

# We Will Walk ART & RESISTANCE IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

In the exhibition you will see many different ways people have used creativity to express themselves. This includes **MARK MAKING** **ASSEMBLING** **STITCHING** and **SOUND**

These works have been made by African-American artists born and living in the American South during the Civil Rights Movement; a time when people were fighting for equal opportunities.

There are photographs documenting this struggle and people's daily life in the exhibition.

**WHAT CAN YOU LEARN FROM LOOKING AT THE PHOTOGRAPHS?**

**HOW CAN ART HELP US IN DIFFICULT TIMES?**

## WHEN & WHERE ARE YOU CREATIVE IN EVERYDAY LIFE?

Without equal access to education, most of the artists in this exhibition were self-taught. We Will Walk shows the importance of creativity and its ability to empower us all.

## THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Civil rights means that everyone is treated equally under the law, regardless of skin colour, gender, nationality, sexuality, age, disability, or religion.

Examples of civil rights include the right to:

**HAVE FREE SPEECH** **AN EDUCATION** **USE PUBLIC SPACES** **VOTE**

The Civil Rights Movement took place in the United States of America between the 1950s - 1960s, led by African-Americans to gain equal rights under the law.

This was done through marches, protests, court cases, demonstrations and acts of resistance.

**DISCRIMINATION** treated unfairly or differently

**EQUALITY** having the same rights as everyone

**SEGREGATION** setting someone apart from others



**HOW MIGHT YOU STAND UP FOR A CAUSE YOU CARE ABOUT?**

Do you need more than one person to make a change?

How can we learn lessons from the past to make the world a better place for all?

# CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT TIMELINE

'I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.'

– Martin Luther King Jr.

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## 1865

Slavery in the United States is abolished at the end of the American Civil War.

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## 1890s

Jim Crow laws passed in Southern states separating Black people in public areas.

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## 1954

The Civil Rights Movement begins, led by African-Americans campaigning for equal treatment under the law.

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By law racial segregation is made illegal in public schools. This decision was resisted by people in the South.

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## 1955

Rosa Parks is arrested for not giving up her seat to a white man on the bus. In protest against her arrest, people stop using the busses in Montgomery, Alabama.

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## 1963

On May 2, more than one thousand school children skipped class and gathered to march together in Birmingham, Alabama. They were met with violence by the police.

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Over 250,000 protesters join the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. This became the largest civil rights protest in US history.

Activist Martin Luther King, Jr. gives his "I Have a Dream" speech.

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## 1964

The Civil Rights Act is signed into law by President Johnson. It makes discrimination based on race illegal.

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Martin Luther King, Jr. is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He was assassinated in 1968.

# We Will Walk MARK MAKING

## IF YOU WERE SELF-TAUGHT WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN?

Artists like Thornton Dial and Ronald Lockett used salvaged materials such as house paint, torn fabric and metal.

Why do you think they used these materials?



## WHAT ELSE CAN YOU SEE IN THEIR WORK?

“Art ain’t about paint.  
It ain’t about canvas.  
It’s about ideas.”

– Thornton Dial.



Mary T Smith was an artist and farmer. She liked to paint figures and slogans onto a white background to create contrast. She had a hearing impairment and found it challenging to be in loud spaces. Drawing was her outlet.

Nearly all of the artists in this exhibition are self-taught. That means they didn't go to art school, but instead experimented with materials until they found their own style. Many of the artists also knew each other as family or neighbours, so making art was passed down through generations and towns.

## DOES A DRAWING NEED TO LOOK REALISTIC TO BE GOOD?

Who decides what art is good?

Paintings have to be 2D.  
Agree or disagree



## CHOOSE AN ARTWORK IN THE EXHIBITION. IF IT COULD SPEAK, WHAT WOULD IT SAY?

COLOUR LINES SHAPE STYLE SHADOW TONE TEXTURE


OUTLINE SHADING PRINT REPETITION PATTERN OBJECT

SELF-PORTRAIT LANDSCAPE SPRAY TEXT ABSTRACT


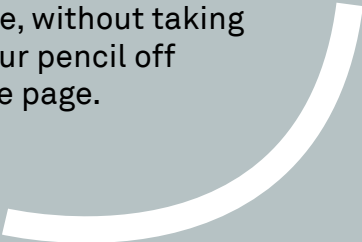


# EXPERIMENT WITH MARK MAKING


“What’s on my mind, I paint”  
– Purvis Young






Draw what you can see, without taking your pencil off the page.





Draw with your finger, toes, elbow or nose by covering it in charcoal or paint.




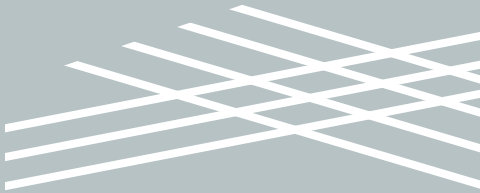
Try drawing or painting what’s on your mind with your eyes closed.



Find an object and draw around it. Repeat in different places on the page and colour in the shapes.



Draw an object using the hand you don’t normally use.



Build up a picture by layering different materials and paint on top of each other until it feels like the right moment to stop.

# We Will Walk ASSEMBLING

Lots of the sculptures in the exhibition have been made by recycling everyday objects/materials and putting them together. Some works are made from natural materials gathered from forests and others from human-made objects that were no longer needed.

The artists have taken these familiar objects and turned them into something completely different.

## WHAT DO THE SCULPTURES LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

### WHAT OBJECTS/MATERIALS CAN YOU SEE IN THE ROOTS & ASSEMBLAGE SCULPTURES?

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#### ASSEMBLAGE SCULPTURE

Artists such as Lonnie Holley and Joe Minter use castoff objects like old hubcaps, shoes, chairs, steel and wire to create assemblages. They see the value of things that are believed to be useless when discarded. The works often contain symbols about African-American's history and unfair treatment.



THE MORE VALUABLE  
THE MATERIALS, THE  
MORE VALUABLE  
THE ARTWORK.  
**AGREE OR DISAGREE**

#### ROOT SCULPTURE

Tree roots and trunks had been used as medicine by early African-American healers and also charms to ward against evil spirits. They also contain Christian symbolism of eternal life.

Bessie Harvey saw hidden figures in tree trunks and branches and worked with the materials to reveal them.

#### THE YARD

These root and assemblage sculptures originally were displayed in the artist's front yards, creating their own outdoor gallery to be viewed by passers-by. You can see examples of Yard Shows in photographs throughout the exhibition.

Should artwork made for a particular place be left where it is, even if this means it won't last as long?

**ARE WE SEEING ALL OF THE ARTWORK IF IT IS SEEN OUT OF ITS ORIGINAL SETTING?**

ASSEMBLE   LAYERS   BUILD   RECYCLE   REUSE   BROKEN  
SCULPTURAL   NATURE   HUMAN-MADE   ABSTRACT   CONTEXT  
PUBLIC   SYMBOL   ARRANGE   TEMPORARY   PRESERVE

# CREATE YOUR OWN YARD SHOW

“My work is especially for the children so they can see how to make art out of things.”

- Lonnie Holley

- 1** Gather materials and objects you'd like to use to make your sculptural piece. Are they natural, human-made or a mixture of the two? Where are you going to find them? Do they have a special meaning to you?
- 2** Choose where you are going to make your artwork. Is it outdoors or indoors? Will it be in a public space like the beach or a private space like your house? Who would you like to see it? What scale are you working to?
- 3** Play around with arranging objects. Are you going to make your piece look like something or are you more interested in experimenting with shapes? Is it going to tell a story or communicate a message?
- 4** Work out how you will fix it together. Will you use string or tape or will you balance it?
- 5** Keep adding to your Yard Show by making more artwork and inviting others to display their work too.

# We Will Walk STITCHING

“When you’re making a quilt, you’re building, because you go to put the first plank just like you have to put the first block”

– Nettie Young.

The textile pieces in the exhibition were originally made to be used as quilts in the home, using household materials such as strips of cloth, cornmeal sacks and old jeans. They have been made by women from Gee’s Bend, a small, rural, African-American community in Alabama, who have become famous for their bold use of patterns and colours in the quilts.

**LOOK AROUND YOU.  
WHAT IDEAS DO  
YOU HAVE?**

**WHAT MATERIALS  
COULD YOU FIND TO  
MAKE YOUR IDEAS  
INTO A QUILT?**

“Most of my ideas come from looking at things. I can walk outside and look around in the yard and see ideas all around the front and back of my house”

– Mary Lee Bendolph

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## WHAT DO YOU THINK QUILTS WILL BE MADE OUT OF IN THE FUTURE?

The quilts were often made by more than one person at a time and inspired by the everyday things that the women saw. Rather than starting with a pattern to follow the quilt designs were often improvised.

What makes these quilts art?

Is an artwork your own if you collaborate with other people?

**CAN YOU JUDGE A  
QUILT IN THE SAME  
WAY YOU WOULD  
A PAINTING?**

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Look closely at the quilts to find clues about who made them, how they were made and how they were used?



# TELL YOUR STORY THROUGH PATTERN

**1** Cut and rip strips of fabric into different shapes. Play around with the layout to create a pattern and glue down. For added detail, try stitching around the shapes.

CAN COLOURS  
& PATTERNS  
COMMUNICATE  
EMOTION?

**2** Stick masking tape across a background of your choice. Try using diagonal lines, or overlapping the tape to create an interesting design. Paint over the top, wait for it to dry then peel away to reveal your pattern.

WHAT COLOUR DO  
YOU FEEL LIKE  
TODAY?

**3** Invite other people to collaborate by adding in their own colours and patterns. How does the piece change?



# We Will Walk SOUND

Music played a big role in the civil rights movement. In the exhibition you can hear music from the time.

## HOW DOES THE MUSIC SOUND?

IS IT FAST OR SLOW, SIMPLE OR COMPLEX?

What does it make you feel? Is it happy, sad, angry, hopeful...?

What are the musicians trying to say through the lyrics? Is it more powerful by singing it rather than speaking it?

“They take the hardest realities of life and put them into music, only to come out with some new hope or sense of triumph.”

– Martin Luther King Jr.



Artist and musician Freeman Vines is from the American South and makes hand carved guitars from trees and re-used objects such as African masks. He is self-taught, preferring the sound of hand-made guitars rather than factory made guitars which he says sound commercial.

He hollows out the guitars by making small fires in the wood and scraping out the ash with hand tools. The objects and wood he uses has special meaning to him.

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## DOES LISTENING TO THE MUSIC CHANGE HOW YOU SEE THE ARTWORK IN THE EXHIBITION?

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‘We Shall Overcome’ is a gospel song that became an anthem for the Civil Rights Movement. It was sung at peaceful protests across the United States of America and Martin Luther King Jr. often used lyrics from the song in his sermons and speeches.

Music was important because it reflected the events of the time, was a way to talk about injustice and could bring people together by spreading messages of hope.

**CAN YOU THINK OF ANY EXAMPLES OF RECENT MUSIC THAT IS USED FOR THE SAME PURPOSE?**

# DIY MUSIC

If you were a musical instrument what sound would be your sound?

- 1** Gather objects found around the house or in nature.
- 2** Assemble the objects in different ways to make a new sound. Do you need to change parts of the objects to find the sound you are after?
- 3** Experiment with the sounds your instrument can make. Do you need to hit it, shake it, blow it, strum it?
- 4** Decorate your instrument to make it personal to you.
- 5** Try playing it and sing along with whatever comes into your head.