

New Museum Kids Menu provides families and educators with resources to learn about contemporary art and ideas in learning environments or at home.

HOME MUSEUM



In the exhibition, “**Theaster Gates: Young Lords and Their Traces**,” the artist **Theaster Gates** (b. 1973, Chicago, IL) expands his practice of creating collective forms of knowledge between objects, images, sounds, movements, and relationships between people. Throughout the exhibition, Gates includes objects left to him by people with whom he has close personal relationships: a bell from writer bell hooks; a paint-spattered boot from artist Sam Gilliam; and a library from Russian film scholar Robert Bird. By including these pieces, Gates asks the questions: What is worth collecting? Are these objects as important as what a museum usually displays? How do you choose what to preserve?

In Gates’s words,

...The everyday person should be able to say:

“I have some things I think are important. In addition to the objects in state-run and privately funded museums, the things in my house are very interesting—I would like you to see them.”

—Theaster Gates: Young Lords and Their Traces

Learn more about Gates's artistic practice and ideas in this video.



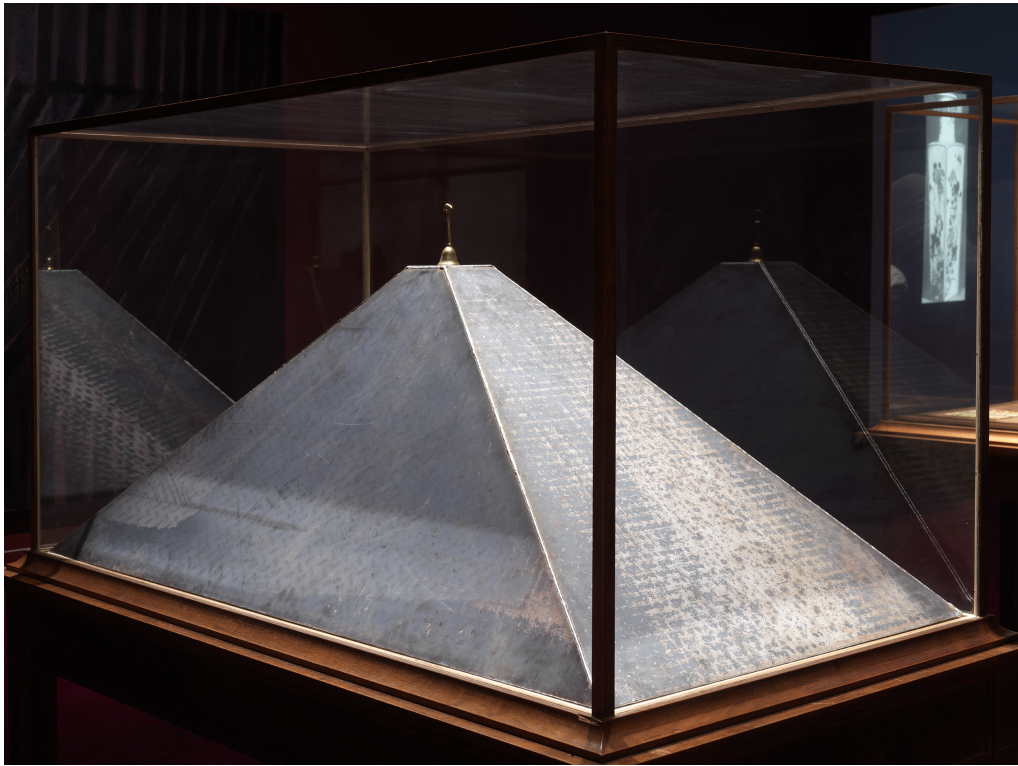
KEY WORDS for KIDS

- **collection:** a selection of objects, photographs, books, and/or mementos that one keeps, sometimes for sentimental rather than practical reasons. Objects in a collection often remind us of significant people, places, or events.
- **archive:** a collection of historical documents—photographs, letters, cards—that may relate to a specific topic, group of people, an individual, a place, event, or phenomenon
- **memorial:** a physical and/or written tribute to a person, event, occasion, or moment in history. A memorial can be a physical monument or sculpture, a poem or article, a painting, or other depiction.

KEY WORDS for YOUTHS

- **collection:** a selection of objects, photographs, books, and/or mementos that one keeps, sometimes for sentimental rather than practical reasons. Objects in a collection often remind us of significant people, places, or events.
 - **archive:** a collection of historical documents—photographs, letters, cards, small objects—that may relate to a specific topic, group of people, an individual, a place, event, or phenomenon
 - **memorial:** a physical and/or written tribute to a person, event, occasion or moment in history. A memorial can be in the form of a monument or sculpture; a poem or article; a painting or other physical depiction of a person or event.
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START WITH ART: THEASTER GATES





The images above represent Gates's practice of **collecting** objects and **archives** to **memorialize** people and social and cultural movements that are important to him. On view in the New Museum's exhibition, they include from the top: *bell's bell*, a small bell placed atop a pyramid platform given to Gates by bell hooks; his father's tar kettle; and photographs from the Johnson Publishing Company **archive**, which the artist maintains.

1. Of the above, which do you find the most interesting and why?
2. Do any of them bring up memories or associations from things you might own, use, or have seen? Describe the memories or associations that arise.
3. How do you think it feels to encounter these everyday objects in a museum, displayed alongside art?
4. Do you consider these objects art? Why or why not?
5. What objects do you have at home that you consider to be important?

MAKE ART for KIDS

Let's organize a **collection** of our own special objects into a home exhibition or **memorial**.

Materials

- Books, objects, cards, photographs, or keepsakes that remind you of a special person, place, event, or experience
- A shelf, windowsill, dresser, or table where you can organize your objects

Making

1. Look around your bedroom or other parts of your house. What objects do you see that remind you of a person you love, a special place, or memorable experience? These could include photographs of yourself with a loved one, books, birthday or holiday cards, or a toy or gift from someone you love. You might also find a map, postcard, magazine, or other printed material of importance.
2. Once you find objects that bring up strong memories and associations, think about what they have in common, and how, together, they tell a story about different parts of your life and who you are. For inspiration, think about how Gates created a **memorial** to his father and several cultural luminaries, including bell hooks, Robert Bird, Sam Gilliam, and Virgil Abloh, by including their objects in the exhibition alongside artworks he made inspired by his memories of them.
3. Find a windowsill, shelf, empty drawer, or part of a tabletop where you can safely lay out your objects.
4. Arrange the objects in a way that demonstrates their importance and their relationship to each other. Think about how you position the objects: do you want to stack any of the objects on top of each other, place them side by side, place them at different angles, or other options?
5. When you are finished arranging the objects, show them to a family member or friend. What do they notice about the grouping, and what do the objects teach them about you?

MAKE ART for YOUTHS

Let's curate a home exhibition or create a **memorial** from artifacts, mementos, and objects that hold special memories or significance.

Materials

- Objects you identify as having personal significance, possibly cards, photographs, clothing, mementos, or jewelry. These can include objects you received as gifts or items that were passed down from family members.
- A shelf, windowsill, empty drawer, mantelpiece, tabletop or other area where you can arrange the objects
- Optional: a smart phone or camera to take photos of your display, and/or to give a virtual tour of your exhibition

Making

1. Start by identifying objects at home that carry significant memories or meaning to you. These might include gifts from friends or relatives, postcards, holiday and birthday cards, jewelry, clothing, event tickets, photographs, books, or other mementos.

2. Alternatively, instead of starting with objects, think of an important person or experience you would like to honor or **memorialize** by gathering related artifacts and organizing them into a personal museum.
3. If you're starting with an important person or event, find objects you received from them or that remind you of them and begin arranging them on a shelf, table, windowsill, or other dedicated area.
4. If you're starting with a **collection** of objects, think about their commonalities, the memories they evoke, and arrange them in a way that emphasizes these connections and/or tells new stories.
5. You might want to photograph your arrangement and share your home museum directly with friends or on social media.
6. You might even want to lead an artist tour or talk, where you record or livestream yourself describing the meanings behind the objects and why you chose them. If you have friends visiting or family members at home who are available, consider giving them an in-person museum tour.

Reflection

- How did you select the objects to include in your home museum?
- How did organizing and curating the objects shift your relationships to them?
- How did arranging the objects into an **archive** and/or a **memorial** change them? How did arranging the objects into an exhibit alter your perception of them?
- If you shared your exhibit with friends or family, what stories could they pull from viewing your objects?
- How else can you share the stories of these objects?

Images: Exhibition view: "Theaster Gates: Young Lords and Their Traces," 2022, New Museum, New York. Photo: Liz Ligon;
Installation views: "Theaster Gates: Young Lords and Their Traces," 2022, New Museum, New York. Photo: Dario Lasagni.

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