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ARTIST and INSPIRATION STATEMENT

Quilted by Carla Hamm

Art has been my passion and my dream all my life. I have tried all kinds of art, but when I found quilting, it became what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

Black film has also been a part of my life since childhood. We were drawn to the television like a magnet when a black person was on the screen. We were so proud of their talent. They acted, sang, and danced, and we were in awe.

How wonderful they were, how amazingly hard they must have worked, and what challenges they must have faced for the often meager opportunities they were given. I put myself in their places; the “Coloreds Only” restaurants and bathrooms, the bad names they were called. I understand that it was the price they had to pay to realize their dreams. Those brave artists paved the way for those who came after, a chance to dream.

Many hours were spent watching old films and doing research before starting on this quilt. I thought of those early Black actors, singers, dancers, orators, who yearned for a venue in which to express their art. They needed to entertain, just as I needed to sew. In searching for inspiration, I began to look through some of my art books. Years ago, my husband, Ernie, bought me a book by the artist, Erte. He urged me to take some time looking through it. He is my muse, you see, and involved in each quilt I create. He plays an integral part in all stages of my designs, and gives me suggestions, ideas and encouragement.

I stopped at a page showing a piece called “Mah-Jongg”. I knew this inspiration was just what I had been looking for. I decided to make a similar stage, but using black suede silhouettes of Black actors, singers and dancers demonstrating their craft. The stage shows the shiny, polished boards of a theater floor, and the beams of stage lights radiate from above. I had chosen the title of this piece long before I finished it. And now, as the last stitch has been sewn, I present to you, “**The Entertainers**”.