

Delta Sources and Resources

Of Salt and Spirit: Black Quilters in the American South (traveling art exhibition) Mississippi Museum of Art Jackson, Mississippi by Marcus Charles Tribbett

Originally staged at the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson, Tennessee, from mid-November of 2024 to mid-May of 2025, the *Of Salt and Spirit: Black Quilters in the American South* exhibit was recently on display at the Brooks Museum of Art in Memphis through the beginning of January 2026. Curated at the Mississippi Museum of Art by Sharbreon Plummer, PhD (and by Kristin Pedrozo at the Brooks Museum), the exhibit features a variety of quilts from the permanent collection of the museum. According to the MMA's website the exhibition seeks "to illuminate the processes and practices of Black Southern quilters and demystify cultural narratives assigned to their artistry while celebrating the enduring impact of quilting on communities and generations" (www.msmuseumart.org/exhibition/of-salt-spirit/) Included among the works in the exhibition are many collected by the late Roland L. Freeman (1936-2023), photographer, author, quiltmaker, and former director of the Mississippi Folklife Project. Freeman spent decades studying the Black Quilting Tradition in the American South, gathering quilts for his collection (dozens of which were donated to the MMA) and producing two books along the way: *Something to Keep You Warm: The Roland Freeman Collection of Black American Quilts from the Mississippi Heartland* (1979) and *A Communion of the Spirits: African American Quilters, Preservers, and Their Stories* (1996). Arkansas Review editorial board member and long time contributor Professor Gregory Hansen (Folklore and Heritage Studies) paid a visit to the Brooks Museum to witness the exhibition first hand while it was on display. "I've been interested in Black quilting traditions for quite some time, and Roland Freeman's book, *Communion of the Spirits*, is such a rich documentation and presentation of the artistry," Hansen notes. "There's an Arkansas connection," too, he points out, "as Roland was able to interview Maya Angelou and document her quilting." In years to come, with the quilts permanently housed by the MMA, admirers of this exquisite cultural and artistic tradition will continue to have opportunities to experience its intricacy and beauty for themselves. "I was wondering what might have happened to his collection of quilts after his passing," Professor Hansen says. "It's great to see that they're cared for and that exhibitions have been developed from them." As Arkansas Review goes to press, the next site for the *Of Salt and Spirit* exhibition has not been announced, but interested readers should keep an eye on the Mississippi Museum of Art's website to find out where it travels to next. As well, Hansen's review of the new book of the same title that coincides with the exhibition (edited by its curator Dr. Sharbreon Plummer) provides more context for understanding both the artwork and Freeman's lifelong dedication to it. It appears on the following pages.

Revision #2

Created 2026-08-10 14:58:42 UTC by Michael Moore

Updated 2026-08-10 15:02:50 UTC by Michael Moore