



Winter 1980

Pieced and appliquéd cotton and synthetic solid and printed plain weave, twill, flannel, knit, dotted swiss, and damask  
83 1/4 x 78 inches (211.5 x 198.1 cm)

**SARAH MARY TAYLOR**  
American

The Ella King Torrey Collection of African American Quilts, 2006, 2006-163-11

### LET'S LOOK

Describe some of the color combinations in this quilt. Are any two blocks the same?

Why might the artist have paired certain colors together?

Why might she have chosen the image of hands to repeat?

What kind of mood do the hands create?

What could the hands represent?

## "HANDS" QUILT

To create her quilts, Sarah Mary Taylor drew shapes on paper and cut out templates for the appliqué pieces. She gathered design ideas from images she saw in magazines, newspapers, catalogues, and from objects she encountered in her everyday life. She added the appliqué shapes onto squares of fabric and combined them together with vertical strips. She arranged the blocks in a way that was visually striking to her, often resulting in energetic compositions. Taylor's appliqué quilts were typically not used and instead were sold, given away to friends, or stored. A version of this "Hands" quilt was commissioned for the film adaptation of Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*.

## ABOUT THIS ARTIST

*"Every time I piece one I tries to make something different from what I made. I don't want what I been piecing; let me find something different."* —Sarah Mary Taylor

Known for her use of vibrant colors and bold designs, Sarah Mary Taylor inherited a love of quilting from both her mother, Pearlie Posey, and her aunt, Pecolia Warner. Her mother taught her how to quilt at a young age, but Taylor didn't make a quilt of her own until she was married and left her mother's house. She was married five times, but never had children. She lived on plantations throughout the Mississippi Delta, working as a cook, a field hand, and a housekeeper. For many years, Taylor made pieced quilts out of the skirts of long dresses, but began making appliqué quilts in 1980 after her aunt Pecolia received attention for her work from a professor at the University of Mississippi. Taylor soon gained recognition for her appliqué quilts as well.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

### LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

#### *Elementary School – Expression in Hands*

How do hands express emotion? Discuss what emotions are expressed in the outstretched hands in this quilt. What other emotions can we express with our hands? Have a brainstorming session and write about what each hand gesture can communicate. As an extension, have students design quilt blocks with their own hand gestures and combine them together in a class quilt.

#### *High School – The Color Purple*

A version of this quilt was commissioned for the film adaptation of Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*. Have the class read the novel and discuss what sewing and quilts symbolize in the story.

### MATH

#### *Elementary School – Variations*

After discussing the different color combinations of hands and background colors, explore similar permutations using colored paper squares and circles. Give each student two squares of different colors and two circles of different colors. How many different design variations can you make (four)? Then try with additional squares and circles. How can you prove that you've found all of the possible variations?

### ART

#### *Elementary School – Color Combinations*

While looking at the quilt, discuss which hands stand out. What color combinations make the hands pop out the most? Why could this be? Discuss ideas such as complementary colors, value, and contrast. Using a wide range of colored paper, have the students create collages in which they produce vibrant color combinations that make different shapes stand out.