibition honoring the 2027 bicentennial of the abolition of enslavement in New York State.

Following are suggested for topics to inspire your quilt submissions. You are not limited to these topics. More detailed information with specific topic lists, references, and resources are available at <https://mhahp.vassarspaces.net/>.

1 – Enslavement in New York, the Center of Northern Slavery

- a. Enslavement in early New York, the state with more enslaved people than all the other northern states put together
- b. Slave traders and their wealth
- c. Restrictions on the enslaved and slave catching societies
- d. Enslavers large and small in the Hudson Valley
- e. Enslaved people in the Hudson Valley – their daily lives, their occupations, where they lived, what they wore, and more
- f. Families and relationships of the enslaved

2 - Pathways to Freedom

- a. Resistance to enslavement from the beginning
- b. Freedom seekers and self-emancipation in New Amsterdam and New York
- c. The River Trail to Freedom – the Hudson River as a pathway of escape locally and from points South
- d. The Quaker Trail to Freedom - from Long Island and through the Hudson Valley
- e. The Underground Railroad in the 19th century and its Black and white leadership
- f. The American Revolution and its impact on the Black population - Black soldiers in the Revolutionary War – fighting for their own freedom on both the Loyalist and Patriot sides – the post-revolution move to Canada
- g. Black mariners from New York

3 – Gradual abolition and the legal efforts to end slavery in New York State.

- a. Freeing the enslaved in the Revolutionary and early national period
- b. Education of Black children and the formerly enslaved – New York's African Free School, the Lancaster School in Poughkeepsie, and more
- c. The growth of a new generation of Black intelligentsia – newspapers, orators, and political activists
- d. Gradual abolition laws – 1799 first gradual abolition law, 1817 expanding freedom and education, 1827 and the end of legal enslavement in NYS
- e. The children who remained in forced servitude
- f. Legal fight against enslavement – Using the courts to gain freedom – Sojourner Truth, the story of Platt, the Lemmon Case, and more
- g. Impact of the Fugitive Slave Law on New York's Black population both Free and formerly enslaved, including the story of John Bolding
- h. The 19th century Black suffrage and civil rights movement

4 – Building an abolition and antislavery movement in New York

- a. Development of Black communities – rural, urban, and neighborhoods including home ownership
- b. Communities of Faith and abolition – Quakers, Methodists, Congregationalists, the founding of the AME and AME Zion churches and others throughout the Hudson Valley
- c. The growth of antislavery societies and organizations - New York Manumission Society, Hudson Valley Vigilance Committees, Hudson Valley Antislavery Societies, the Free Produce Movement, and more
- d. The movement for Black suffrage - The Black Convention Movement, Gerritt Smith and Timbuctoo, Black political and social leadership

- e. Black entrepreneurs in the antebellum period
- f. Women and the antislavery movement – the petition movement, the Women’s Antislavery Societies and Conventions, Antislavery fairs, and more

5 - Abolition Heroes of the Hudson Valley

- a. Black leaders - Samuel Ringgold Ward, Stephen and Harriet Myers, Nathan Blount, Uriah Boston, Isaac Deyo, Benjamin Lattimore, David Ruggles, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Freeman/Mum Bett, Nancy and Emeline (the Lemon case), Louis Napoleon, Frederick Douglass (his role in the Hudson Valley), Anthony Waring, and more
- b. White leaders - David Irish, Charles Marriot, Lucretia Mott, the Grimke sisters in the Hudson Valley, Jacob and Deborah Willets, Moses Coit Tyler, the DeGarmos of Dutchess County, Aaron Powell, James and Olivia Tappen Bowne, the Bownes from Flushing, Henry Ward Beecher, and more

If you would like more information on your historical topic, feel free to reach out to us at ohfreedomproject@gmail.com and we will be in touch.

