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The Contemporary Dayton Presents
Threads of History: Quilts by Carolyn Mazloomi
June 12-September 12, 2026

DAYTON (May 28, 2026) – The Contemporary Dayton, in partnership with the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, is proud to present ***Threads of History: Quilts by Carolyn Mazloomi***, a landmark solo exhibition celebrating the extraordinary career of award-winning artist, historian, curator, and activist Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi. On view from June 12 through September 12, 2026, the exhibition highlights Mazloomi’s powerful black-and-white pictorial quilts honoring the lives and legacies of African American freedom fighters and cultural leaders.

Now an octogenarian, Dr. Mazloomi remains one of the most influential voices in contemporary quilting and a pioneering advocate for African American quilt traditions. Through striking imagery and layered narrative, her quilts preserve stories of resilience, resistance, and remembrance while positioning quilting as both fine art and historical record.

Originally trained as an aerospace engineer, Mazloomi shifted her focus in the 1980s to champion the work of African American quilt artists whose contributions had long been overlooked. As founder of the *Women of Color Quilters Network*, she has reshaped the cultural landscape through decades of scholarship, mentorship, curatorial work, and community building. Her achievements have been recognized with numerous honors, including the Bess Lomax Hawes NEA National Heritage Fellowship, a United States Artists Fellowship, and an American Craft Council Honorary Fellowship. Her work is held in major collections including the Smithsonian Institution and the American Folk Art Museum.

Figures included in Dr. Mazloomi’s quilts in the exhibition include Ahmaud Arbery, Ruby Bridges, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Frederick Douglass, George Floyd, Fannie Lou Hamer, Henrietta Lacks, John Lewis, Richard and Mildred Loving, Elijah McClain, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Harry and Henrietta Moore, Huey P. Newton, Black Panther Party, Bobby Seale, George Stinney, Sojourner Truth, Breonna Taylor, Emmett Till, Malcolm X, and The Little Rock Nine,. Historical events illustrated in her work include Black Wall Street, Brown v. Board of Education, The Green Book, and The Voting Rights Act.

In conjunction with the exhibition, The Contemporary Dayton will present a series of free public programs designed to deepen engagement with Mazloomi’s work and its broader cultural and historical themes. Programs include an opening reception and meet-and-greet with the artist, and a public lecture and discussion led by scholar and curator Dr. Sharbreon Plummer, examining cultural histories and the role of art and craft in democracy, particularly in relation to the current political climate and Mazloomi’s work within U.S. history.

Additional programming will include an activation of Yellow Springs-based artist Migiwa Orimo's *People's Banner Workshop*, a community protest banner-making workshop. Inspired by the bold visual language and narratives within Mazloomi's quilts, Orimo's ongoing project provides free visual aids including banners, signs, and props, for direct action, protest rallies, picket lines, and other street actions supporting social justice.

"As Dayton's contemporary art center, we are honored to present the work of Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi and celebrate her transformative contributions to American art and cultural history," said Heather Jones, Curator and Director of Programs and Engagement. "Threads of History reflects our ongoing commitment to inclusion, access, and presenting exhibitions that foster dialogue, reflection, and community connection."

Joni Doherty, Senior Program Officer for Democracy and the Arts at the Charles F. Kettering Foundation states "The foundation is delighted to be partnering with The Contemporary Dayton during their season of celebrating freedom of expression. The *Threads of History* exhibition of quilts by Carolyn Mazloomi is one example of this gallery's recognition of the role of the arts in an inclusive democracy and of acknowledging our complex and complicated struggle to realize those freedoms for everyone."

All exhibitions and public programs at The Contemporary Dayton are free and open to the public.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS & EVENTS / ALL PROGRAMS TAKE PLACE AT THE CONTEMPORARY DAYTON / FREE & OPEN TO ALL

Opening Reception

Friday, June 12, 2026, 6–8 pm

Welcome remarks by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, 6:15 pm

Remarks by the artist, 6:30 pm

Free and open to all.

***Quilts as Witness: Carolyn Mazloomi and the Power of Cultural Memory* by Dr. Sharbreon Plummer**

Thursday, September 10, 2026, 6:30 pm

Dr. Sharbreon Plummer is a public scholar, curator, writer, and interdisciplinary artist whose work explores Black art history, craft and material studies, southern folkways, and cultural memory. In this lecture, Dr. Plummer will examine cultural histories and the role of art and craft in democracy, particularly in relation to the current political climate and Mazloomi's work within U.S. history.

A native of South Louisiana, she has spent more than fifteen years developing programs and initiatives that support artists and communities of the global majority whose work advances freedom, liberation, and social change. Dr. Plummer's latest publication, *Stories in the Seams: A People's History of Black Quilts and Their Makers*, will be released in October, 2026.

Free and open to all.

People's Banner Workshop with Migiwa Orimo

Saturday, September 12, 2026, 11 am - 2 pm

Yellow Springs-based artist Migiwa Orimo will lead an activation of her ongoing *People's Banner Workshop*, which provides free visual aids including banners, signs, and props, for direct action, protest rallies, picket lines, and other street actions supporting social justice. The workshop will be inspired by the bold visual language and powerful narratives of Dr. Mazloomi's quilts.

Free and open to all.

SPONSORS:

In Partnership: The Charles F. Kettering Foundation

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Community Partners: Artist Impact Working Group, Board of Trustees, Cross Street Partners, Hilton Garden Inn Dayton Downtown

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The Wiletha McGuire Family, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Culture Works, The Dayton Foundation, The Montgomery County Arts & Cultural District, The National Endowment for the Arts, The Ohio Arts Council, The Virginia W. Kettering Foundation, and our Members.

GALLERY & CoSHOP HOURS

Wednesday-Saturday 11 am-6 pm

Closed Sunday-Tuesday

ALWAYS FREE & OPEN TO ALL

ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY DAYTON

Advancing art for the community and a community for artists since 1991.

The Contemporary Dayton is the region's contemporary art center. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, The Contemporary Dayton produces and presents ART EXHIBITIONS, ARTIST TALKS, and PUBLIC ART by local, national, and global creatives and makers, and is ALWAYS FREE & OPEN TO ALL. As a non-collecting art center, The Contemporary Dayton is one of 45 non-collecting art centers and museums across North America that specialize in presenting modern and contemporary art.

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