

**NEW
MUSEUM**

**KIDS
MENU**

SELF REFLECTIONS

New Museum Kids Menu provides families with activities to learn about contemporary art and ideas at home.



In **Kapwani Kiwanga's** (b. 1978 in Hamilton, Canada) New Museum exhibition, "**Off-Grid**," the artist creates a site-specific installation or immersive visual, textural, and material environment. In the exhibition, the piece *Cloak*, consists of a floor-to-ceiling beaded curtain. This curtain is perpendicular to a wall of alternating mirrored and opaque triangular forms that angle out slightly from the wall.

Kiwanga was inspired to create *Cloak* when researching New York's eighteenth-century lantern laws, which required enslaved individuals to carry candle lanterns or lit candles after dark. To emphasize the continuity between this historic and contemporary **surveillance** targeting people of color, the beads and wall pieces are coated with pulverized aluminum that was obtained

from melted down police floodlights, which are currently used to target urban areas. The installation is lit only by natural **light** from two windows and skylights. During the day, viewers can see themselves **reflected** in the mirrors as part of the installation. During the evening, however, the visitors' reflections dim, becoming nearly invisible.

Watch Kiwanga choose materials and find inspiration for her work in this video.



KEY WORDS for KIDS

- **reflection:** the throwing back of an image (of a person or object) by a body or surface of light, heat or sound. Example: when you look in a mirror, you see a reflection of your face and/or body.
- **surveillance:** close observation of how, when, and where a person moves through a space or environment.
- **self-portrait:** a depiction of oneself through drawing, painting, photography, or sculpture.
- **lighting:** the arrangement of lights within a space to create an environment or atmosphere, or to serve a purpose, such as to aid one's ability to read or do homework.

KEY WORDS for YOUTHS

- **reflection:** 1) the throwing back of an image (of a person or object) by a body or surface of light, heat or sound; 2) what one sees when one looks in a mirror; 3) how one sees echoes of themselves in the world around them, sometimes in other people, or in music or art.

- **surveillance**: close observation, usually in a manner that implies that one is potentially ill-intentioned.
 - **self-portrait**: a depiction of oneself through drawing, painting, photography or sculpture.
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START WITH ART: KAPWANI KIWANGA



Kiwanga uses **reflections**, natural **lighting**, shapes, and materials to create an immersive installation about **surveillance**, and the acts of seeing and being seen, or being unseen or barely visible in public spaces.

- What do you notice about the lighting in this installation? Which area(s) are lightest? Which area(s) are darkest?
 - Describe the shapes and patterns that you notice.
 - Take a moment to look at the first photograph. How does the presence of a reflection within the mirrors affect what you think about this artwork?
 - How do you think it would feel to stand in front of this installation in person?
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MAKE ART for KIDS

Let's draw two different **self-portraits** exploring different kinds of **lighting** to show how we see ourselves and how others might see us.

Materials

- A mirror of any size
- A window or windows that receive enough light for you to see your reflection
- Paper
- Drawing and/or painting media (pencils, colored pencils, markers, oil pastels, watercolor, tempera or acrylic paint – you choose!)

- A pencil and eraser for your initial sketches

Making

1. Start by selecting one area where you can see your reflection. This might be a bathroom or bedroom mirror, or one or more windows.
2. Spend time looking at your reflections in the mirrors or windows at different times of day, including when the light is brightest and when it's much less bright.
3. Compare how much of yourself you can see in these different lighting situations. Optional: You might want to write down a few words listing what you see in different light settings and compare the two lists.
4. After you spend time looking, you can make a pencil sketch of your reflection in one of the two lighting situations, bright or dim. You can decide how much of your body to include; you don't need to draw everything you see.
5. If you would like to add color to your self-portrait, choose a medium you like that's available. This might include watercolor paint, colored pencils, markers, crayons, oil pastels.
6. Repeat the process of sketching a self-portrait in pencil choosing a different lighting situation. If your first sketch was in the morning in bright light, you might instead draw yourself reflected in a window before sunset.
7. After sketching your second self-portrait, add color using the same or a different medium.

MAKE ART for YOUTHS

Let's make two or more photographic **self-portraits** in different kinds of **lighting** to reflect on our visibility and/or invisibility in public spaces.

Materials

- A camera or smart phone to take self-portraits
- Public and/or private spaces to which you have access at different times of day and where you feel comfortable spending time. These spaces should have access to natural light.
- Optional: a tripod and timer to hold your camera while you pose.
- Optional: a notebook and pen or pencil to write down observations about lighting in the spaces where you plan to take self-portraits.
- Optional: artificial lights you can adjust

Making

1. Kiwanga uses only natural light in *Cloak*, deeply impacting your experience viewing the artwork, including your ability to see your own reflection in the mirrors. Consider how much of yourself you might hide or reveal through available natural light or artificial lighting you manipulate to create different effects.

2. Before composing your self-portraits, you might spend a few days or a week observing one or more spaces and taking notes on lighting changes throughout the day.
3. Once you've selected one or more sites, start taking photographs at different times of day or in different lighting situations.
4. *Cloak* does not use any artificial light; you can choose to include or omit artificial lighting. If you have lights you can move and manipulate, you can experiment with these in your self-portraits.
5. Experiment with taking different kinds of self-portraits, editing your final selection into 2-4 that convey different moods or amounts of visibility and invisibility through variations in lighting.

Reflection

- How did you select spaces for your self-portraits? Did you choose to go outside or stay inside? Were you at home or elsewhere?
- If you spent time observing the lighting environment in one or more spaces before making your self-portraits, what did you learn about these spaces? How did your observations impact the artistic choices you made?
- Compare the two or more self-portraits you made. How are they similar? How are they different? How much do they conceal or reveal about you?
- Consider showing your self-portraits to a friend or family member. Do they think the self-portraits look like you? Do the artworks allow the viewer to learn something new about you?

Did someone forward this email to you? If you would like to receive these art activities directly, sign up [here](#).



Images: Exhibition view: "Kapwani Kiwanga: Off-Grid," 2022, New Museum, New York. Photo: Liz Ligon | Installation views: "Kapwani Kiwanga: Off-Grid," 2022, New Museum, New York. Photo: Dario Lasagni.

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