



THE ARTS PART OF THE SOLUTION

SPIRIT IN THE CLOTH

A Legacy of Sharing



Two pairs of hands guide silver needles and thread through bright squares of fabric. Two sets of eyes ensure that the stitches are the same. Two bursts of laughter break the silence when a corner must be turned. The movements are smooth and coordinated; the two artists work and breathe almost as one. The only thing that separates them is their years. One is master quilt artist Sarah F. Brown and the other is her daughter, Yaasmiyn.

African American quilting is almost as old as the history of America. Black slave women did the spinning, sewing and quilting on plantations and in other wealthy households. In many cases they copied the designs from African textile patterns and pottery.

“Quilting is a perfect way to teach our history,” Brown said, “especially the history of black women who contributed profoundly to fabric art whose legacy has not been recognized.”

Brown is well-known in her west Columbus neighborhood. She has been recognized by the National Quilting Association and her work has been displayed in numerous exhibitions throughout the city. Brown founded a program at the King Arts Center called “Youth Sew” to pass on her skills to foster children and inner-city youth, teaching them to quilt to improve their self-esteem. And, with the support of the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program of the Ohio Arts Council, Brown designed a project to work one-on-one with Yaasmiyn.

“Quilting brings out patience, focus and tenacity,” said Brown. “Yaasmiyn has to learn design, color theory, symmetry and math for creating patterns.”

Building character and connecting with history were at the heart of the year-long apprenticeship. Concentrated work with a master artist is a unique way to develop the discipline and habits of mind that are important for success in work and in life. “Making the quilt itself is only one part of the project,” Brown added. “For me, it is all about challenges. I want her to learn this art form so she will have the strength to accomplish whatever she wants to do in life. I want to inspire her to be the best that she can be.”



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FRANKLIN COUNTY
Sarah Brown, Quilter
Columbus, Ohio



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