

**NEW  
MUSEUM**

**KIDS  
MENU**

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## LAYERS AND LIGHT

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



In her site-specific installation for the New Museum 2021 Triennial, “Soft Water Hard Stone,” artist **Samara Scott** (b. 1984 London, United Kingdom) transformed the floor-to-ceiling windows of the Museum’s façade into a kaleidoscopic mural titled *Lonely Planet (Gargoyle)* (2021). We often think of murals as paintings; however, instead of paint, Scott used found and discarded materials, including some that decay and change over time. Scott layered materials of varying transparency on top of one another so that we can partially see some objects through other objects, as well as hints of the view through the window. In addition to the materials naturally changing over the course of the exhibition, the installation itself seems to transform before our eyes depending on the time of day and weather conditions. Sunlight can illuminate the work like stained glass; but on overcast days, we’re able to pick out new textures,

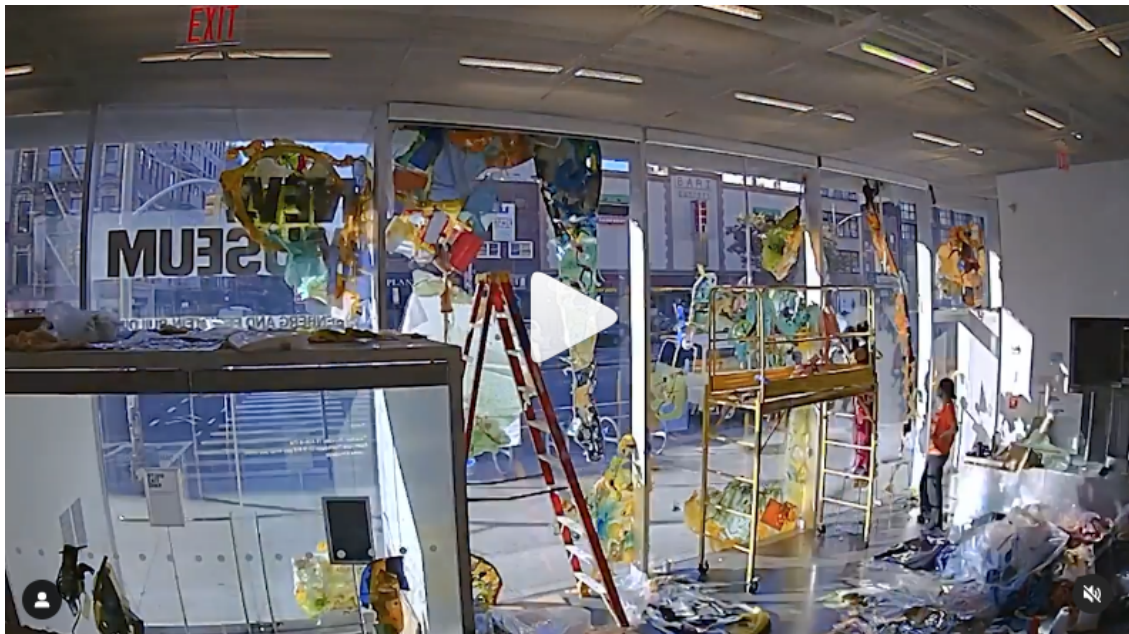
overlapping surfaces, details, and materials. Scott describes her interests in change and found materials:

"...It's about mutation, rot, and change, rather than preservation. If I truly desired to preserve things I'd have chosen different material pathways... All of the works contain products that will be potentially obsolete or poisonous in the future. They might also become increasingly illegible, which is interesting for me too."

"I also like using things that I've used myself—old t-shirts, apple cores, dental floss, cigarette butts, broken jewelry... I like using things at hand, like a shoe being used to prop open a door, as well as relics streaked with intimacy."

— **Samara Scott, interview in the exhibition catalogue for the 2021 New Museum Triennial, "Soft Water Hard Stone"**

To learn more about Scott's process for creating assemblages and installations from obsolete, transparent, and decaying materials, watch this [timelapse video](#) of her installing her work for the New Museum's 2021 Triennial.



## KEY WORDS

- **site-specific:** a type of artwork designed to interact with, enhance, compliment, or respond to a specific space. Site-specific installations are often three-dimensional and can be seen from multiple vantage points.
- **discarded:** 1) an object no longer useful or desirable that has been tossed out; 2) to have removed or gotten rid of something no longer considered useful or desirable



- **transparent:** describes an object that appears to have light pass through it, so that you can see what's behind and in front of it. For example, a plastic bag that you can see through is transparent.
- **translucent** or **semi-transparent:** partially see-through or transparent. For example, tissue paper is something that you can see through a little bit, but you cannot see clear details of what's on the other side of the paper.
- **layering:** placing one object or material on top of another

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## START WITH ART: SAMARA SCOTT



Before discussing the questions below, look at the two images of *Lonely Planet (Gargoyle)* in this Kids Menu. The image directly above is a closeup detail of the work.

- What do you notice about the surfaces of this artwork? How do you think it would feel to touch? What kinds of textures do you see?
- What materials or objects can you identify? What memories or sensations (smell, touch, taste, sound, visual images) do you have when you view these materials and objects?

- How does light interact with the installation? Can you see through parts of it?
- How does the view through the transparent glass window onto the street contribute to what you see when you view this installation?

How can Scott's use of **discarded**, **transparent** and **semi-transparent**, and **layered** materials inspire us to make a **site-specific** installation in one of our home windows?

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## MAKE ART

Let's create an installation with discarded materials to hang in one of our home windows.

### Materials

- Discarded plastics that are transparent or semi-transparent, including plastic bags, plastic packaging, plastic bottles or containers, bubble wrap, or even clear packing tape
- Other discarded objects found at home, like clothing, small containers, pieces of wood, paper, cardboard, and metal (Be sure to include flat materials you can sandwich between layers of plastic or paper, such as leaves or fabric scraps.)
- Semi-transparent papers, like tissue paper or tracing paper
- Glue or tape
- String or yarn, and/or a nail or pushpin for hanging. You can also layer pieces of yarn in your artwork.
- Scissors

### Making

1. Experiment with layering objects by putting leaves or other flat materials inside a plastic bag or between two pieces of tracing paper. Hold these up to the light. Does the light pass through? Is there transparency or semi-transparency?
2. Consider twisting, crumpling, cutting, or folding some of your objects to create new shapes while playing with texture and layering.
3. After arranging your objects in different ways, begin assembling them with glue, clear tape, string, or yarn. Ask an adult for help if it is hard to attach objects together.

4. Once your sculpture is complete, hold it up near a window. Does light pass through it? Does it look different from different angles?
5. If you cannot hang or tape your artwork in the window, ask an adult if you can place it on a windowsill, or hang it where light can still pass through it, either outside or inside your house.
6. Invite the whole family to view the object with you at different times of the day and evening.

## Reflection

- What kinds of materials did you include in your installation? How did you transform these materials? Did you crumple, roll, fold, or layer them? Did you place one object inside another? How did these interactions affect the transparency of your artwork?
- Did you notice any changes to your installation over time? Did any of the materials start to droop, come unglued, or decay?
- How did your artwork interact with light? Were some parts more transparent than others? Did the artwork look different at different times of the day or in different types of weather?
- As you observe your installation at different times, do you notice anything new about the objects you used? Do you notice anything new about the surrounding environment?

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Image: Samara Scott, *Lonely Planet (Gargoyle)*, 2021 in "2021 Triennial: Soft Water Hard Stone," 2021. Exhibition view: New Museum, New York. Photos: Dario Lasagni

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