

EDUCATORS GUIDE

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# Guide to artists

“Monochrome means one color, so in relation to art, a monochrome artwork is one that includes only one color”

— [tate.org.uk](https://www.tate.org.uk)

## Explore by color

Yellow	White	Blue	Grey	Black	Red
Anne Truitt <i>page 17</i>	Bethany Collins <i>page 4</i>	Yves Klein <i>page 11</i>	David Hartt <i>page 8</i>	Mark Bradford <i>page 3</i>	Rashid Johnson <i>page 9</i>
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## Explore by theme

Explicitly Self-reflective	Media & Technology	Urban Space & Walls	The Body	Sound	Colorful
Felix Gonzalez-Torres <i>page 7</i>	Tobias Rehberger <i>page 14</i>	Dan Peterman <i>page 13</i>	Linda Montano <i>page 12</i>	Naama Tsabar <i>page 18</i>	Claire Zeisler <i>page 21</i>
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# mark bradford

## In the exhibition

Mark Bradford

*Raidne*, 2017

Mixed media on canvas

120 x 120 in.

Private Collection

## In the artist's words

"My life actually is exactly like my paintings. It's lots and lots of layers. And you'll get a little bit of something that will peek in from the underneath that kind of just peeks out and lets you know that there is a little bit more going on than you thought."

—Mark Bradford

## Online resources

- [Art21 profile of Mark Bradford](#)
- [Video: End Papers](#)
- [Biography \(Hauser & Wirth\)](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Portrayals of marginalized communities and vulnerable populations
- Exploring contemporary issues through art
- Creating art through the use of everyday materials

## Guiding questions

- What does it mean to be a part of a community?
- Why might Bradford choose to abstract his pieces? What effect does this have on his message?

## Recommended activities

- Spend a day collecting papers (in any form) from around your home or neighborhood, and then create a collage from the materials you found.
- Pick a headline from a newspaper and use it as the title of your piece. Use whatever medium you see fit to make a commentary on what was written.

# Bethany Collins

## In the exhibition

Bethany Collins

*A Pattern or Practice*, 2015

Blind-embossed Somerset paper

72 1/4 x 117 1/4 in.

Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago,

Purchase, The Paul and Miriam Kirkley Fund for Acquisitions, 2019.3

## In the artist's words

"The first time language entered my practice was in grad school. I was the only Black grad student in a peer group of primarily white grads, and the critiques were just really awkward and strange. And I'm not a good first responder so it takes me a minute. But the second time you ask me a question I'll have a really good answer. So I started to take that language from critiques and write it over and over again. That obsessive repetition is something I'm still interested in."

—Bethany Collins, on how she began working with text

## Online resources

- [Video: The Contemporary American Struggle](#)
- [Critic's perspective \(Artforum\)](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Visual language
- Transformative power of language
- Race and Politics in America

## Guiding questions

- How can the language of others help you make sense of the world?
- What new ways can you think of to use the written word?

## Recommended activities

- Create a powerful visual image using only words.
- Find something in print (i.e., newspaper or magazine article, candy wrapper, video game instructions, etc.) to translate into a visual image.

# Laddie John Dill

## In the exhibition

Laddie John Dill

*Magma* from *Light Sentence* series, 1971

Argon, mercury, hand-colored glass tubing

84 x 34 in.

Courtesy of the artist and Anna Valverde

## In the artist's words

"Early on I had a particular interest in light, how it reflects, refracts, how it interacts with objects, the coloration of light and things like that. My father was a lens designer so there was an interest in refraction of light through his interest."

—Laddie John Dill, [in conversation](#) with Joan Quinn

## Online resources

- [Video: Light Sentences](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Laddie John Dill \(Art in America\)](#)
- Images
  - [Light Sentences](#)
  - [Light Plains](#)
  - [Light and Sand](#)

## Main themes

- Light is a language

## Guiding questions

- How might you use light to communicate?
- When have you been influenced by some kind of light?

## Recommended activities

- Try to recreate on paper the beam of light from a cell phone
- Assign a meaning for several colors of light and write a 10-word story in colors

# theaster gates

## In the exhibition

Theaster Gates

*Black Seam Formal Practice*, 2016

Courtesy of the artist's studio

## In the artist's words

"Projects that are successful are symbolic. You're looking at something that's really trying to represent something else."

—Theaster Gates in conversation with Carol Becker

## Online resources

- [Art21 profile of Theaster Gates](#)
- [Video: Theaster Gates in Chicago](#)
- [Video: Sights, smells and sounds growing up](#)
- [Five Things to Know about Theaster Gates](#)
- [Theaster Gates at UChicago](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Transformation
- Black American identity

## Guiding questions

- What is the value of symbolism?
- What are important symbols in your world/environment?
- What are some ways to help you realize your wildest vision?

## Recommended activities

- Find objects in your environment that can symbolize larger meaning.
- Transform something that appears to have little value into something extraordinary.

# felix Gonzalez Torres

## In the exhibition

Felix Gonzalez-Torres

*"Untitled"* (L.A.), 1991

Green candies in clear wrappers, endless supply

Overall dimensions vary with installation

Original dimensions: approx. 192 x 14 x 1 ½ inches

Original weight: 50 lbs.

Jointly owned by Art Bridges and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art

Courtesy of the artist's studio

## In the artist's words

"I don't want to make art just for the people who can read Fredric Jameson sitting upright on a Mackintosh chair. I want to make art for people who watch *The Golden Girls* and sit in a big, brown, La-Z-Boy Chair. They're part of my public too, I hope."

—Felix Gonzalez-Torres on who he makes art for

## Online resources

- [Video: "Untitled" \(L.A.\)](#)
- [Felix Gonzalez-Torres's Queer Identity \(Artnet News\)](#)
- [Biography \(Guggenheim\)](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Coded metaphors
- Unrestricted availability
- What is art
- Minimalism

## Guiding questions

- How do bodies change over time and/or from illness?
- How do you define things that can be replaced, and things that can not be replaced?
- How do you honor someone you love?

## Recommended activities

- Find replaceable objects to describe the pandemic.
- Compare and contrast the Covid-19 pandemic to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
- Make a piece of art to give to someone grieving a loss in hopes of comforting them.

# David Hartt

## In the exhibition

David Hartt

*Untitled*, 2015

Archival pigment print mounted to Dibond and framed

Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago,

Purchase, The Paul and Miriam Kirkley Fund for Acquisitions, 2015.87

## In the artist's words

"I have a research-based practice wherein I create digital films, installations, photographs, and sculptures that unpack the social, cultural, and economic complexities of my subjects. The work explores how historic ideas and ideals persist or transform over time. The current work is also becoming increasingly speculative and suggests hybrid models for consideration. Ultimately, I consider my practice as an opportunity to dimensionalize my experience of the world and my place in it."

—David Hartt, artist statement

## Online resources

- [Video: Artist Talk](#)
- [Interview with David Hartt \(Pin-Up Magazine\)](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Architecture and the built environment
- Cultural critique

## Guiding questions

- If buildings could talk, what stories would they tell ?
- How might the camera see things differently than they eye?

## Recommended activities

- Take and print a photo of a familiar building—where you live, your school, a store, etc.
- Study the photo until you notice something you've never noticed before about this very familiar place.
- Make a piece of art to give that captures your new discovery.



# rashid johnson

## In the exhibition

Rashid Johnson

*Untitled Anxious Red Drawing*, 2022

Oil stick on cotton rag paper

Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago,

Gift of an anonymous donor in honor of the artist, 2022.7

## In the artist's words

"Anxiety is part of my life. It's something that people of color don't really discuss as often as we should. It's part of my being and how I relate to the world, and being honest with that struggle has been rewarding for me. It has led to the kind of self-exploration that produces fertile ground for my output as an artist."

—Rashid Johnson in CNN Style Magazine

## Online resources

- [Art21 profile of Rashid Johnson](#)
- [Essay on anxiety \(CNN Style Magazine\)](#)
- [Critic's perspective \(Brooklyn Rail\)](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Shared cultural identities
- Following your instincts
- Afrocentric communities

## Guiding questions

- How can art be used to tell a collective story?
- What makes your experience different from someone experiencing the same thing as you?
- What do you do when you feel anxious?

## Recommended activities

- Paint a self-portrait that is clearly your image while keeping your face not easily identifiable.
- Custom blend a paint color uniquely your own.
- Create a work to try and capture the emotion you feel most often.

# byron kim

## In the exhibition

Byron Kim

*Synecdoche: Adayalise Caraballo*

*Synecdoche: Dong Wook Kim*

*Synecdoche: Gleb Yetnus*

*Synecdoche: Tyrone McCallum*

1992

Oil and wax on lauan plywood, birch plywood, and plywood

Collection of Helyn Goldenberg and Michael Alper

## In the artist's words

"I've been studying precalculus. All the art stuff drives me nuts sometimes. In a weird way when it's going well it makes me feel lost—I hate to talk about it this way—in kind of a spiritual way. It fills me with doubt. I feel happy when I'm doing math, There isn't any doubt; you get an answer. Math and science is what I was good at. With art I pursued what was most challenging and what I wasn't good at."

—Byron Kim on math exercises

## Online resources

- [Video: Studio visit](#)
- [Artist Talk: On the Relationship of Big and Small](#)
- [School Colors \(KSMOCA\)](#)
- [Herb Alpert Award in the Arts](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Minimalism
- Abstraction
- Representation

## Guiding questions

- What is color? What is skin?
- What is skin color?
- Why is it important? Why is it not important?
- Why might some people find this hard to talk about?

## Recommended activities

- Study skin on your hand or arm then mix a color as close as possible to that color.
- Do the same with a friend whose skin is a different shade than yours.
- Create an abstract painting using the two colors.

# yves klein

## In the exhibition

Yves Klein

*Table Bleue (Blue Table)*, Designed 1961, table made after 1963

IKB pigment, Plexiglas, glass, and steel

Collection of Robert J. Buford

## In the artist's words

“The monochrome is the only physical way of painting - permitting us to attain the spiritual absolute. If we imagine that cinema always existed, that one only knew moving pictures, then the creator of a fixed image would today have been considered a genius.”

—Yves Klein from *The Writings of Yves Klein*

## Online resources

- [Video: What inspired Yves Klein?](#)
- [Yves Klein: Messenger of the Age of Space \(Artforum\)](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Monochromes
- Experimentation
- Extravagance

## Guiding questions

- What is it like to try something that has never been done before?
- What do you think Yves Klein means by the spiritual absolute?
- What is something about you that is unique to only you?

## Recommended activities

- Figure out which color is the most important color for you and why?
- Support your argument about the most important color.
- Color several things using your new color, which are usually another color.

# linda montano

## In the exhibition

Linda Montano

*T7 Years of Living Art, and Another 7 Years of Living Art = 14 Years of Living Art*, 1984–1998

Performance relics, seven colored coats, seven pairs of shoes

Volatile [redux], Cincinnati, Ohio

## In the artist's words

“It has always been my personal belief that the themes artists employ are born in childhood and that an artist’s work explores, transforms, perpetuates, or makes the information from that time understandable and manageable via symbolic acts—art.”

—Linda Montano

## Online resources

- [Video: Deep Dive](#)
- [Video: Documenting Process](#)
- [Video: Walking with Linda Montano](#)
- [Video Data Bank](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Performance
- Boundaries between life and art
- Vulnerability

## Guiding questions

- What part of your life looks like a work of art?
- How does what you wear affect how you feel?
- What kind of rituals do you honor?

## Recommended activities

- Wear something the same color everyday for a week.
- Notice how wearing that color makes you feel.
- Keep a journal of comments and questions you hear about the color you’re wearing.

# dan peterman

## In the exhibition

Dan Peterman

*Corridor (sulfur cycle)*, 2022

Part 1: Gypsum drywall, wood, straps, build agreement with South Side Chicago housing developer

Part 2: Assembly of synthetic gypsum drywall samples removed from the Museum of Contemporary Art gallery walls

Courtesy of the artist

## In the artist's words

"Artists have the possibility of continually adapting the ways in which they pose questions and engage situations. So they have a lot, potentially, to offer in the face of complexity you point at here. There certainly is no single correct way to build awareness of current ecological crisis or even a single way of defining what, precisely, the problems are. But art can be a dynamic form of inquiry that launches diverse, multifaceted, interdisciplinary models. The important thing, as ecological issues sweep into ever more compelling view, is that we bring many different tools to bear on our situation. Not just tools that tell us how we should fix things, but tools that help deepen the telling of the story, or that guide us to look in directions we have been neglecting."

—Dan Peterman, interviewed by Oliver Zybok

## Online resources

- [Video: Dan Peterman + Heinrich Jager](#)
- [Critic's perspective \(CAA Reviews\)](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Local engagement and activism
- Ecology and the environment
- Sustainability

## Guiding questions

- What materials are needed to make a neighborhood?
- How can art be used as activism?

## Recommended activities

- Build something sustainable from ordinary materials
- Consider relationships, partnerships and friendships as sustainable then draft a blueprint of which materials are needed to build them.

# tobias rehberger

## In the exhibition

Tobias Rehberger

*81 Years*, 2002

Computer program

Courtesy of Tobias Rehberger and neugerriemschneider, Berlin

## In the artist's words

"For me, it's important that people don't know what the actual work is. That they don't know where it begins and where it ends."

—Tobias Rehberger

## Online resources

- [Video showcase](#)
- [Video: Artist talk](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Technology
- Memory
- Time

## Guiding questions

- Why does time seem to move fast when you are enjoying yourself and seem to move slowly when you are not?
- How do we measure time other than minutes on a clock?
- What happens when you hear a sound different from what you see?

## Recommended activities

- Watch a sunrise or sunset (live or recorded) for several minutes, notice the subtle changes second by second. Try to recreate the changes on paper.
- Watch a timelapse video and record the timestamps when it appears that nothing is changing.

# richard serra

## In the exhibition

Richard Serra  
*Artaud*, 2009  
Oil stick on paper  
Art Bridges

## In the artist's words

"I am aware that people call my black drawing installations sculptural. Not only are these drawings flat and flush with the wall, but they do not create any illusion of three-dimensionality. They do, however, involve the viewer with the specific three-dimensionality of the site of their installation. The drawings make the viewer aware of his body movement in a gallery or museum space."

—Richard Serra

## Online resources

- [Art21 profile of Richard Serra](#)
- [New York Times profile of Richard Serra](#)
- [Video: Richard Serra Throws Molten Lead](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Minimalism
- Permanence
- Space

## Guiding questions

- How is the environment changed by the space you use/take up?
- What are some things in your environment that are built to last?

## Recommended activities

- Create a piece of permanent art (i.e permanent markers, dye, wood burning etc).
- Create a piece of permanent public art.

# tony tasset

## In the exhibition

Tony Tasset

*Pieta*, 2007

Painted cast hydrocal

Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago,

Purchase, Paul and Miriam Kirkley Fund for Acquisitions, 2008.48

## In the artist's words

“Q. The most important thing about art is? Its vagueness. Q. If I could live or work anywhere it would be. Chicago. Q. Favorite horror film. *Passion of the Christ*. Q. I source my inspiration from. More successful artists. Q. If I could only live with one with one creative tool, I'd choose. An assistant.”

—Tony Tasset excerpts from *Artist's Multiple*, Paddle 8

## Online resources

- [Video: Studio Visit](#)
- [Critic's Perspective \(Austin Chronicle\)](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Conceptualism
- Symbolism
- Humanity

## Guiding questions

- What are examples of things meant to represent other things?
- What happens when groups witness an event and interpret it differently?
- What happens when groups assign the same meaning to a shared experience?

## Recommended activities

- Distill a complex scenario down to a simple visual form.
- Try writing a detailed 10 word story, or a Haiku (3 lines and 17 syllables, 5-7-5)



# anne truitt

## In the exhibition

Anne Truitt

*Sun Flower*, 1971/1984

Acrylic on wood

Collection of the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation

## In the artist's words

"It was nowhere near broad or wide or deep or open enough. With abstraction you can go as far as you can. But with the figure you are stuck because you are dealing with actuality."

—Anne Truitt, when asked why she was dissatisfied with figurative work by James Meyer, *Artforum*

## Online resources

- [Video: In the Tower, A Remembrance](#)
- [Anne Truitt Sound Paintings \(Artnet\)](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Spatial boundaries
- Painting vs. Sculpture
- Geometric forms

## Guiding questions

- What's the difference between a painting and a sculpture?
- What happens when two vastly different ideas are both true?

## Recommended activities

- Create a vertical painting.
- Assign meanings to specific colors then create a story with color.

# naama tsabar

## In the exhibition

Naama Tsabar

*Work On Felt (Variation 18) Black*, 2017

*Work On Felt (Variation 21) Purple*, 2020

Felt, carbon fiber, epoxy, wood, archival PVA, bass guitar tuner, piano string, piezo microphone, guitar amplifier

Kasmin Gallery, New York

## In the artist's words

"The idea of having a flat surface and marrying it with a string to create sound initially originated in paper form in 2012. Artis, an organization that promotes Israeli arts abroad, asked me to create work on paper for their NADA booth. I decided to sculpt the paper while giving it the ability to create sound. That was the first time I embedded carbon fiber, which is the material I embed in the soft felt to create tension and rigidity."

—Naama Tsabar, answering when and why she started working with felt, *Bomb Magazine*

## Online resources

- [Video: At Home with Naama Tsabar](#)
- [A Glitch in the Patriarchy \(Art Basel\)](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Sculpture and sound
- Music and performance

## Guiding questions

- Can you play an instrument?
- What instrument(s) would you like to play if you could?
- What are some ways you can make sound without a musical instrument?

## Recommended activities

- Construct your own instrument using felt and wire.
- Compose a piece of music using a non traditional instrument.
- Create a way to convey sound to someone with low or no hearing.

# amanda williams

## In the exhibition

Amanda Williams

*Color(ed) Theory*, 2014–16, printed 2017, edition of 10

Color photographs

Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago,

Purchase, The Paul and Miriam Kirkley Fund for Acquisitions and Ann E. Ziegler,

2018.9.1–2018.9.7

## In the artist's words

“Growing up on the South Side, seeing the landscape of years of disinvestment, but as a child not having language for that, it really was those environments that inspired me to first want to be an architect and then eventually an artist.”

—Amanda Williams, interview with Jim Williams, CBS 2 News Chicago

## Online resources

- [Video: 3Arts](#)
- [Video: WTTW Chicago Tonight Interview](#)
- [Profile of 2022 MacArthur Fellow Amanda Williams](#)
- [Paint the Town \(South Side Weekly\)](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Art and Architecture
- Racial disparities
- Housing inequities
- Resilience

## Guiding questions

- What stories are uniquely attached to your neighborhood?
- Who tells the stories about your neighborhood?
- How is a story about you different when you tell it versus when someone else tells it?

## Recommended activities

- Select colors to represent important parts of your culture.
- Design a public art project you and your classmates can create together.

# haegue yang

## In the exhibition

Haegue Yang

*Sol LeWitt Upside Down onto Wall – Modular Wall Structure, Expanded 20 Times, 2022*

Aluminum Venetian blinds, powder-coated aluminum hanging structure, steel wire rope, LED tubes, cable

Commissioned by the Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago

Courtesy of Greene Naftali, New York

## In the artist's words

“My second intervention was to turn the piece upside down. The original structures are free standing, while the Sol Lewitt Upside Down works are either entirely suspended or wall mounted. Turning the piece upside down is both a literal and metaphorical act. As a non-Western artist, I feel an inherent tension towards the Western art historical canon. So I do need to first go through this kind of processing to understand how my position is absent from or can be located on their map, and this understanding feeds my ability to bring this existing art historical map to my subjective and somewhat idiosyncratic map.”

—Haegue Yang, when asked to elaborate on her response to the *Sol LeWitt Upside Down* series by Silke Schmickl

## Online resources

- [Video: Documentation of installations](#)
- [Profile of Haegue Yang \(New York Times\)](#)
- [Bio \(Archives of Women Artists\)](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Utilitarianism
- Conceptualism
- Modernism
- Repetition & Geometric form

## Guiding questions

- What are some things that stay the same even when placed upside down?
- What ways have any kind of your work ever overlapped with another person's work?

## Recommended activities

- Learn what palindromes are (if you don't already know).
- Create a series of palindromes—both literary and visual.
- Find ordinary household items to incorporate into your palindromes.

# claire zeisler

## In the exhibition

Claire Zeisler

*Triptych*, 1967

Knotted and tied dyed wool

Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joel Starrels, Sr., 1973.213a-c

## In the artist's words

"I had a nanny who could sit on her hair. When I was a good little girl, she would let me brush it. [Years later when Zeisler became an artist, she stepped back from one of her graceful, cascading fiber sculptures and realized:] Look what I'm doing—her hair! I think all of my pieces came out of that."

—Claire Zeisler, excerpted from the *Chicago Tribune*, 1997

## Online resources

- [Video: A Tribute to Claire Zeisler](#)
- [Oral history interview \(Archives of American Art\)](#)
- [Photos of Claire Zeisler working](#)
- [Images](#)

## Main themes

- Fiber Art
- Woven Painting
- Textile Sculpture

## Guiding questions

- What people, places or things in your surroundings inspire you to create?
- Other than knitting or crocheting, what are other ways to work with yarn?

## Recommended activities

- Create a work of art using yarn or thread.
- Use hair as inspiration for a sculpture.

## **Smart Museum of Art**

The University of Chicago

5550 S. Greenwood Avenue

Chicago, Illinois 60637

[smartmuseum.uchicago.edu](http://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu)

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