

BROOKLYN

CHILDREN'S

MUSEUM

ACTIVITY KIT



BCM Activity Kit: Our City

Designed for children ages 4 and up

**BROOKLYN
CHILDREN'S
MUSEUM**

ACTIVITY KIT

Dear Kids,

We miss you so much at Brooklyn Children's Museum. We miss your smiles and hearing you laugh and run down the rainbow tunnel. Like many other spaces, BCM closed recently to keep our community healthy, so we really hope that you enjoy this activity kit.

This kit is called *Our City*, and it features art inspired by the city we all share. During this time, we hope that *Our City* inspires you to explore your neighborhood and community.

Try the *Our City* activities or use the materials to create your own work! Let us know what you think of this kit by tagging @bcmkids and #brooklynchildrensmuseum, or e-mailing education@brooklynkids.org. We can't wait to see you again at the Museum!

Love,
Your friends at Brooklyn Children's Museum

Our City is a portable kit of materials and ideas for hands-on fun.

This kit includes activities and tools to create your own artwork. Take the experiences further with the Keep Going ideas on page 16.

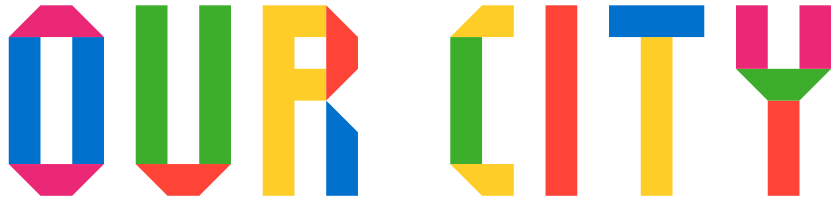
FIND-IT-YOURSELF LIST

Here are some items that are not in this kit, but that are easy-to-find and fun additions to any activity.

Be safe when gathering objects from outdoors! Remember to wash your recyclables, such as plastic bottles, with soap and water before using them.

Materials

- Fallen leaves, sticks, flowers, acorns, etc.
- Plastic bottles, take-out containers, straws
- Toilet paper and paper towel tubes
- Plastic bags
- Magazines or newspapers
- Cardboard
- Egg cartons
- Blocks
- Wax or parchment paper
- Foil



EXPLORE WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE IN OUR CITY!

What does it mean to be a neighbor?

Who do you greet when you step outside or walk down your street?

Are there things you wish you could change about the place you live?

What makes a neighborhood happy and healthy?

Our City was an exhibit curated by Petrushka Bazin Larsen and presented at Brooklyn Children's Museum in 2016. The group show included works by six artists who explore ideas connected to living in the city. Thank you to Brooklyn Hi-Art! Machine, Aisha Cousins, Elizabeth Hamby, James Rojas, Priscilla Stadler, and Rusty Zimmerman for sharing their artwork now when we need reminders of who and what holds New York City together.

What do you love most about our city?

Write about or draw a picture for your response:

JAMES ROJAS

Place It!

James Rojas is an artist who is interested in the way cities are planned. He likes to see how people work together to organize their spaces, and what choices they make to create communities. Through PLACE IT!, James brings people together to think about what they want their neighborhoods and cities to be and to create colorful models using recycled and found materials.



SKETCH IT!

Draw the buildings and places that are on your city block or in your neighborhood. Think about the past, present, and future, and add buildings, spaces, and other details.

What places do you pass often? What do you want your neighborhood to have? Where would your home or school be?

BUILD IT!

Look at your drawing as a guide to build a 3-D model of your block or neighborhood. Try shaping, folding, and taping together materials to make buildings and places. Use any of the materials included in this kit and see what other materials you can find to build with. Attach your constructions to a large cardboard base with glue or tape.

PRISCILLA STADLER

Fragile City

Priscilla made her artwork *Fragile City* out of fabric to look like buildings. People can walk through the buildings, touch them, and see them moving. Priscilla is interested in how changes in our neighborhoods affect us, like when old buildings are torn down and new ones are built.

The word “fragile” describes something that can break easily or needs to be treated with extra care.

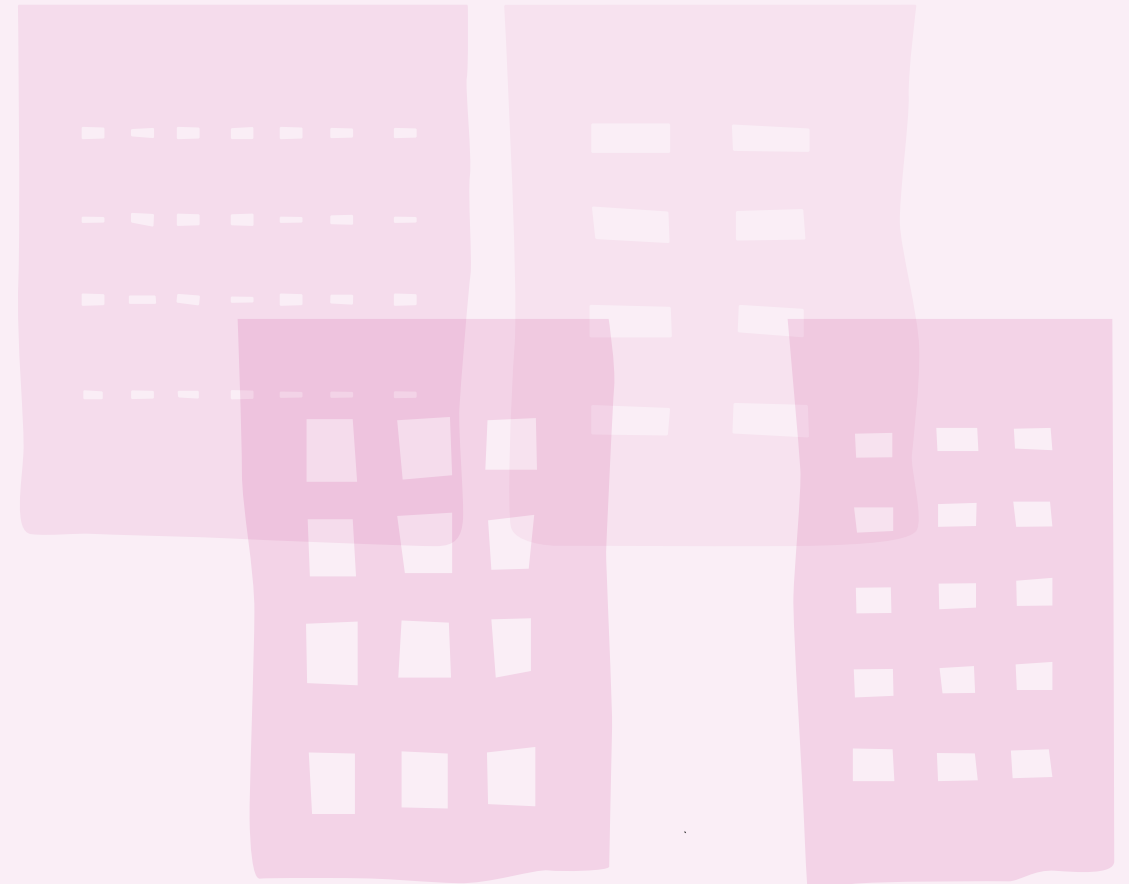
What do you see, hear or feel when you think of the word fragile?

Our neighborhoods can sometimes feel fragile. **In what ways are our neighborhoods also strong?**



EXPLORE YOUR THOUGHTS

Draw, color, or write words in the building shapes below:



OUR CITY HAND-KITE DANCE

1. Tie streams of ribbon, yarn, or fabric strips to the ring.
2. What rhythms or songs make you feel proud of our city?
3. Play the music, sing those songs, move your body, dance, and wave your hand kite.

Materials

- Yarn or ribbon
- Scissors
- Plastic or wooden ring

BROOKLYN HI-ART! MACHINE

Mildred Beltré and Oasa DuVerney

Spread the Word

Brooklyn Hi-Art! Machine is a project that began when two artists and neighbors, Mildred and Oasa, started making art outside their building. They wanted to use artwork as a way to bring their community together. They create a message in a public space, like a fence, sometimes inviting people walking by to add to the message.

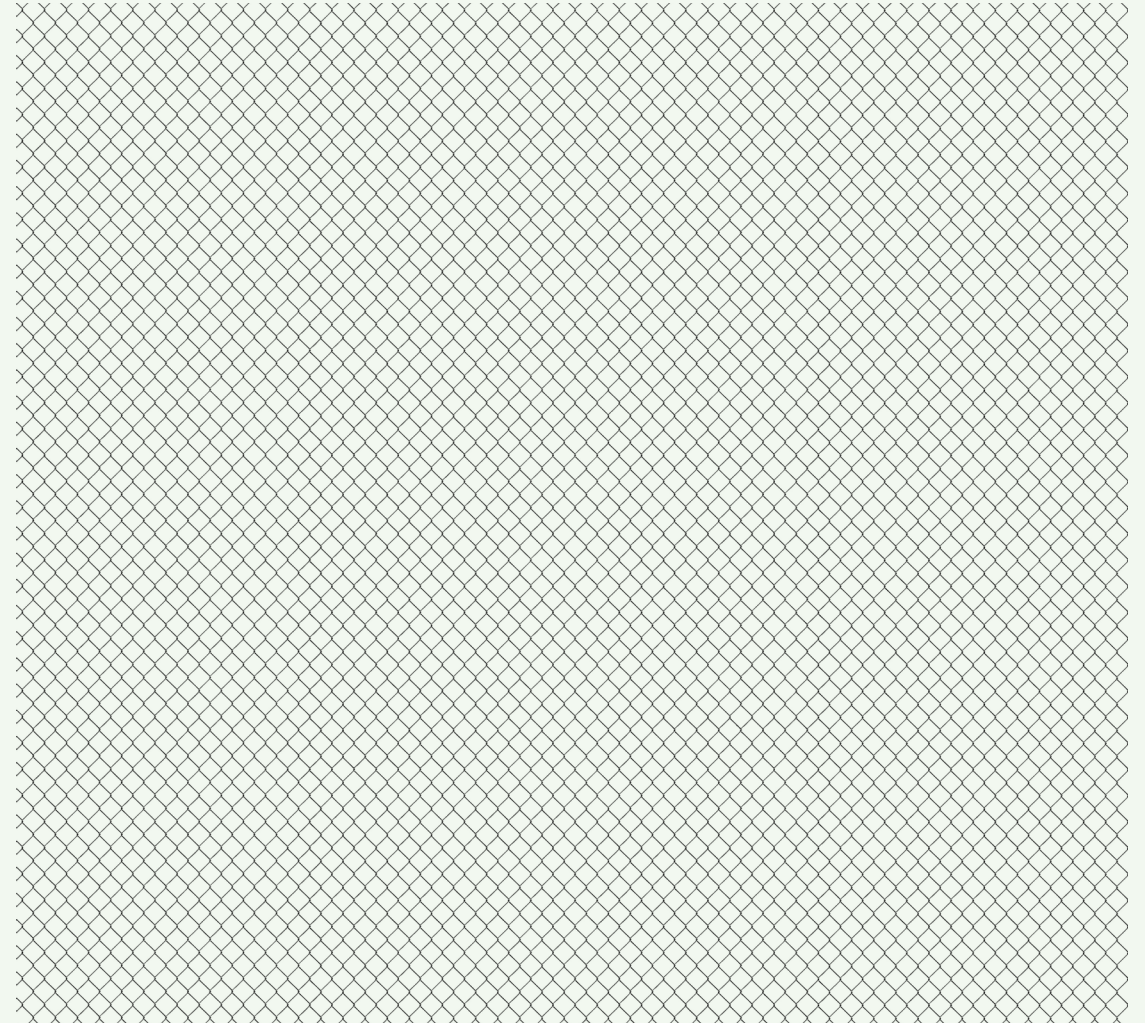
Recent Brooklyn Hi-Art! Machine messages have been “See the Unseen” and “Do Not Disappear into Silence.”

What could these messages mean? What could they be asking people to do?



DESIGN A MESSAGE

What message do you want to share with your family?
Design a message for your family or community on this fence:



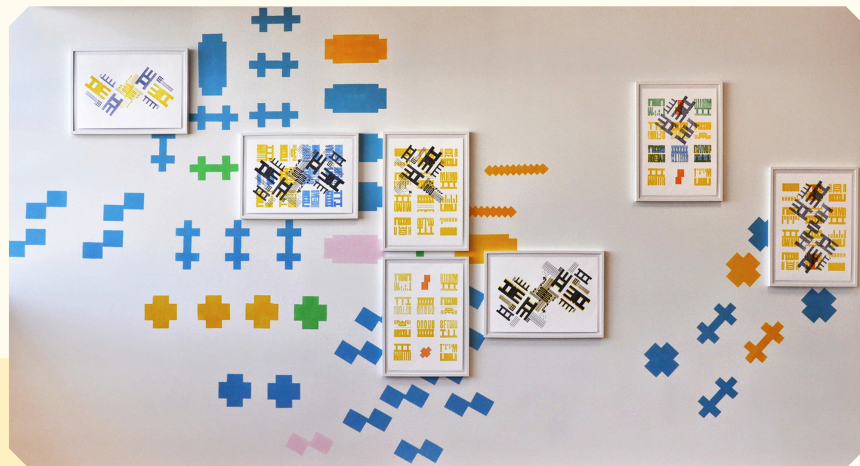
FAMILY MESSAGE

Choose materials from the kit to make a sign with your family message using words and/or images. Post the message where everyone will see it!

ELIZABETH HAMBY

Alphabet City

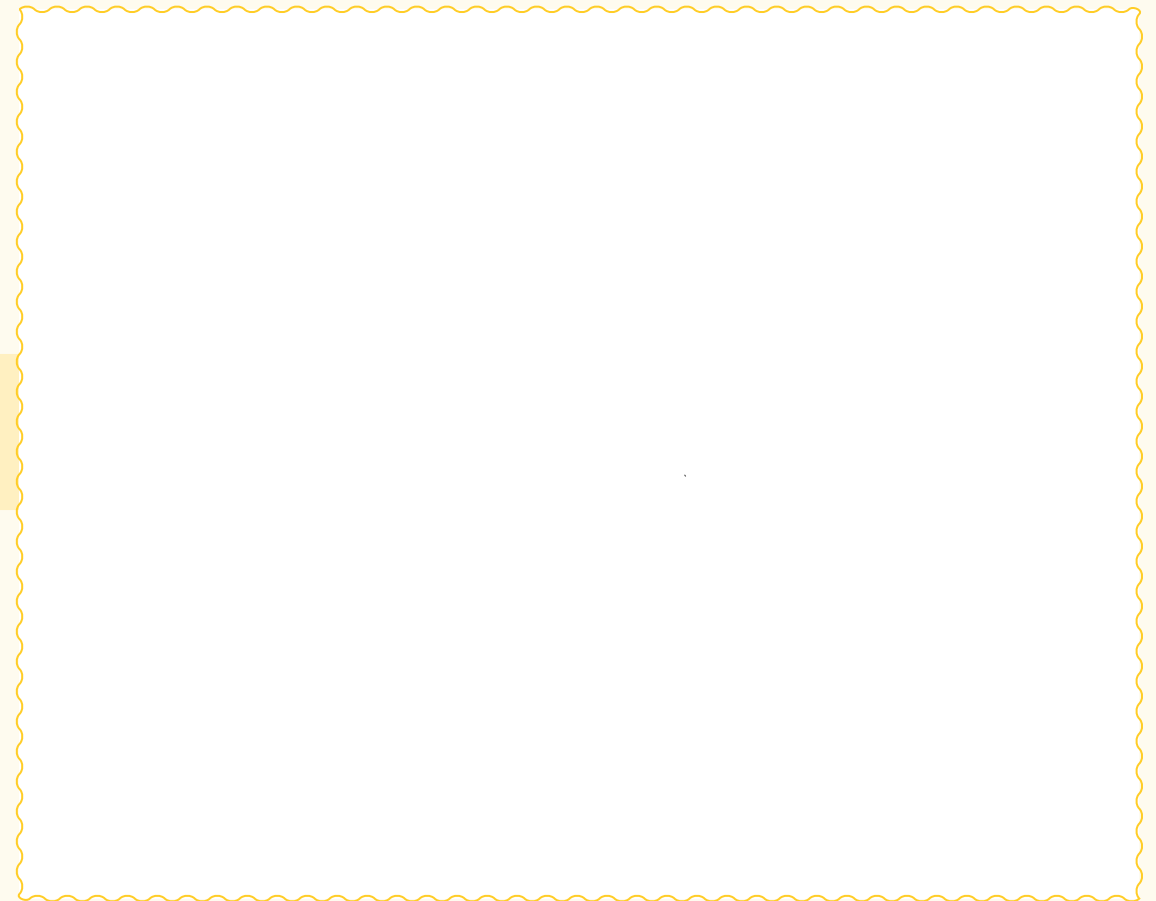
Buildings come in many shapes and sizes—not just squares and rectangles. A building’s *footprint* is the shape of the building’s base, just like your own footprint! Elizabeth Hamby’s *Alphabet City* uses building footprints to make a special alphabet of shapes that can tell us about New York City’s history and neighborhoods. In this project, Elizabeth highlights aerial views of 61 different New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) apartment buildings. She records the shapes of their footprints and then creates pattern murals with the community.



ALPHABET CITY MURAL

1. Look and move around a room where you spend time. What shapes would the furniture, objects, and room be if you were looking down on them from the sky?
2. Draw or cut out colorful shapes that represent the shape of your room and other items from a bird’s eye view.
3. Arrange or draw your shapes to create a mini-mural below.

No matter how spaces are built, it is still people that bring them to life. Add shapes, or even footprints, that represent you and your family:



RUSTY ZIMMERMAN

The Free Portrait Project

Rusty Zimmerman painted two-hundred portraits of Crown Heights residents in one year. The residents were all ages, cultures, and religions, and the portraits included some of the stories they told about their neighborhood.

Who do you see every day?

Who are your family, friends, and neighbors?

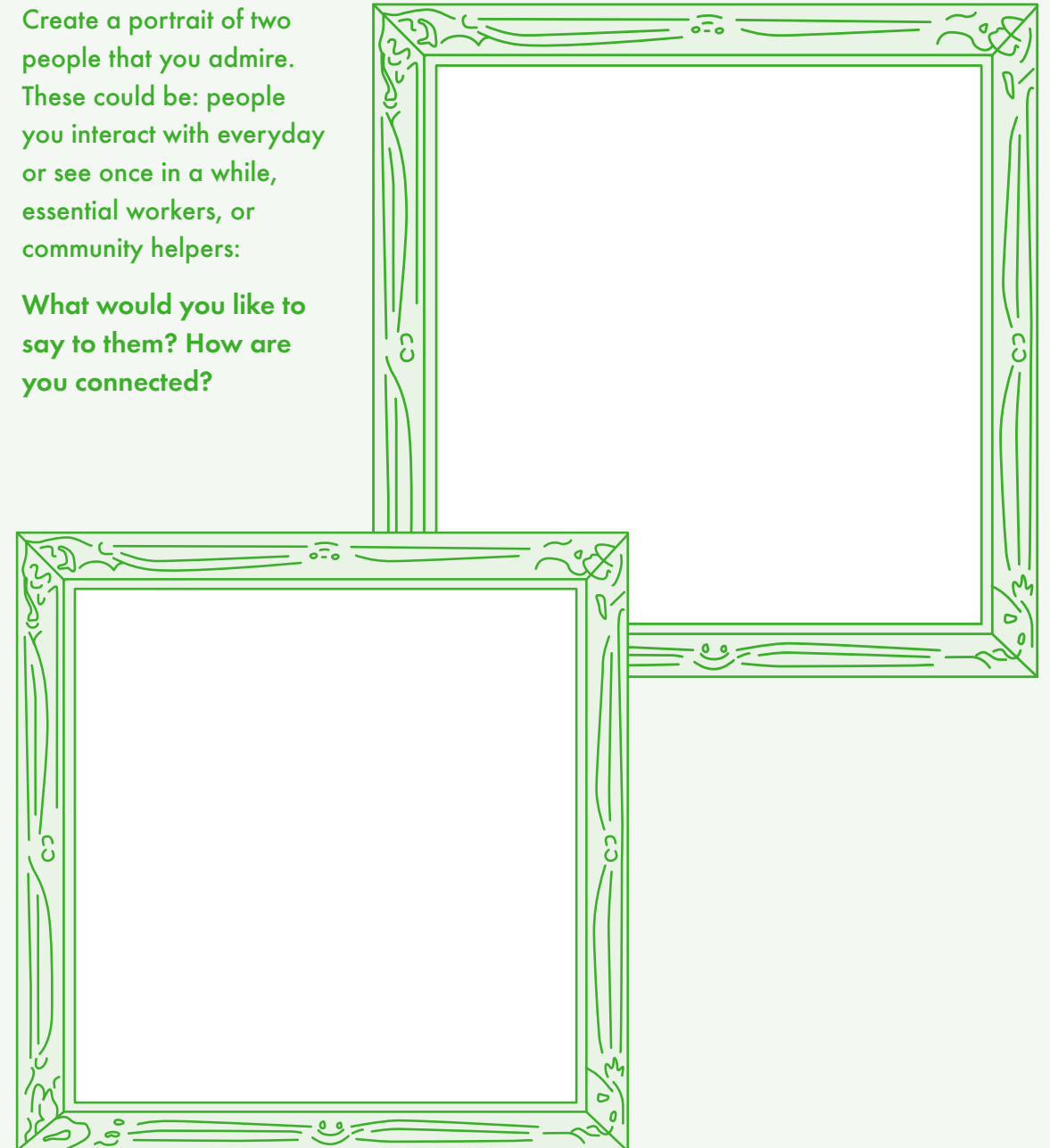
What unique facial features do they each have?



PORTRAITS FOR THE PEOPLE

Create a portrait of two people that you admire. These could be: people you interact with everyday or see once in a while, essential workers, or community helpers:

What would you like to say to them? How are you connected?



AISHA COUSINS

Mapping our City

Aisha is interested in how renaming streets for historic figures helps shape neighborhoods and cultures. In 2013, Aisha worked with her neighbors in Bedford-Stuyvesant to make a set of art projects called Mapping Soulville to teach kids about Malcolm X Boulevard.

Malcolm X was an African American social activist and minister. As part of this project, Aisha traced different streets named for Malcolm X around the world! New York City has streets in Brooklyn, Harlem, and Queens named after Malcolm X. Reid Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant was renamed for Malcolm X in 1985.

Fun Facts about Malcolm X Streets:

1. New York City has 3 streets named after Malcolm X: One in Brooklyn, one in Manhattan, and one in Queens.
2. Reid Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant was renamed for Malcolm X in 1985.
3. The shortest Malcolm X street Aisha found was in Klerksdorp, South Africa. The longest was in Dallas, Texas.



MAPPING OUR CITY

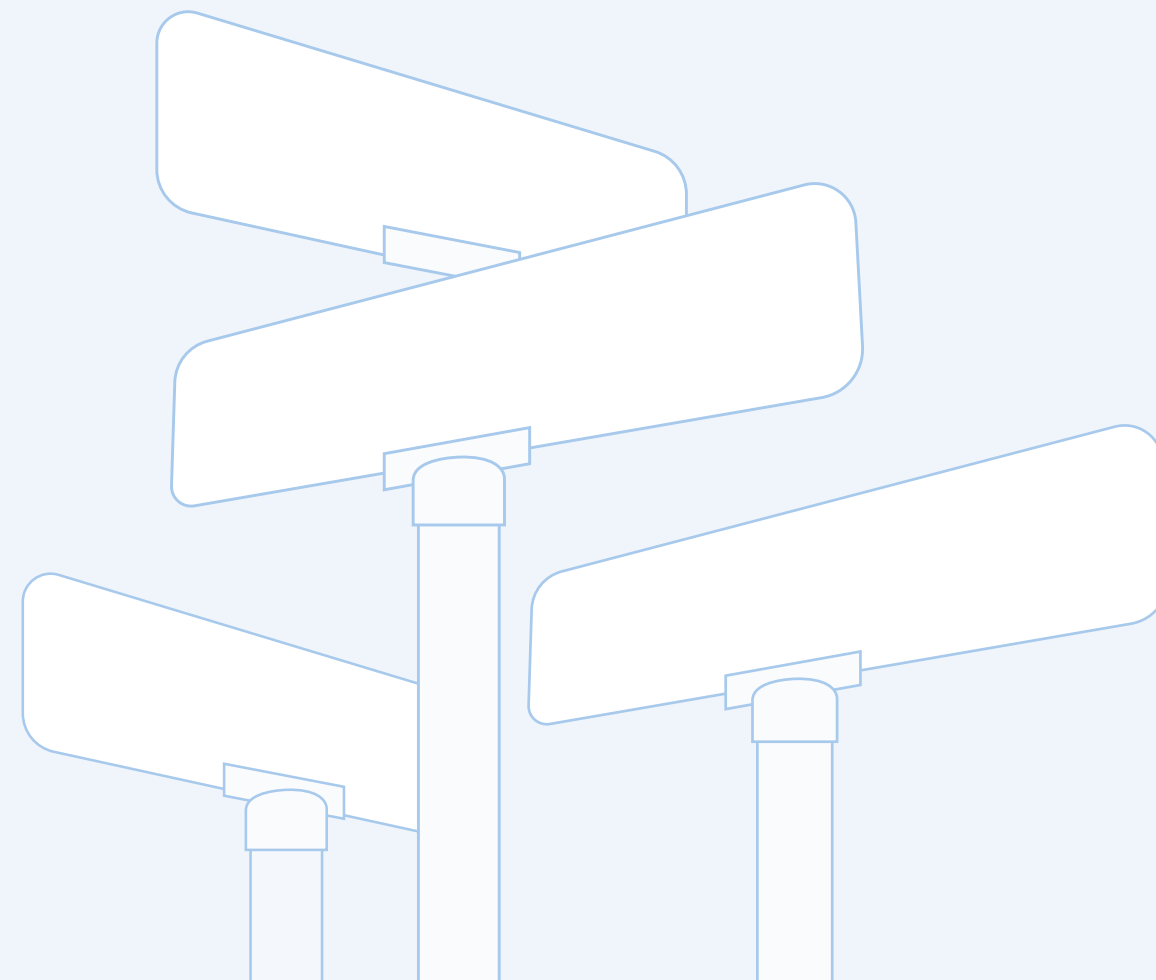
What type of street signs do you see in your neighborhood?

What streets in your neighborhood do you want to rename after an important leader or person in your life? Who would you choose? Why?

Street signs use words, colors, and symbols to help us know where to go. They can also tell us more about who is an important person to a local community.

Sketch a few street signs and include at least one that is named after someone you admire!

Plan and sketch your signs in the space below:



Check out these additional activities to keep exploring OUR CITY!

PLACE IT NEIGHBORHOOD SYMBOLS

1. Go on a walk around your neighborhood.
2. Observe and think about the people and places that make your neighborhood special to you.
3. Use clay, paper, or other materials to make small symbols or sculptures of special people and places.

Materials

- Model magic or air-dry clay
- Pipe cleaners
- Colored paper
- Scissors
- Tape
- Glue stick

SPREAD THE WORD

What do you want people in your community to think about? What would you like to say to them today?

Write a large message or question on a sidewalk with chalk. Include words and images.

Materials

- Sidewalk chalk
- Tape

FRAGILE CITY MOBILE

1. Cut tissue paper or fabric into building shapes.
2. Cut out window openings.
3. Tie or rubberband two popsicle sticks together into a + sign.
4. Use tape or yarn knots to attach the buildings to the popsicle sticks.
5. Hang the Fragile City mobile somewhere a breeze can move it around and light can shine through!

Materials

- Popsicle sticks
- Translucent or tissue paper
- Scissors
- Tape
- Fabric
- Yarn
- Rubber bands

NEIGHBOR LINKS

1. Write the name of the person you drew above on a short strip of paper.
2. Glue or tape the ends of the paper strip together to make a circle link.
3. Connect your paper link to your family member's link.
4. Brainstorm more names of family, friends, and others who you admire.
5. Write each person's name on a strip of paper, and connect each paper link. **What do these people have common? How are they connected?**
6. Wear or display your links as a reminder to stay connected to and appreciate your community.

Materials

- Colored pencils or crayons
- Scissors
- Paper
- Tape or stapler

OUR CITY SOUND MAP

1. Listen closely to the sounds of your neighborhood. Listen when it's sunny or rainy, at different times of the day, and when you're indoors and outdoors.
2. Choose several sounds to remember for your sound map, and draw a symbol for each sound.
3. Create a song with your city sounds! Try different rhythms, sound patterns, and volumes, effects.
4. Make a sound map for your song to help you practice it together! Organize the sound symbols on the map to show the song's patterns.

Materials

- Paper
- Crayons or colored pencils
- Scissors
- Glue stick

OUR ARTISTS

Our City includes artwork by Aisha Cousins, Brooklyn Hi-Art! Machine (Oasa DuVerney and Mildred Beltré), Elizabeth Hamby, James Rojas, Priscilla Stadler, and Rusty Zimmerman.

Brooklyn Hi-Art! Machine

Brooklyn Hi-Art! Machine is a socially-engaged project started in 2010 by artists Mildred Beltré and Oasa DuVerney. Dubbing themselves the “Official Unofficial Artists in Residence” of their block, Mildred and Oasa set up tents, tables, and art supplies on the street outside their apartment building and invited anyone walking by to stop and make art with them. In this way, they co-founded Brooklyn Hi-Art! Machine, a collaborative public art intervention that explores art-making as a community-building tool. brooklynhiartmachine.blogspot.com

Aisha Cousins

Aisha Cousins’ family moved to BedStuy in 1989, so she could go to I.S. 383 and then to LaGuardia High School. Her favorite classes were Art, Math, English, and History. Now she mixes all these things together by writing performance art scores (instructions for live art projects). Aisha’s work has been performed on the streets of historically black neighborhoods from BedStuy to Brixton, as well as at places like Weeksville Heritage Center, Project Row Houses, the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, and MoMA PS1. www.aishacousins.com

Elizabeth Hamby

Bronx-based artist Elizabeth Hamby explores the complexity of cities and the patterns of everyday urban life. Her work has been exhibited at the Museum of the City of New York and Casita Maria Center for Arts and Education. She holds degrees from Parsons School of Design and Eugene Lang College. www.space-place.net

James Rojas

James Rojas is a Los Angeles-based artist who graduated from MIT in urban planning. He is a community activist that developed a multidisciplinary, arts-based approach to improve the public’s involvement in urban planning, and design related fields by improving communication and animating community outreach and visioning through interactive sculpture, and story telling. www.placeit.org

Priscilla Stadler

Artist Priscilla Stadler works with community engagement, drawing, and installations. Her *Fragile City* series of fabric buildings has been developed for sites ranging from street corners to galleries to a 19th century barn. In her new series of drawings (*Rooted*), Stadler explores how fungal and tree networks connect with each other underground (the “wood wide web”), setting an example for humans and how we might exchange energy, support each other and create nourishing networks. Stadler collaborates with the public, artists, and community organizers to develop dialogue, and use art as a tool for creative social justice. www.priscillastadler.com

Rusty Zimmerman

Rusty Zimmerman is a portrait painter raised in New Orleans, Louisiana and the Bay Area of California. He is the Founder and Artist of the Free Portrait Project, and the portrait and poster artist to Governor Andrew Cuomo. Zimmerman lives and works in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. www.freeportraitproject.org

THANK YOU

Leadership support for art programs is generously provided by Peggi Einhorn and Michael Lasky, Lincoln Center Cultural Innovation Fund, which is generously supported by The Rockefeller Foundation and administered by Lincoln Center, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the New York City Council; The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation, and New York State Assembly Member Joseph R. Lentol.

In addition to our leadership art funders, Brooklyn Children’s Museum’s programs are made possible by:

The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Endowment for the Humanities, New York City Council Majority Leader Laurie A. Cumbo; New York City Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel; New York City Council Member Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.; New York City Council Member Farah Louis; New York State Senator Velmanette Montgomery; and New York State Assembly Member Diana C. Richardson.

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About Brooklyn Children's Museum

Our mission

Inspired by the energy and diversity of our borough, Brooklyn Children's Museum creates experiences that ignite curiosity, celebrate identity, and cultivate joyful learning.

Our work

Founded in 1899 as the world's first children's museum, Brooklyn Children's Museum (BCM) is New York City's largest cultural institution designed especially for families. Proudly based in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, BCM serves 300,000 children and caregivers annually with exhibits and programs grounded in visual arts, music and performances, natural science, and world cultures. Visit us at www.brooklynkids.org and share your work with us on Instagram by tagging @bcmkids #brooklynchildrensmuseum. Tell us what you thought of this kit! E-mail us at education@brooklynkids.org.

Our City Activity Kit Education team:

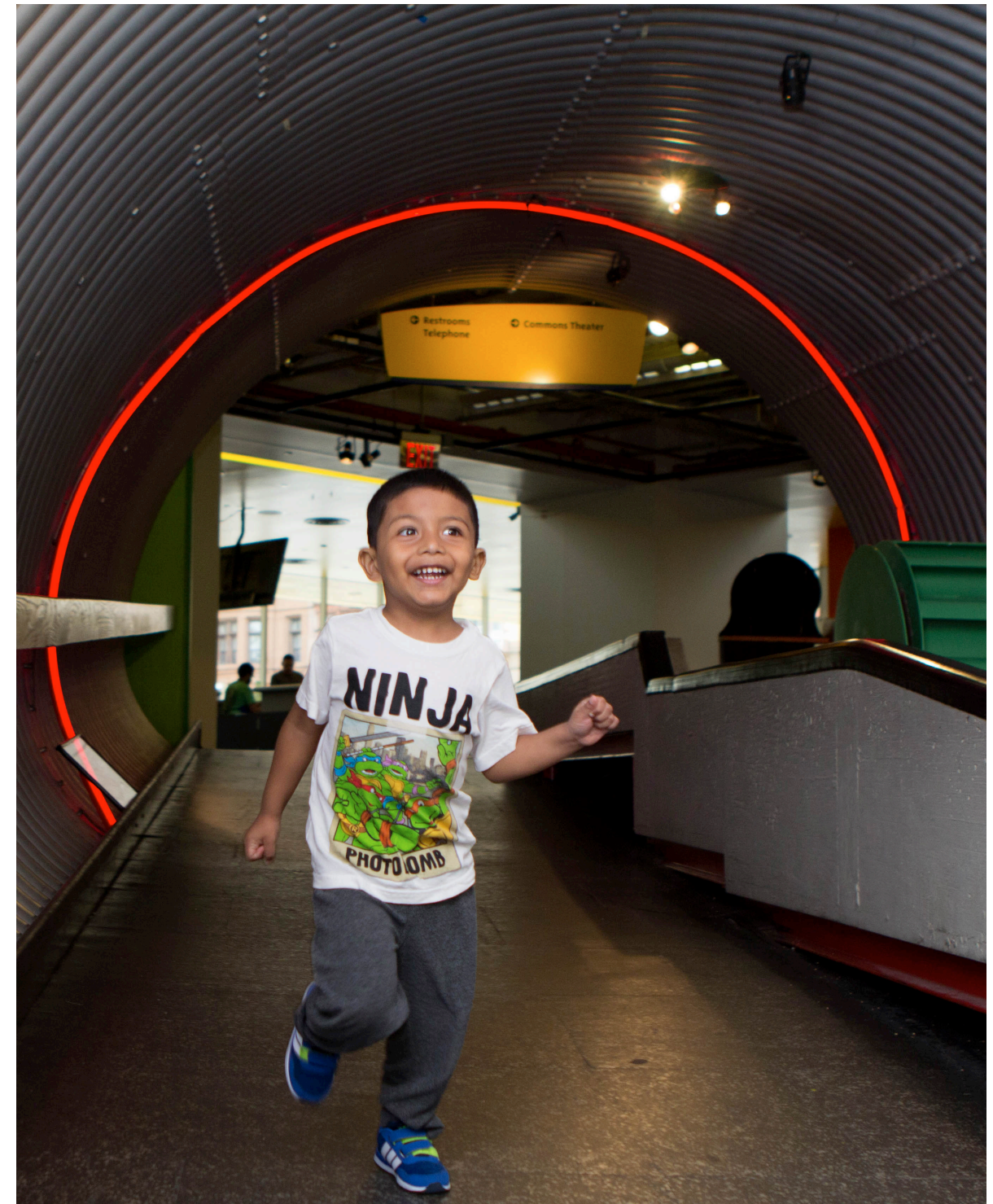
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DeeArah Wright *Director of Education*

Alexandra Bynoe-Kasden *Coordinator of Public Programs*

Coretta Garlow *Educator and Access Program Developer*

Mia Beurskens *Graphic Designer*



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145 Brooklyn Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11213
USA