

---

## MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

Jamaica-born, Harlem-based artist Nari Ward makes art from objects we don't often think of as art materials, including discarded appliances, furniture, and baby strollers. His assemblages, sculptures, and installations incorporating found materials and objects reference what it's like to live and work in Harlem, as well as his experiences as an immigrant and person of color in the U.S. Believing that the objects he collects reflect the history of the people who have used them, Ward's works explore themes of identity, belonging, migration, and displacement. In *Untold*, Ward arranges bottles in a pattern referencing Jamaican **bottle trees** and **traditional American quilts**. Bottle trees have roots in Africa and the Middle East, where it is believed they ward off evil spirits by trapping them inside glass bottles to be destroyed in the sunlight.

To learn more about Nari Ward's found object sculptures and installations, you can watch a [video](#), or [listen](#) to New Museum curator Gary Carrion-Murayari.

### KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

- **assemblage**: art made from found or gathered objects, where the artist removes objects from their original location or context to create new ideas
- **sculpture**: three-dimensional artwork that can be seen from multiple angles or viewpoints
- **recycle**: reuse an object that would otherwise become trash
- **discarded**: tossed or set aside as trash



## START WITH ART: NARI WARD

- How would you describe the patterns formed by the bottles and spaces in between the bottles hanging in the center of this image?
- What do you notice about the shape of the large object at the top from which the bottles hang?
- How do the glass bottles interact with light?
- What colors do you see? Have you seen bottles that are other colors? How or why do you think the artist chose these colors?

How does Nari Ward's arrangement of **discarded** and **recycled** bottles in this **sculpture** change or differ from how you usually see these familiar objects?

## LOOK AROUND

- Can you find bottles or containers set aside for recycling at home?
- Do you see objects of similar size, shape, or color?
- How might you make patterns or assemblages selecting some of the objects to make something new?

## MAKE ART

Let's make our own message in a bottle using a recycled bottle or container.

## Materials

- Paper to draw and/or write on
- Pen, pencil and/or drawing materials (markers, crayons, colored pencils)
- Recycled bottle or container, preferably one you can see through
- Windowsill or sunny indoor spot

## Making

1. Start by thinking of a wish, story, or note you'd like to share with someone. This can be the type of wish you'd make before blowing out birthday candles for something exciting or joyful. Your message could also express feelings of worry, fear, or sadness, as a step toward healing. Your message can be personal, or one that shares your hopes and dreams connected to a social issue.
2. Write out your note or draw a picture of your wish on paper.
3. Fold your wish or note so that it's small enough to fit inside the mouth of your recycled bottle, and push it through down to the bottom.
4. Seal the bottle using its original cap, or one you make out of other found materials. Nari Ward sealed the bottles in *Untold* to capture the messages inside.
5. Place your bottle in a windowsill or sunny spot where your wishes or worries can interact with the light.

## REFLECTION

- How does seeing your wishes or messages for joys, hopes or healing in this way make you feel?
- Is this container more special now than when you found it? Why or why not?
- If you were going to create your own assemblage or sculpture from recycled materials, what materials would you use? What shapes would you create?

How can you create your own bottle tree using recycled containers at home?  
How can this bottle tree reflect the wishes of multiple family members and/or friends?

---

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

---



**NEW**  
**235 BOWERY**  
**NEW YORK NY**  
**10002 USA**  
**MUSEUM**

**IMAGES:**

"Nari Ward: We the People," 2019. Exhibition view: New Museum, New York. Photo: Maris Hutchinson / EPW Studio

**Our mailing address is:**

New Museum  
235 Bowery  
New York, NY 10002

**Add us to your address book**

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#)

---

This email was sent to <<Email Address>>  
[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)  
New Museum 6 235 Bowery 6 New York, NY 10002 6 USA