

Thank you for booking a tour for the inspiring exhibition *The Nest, an exhibition of art in nature*. We look forward to sharing this visually compelling and conceptually thoughtful exhibition with your students.

Birds' nests have inspired great curiosity and fascination for their skilled construction, delicate beauty, and functionality. The 18 artists in this exhibition respond to the extraordinary form of the bird's nest as well as the concept of home associated with the nest. Students will have an opportunity to carefully observe real nests alongside nest-related artworks and will apply methods of visual analysis to both. Aligned with 21st-century skills and Common Core Standards, tours of this exhibition will ask student to observe details, analyze and interpret meaning, voice their opinion, build knowledge and conversation as a group, and find evidence for their opinions in the artworks. We will also think carefully about the artistic process: How are the artists responding to nests both literally and metaphorically? How are artistic techniques such as scavenging for materials, the process of accumulation, weaving and construction parallel to bird's nest building? And ultimately, we will consider how the artistic process borrows from nature, responds to nature, honors nature, and critiques our mistreatment of nature.

Before your students arrive:

- Discuss with your class what they already know about nests. Layer in information from **Nests 101 pre-visit**.
- Brainstorm the ideas that nests evoke: connections, interpretations, associations. Use the *Nest Idioms and Phrases* pre-visit as appropriate.
- Imagine how artists might play off of the scientific aspects of nests as well as the metaphorical meanings of nests to create unique artworks. Use the pre-visit: *Thinking about Nests Before and After your Visit*.

Included in this packet are materials to help prepare your students for their visit. Please share with all classroom teachers. They can also be downloaded from our website: www.katonahmuseum.org under "Teacher Resources."

- Exhibition Introduction, Nests 101
- 3 images from the exhibition with questions for discussion
- Pre-visit activities: *Thinking about Nests*, *Nest Idioms and Phrases*
- Connections to Curricula and Common Core Standards
- Nametag (please have students wear the attached nametags, or any other form of nametag)



Look for this light bulb to indicate ideas for older students! This packet is designed with upper elementary school students in mind; please adjust for your grade level by scaling up or down. Please call 914-232-9555, ext. 2969 to discuss the specifics of your tour. Thank you for choosing the KMA for your class visit.

Margaret Adasko
Education Manager

UPCOMING PROGRAMS TO NOTE ON YOUR CALENDAR:

- Educators' Preview & discussion with exhibition artist Shiela Hale: Thursday, March 10, 4-6:00pm, Free
- Gallery Talk with artist James Prosek: Sunday, March 13, 3:30pm
- Day of the Bird Family Day: Sunday, April 17, 12-5pm, Free
- Art 101: Seminars on Art History: Thursdays: May 12 – June 9, Off-site, 6PM

Introductory Text Panel:

The Nest, an exhibition of art in nature examines the aesthetic complexities and allusive power of the bird's nest in art and culture. Featuring contemporary art and relics from the natural environment, the exhibition illuminates how the fundamental drive to gather, assemble, and create is a function of both the animal world and the artistic process. The bird's nest is a familiar form, signifying such concepts as "home," a place to find rest and protection. It is simultaneously a testament to the inimitable skill of these avian architects. *The Nest* includes a blend of authentic nests, works by contemporary artists, and a selection of feathered pre-Columbian textiles, offering a rare opportunity to consider the creative impulse from multiple vantage points.

In a diverse range of mediums, the work of the eighteen artists in the exhibition spans from direct consideration of birds and their nests to those treating the nest's symbolic potential. Some explore the human effort to record and define the natural world while grappling with our changing environment. Others evoke the similarities between the artistic process and the bird's strategies for nest building. Still others employ the bird and its nest's image to call upon metaphors of creation, birth, economy, identity, and the human body. Next to these contemporary works appears a selection of pre-Columbian Peruvian textiles. Adorned with hundreds to tens of thousands of brightly colored feathers, their artistry confirms that birds have served as a source of inspiration for makers since ancient times.

Birds' nests from the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History collection also populate the galleries, a selection from one of the most extensive and significant collections in North America. These specimens' range—from the weaverbird's elaborate hanging structure to a nest built in an old shoe—makes clear the marked variations found in the nest's construction. The affinities in aesthetic language between the birds' and artists' creations blur the traditional division between art object and the everyday natural environment, provoking inquiries into the definition of art itself.

The Nest, an exhibition of art in nature provides an unexpected lens through which to observe the parallels between human and animal behavior. By incorporating works that exist within disparate realms, the exhibition both prompts consideration regarding the nature of art and raises timely questions about the survival of the birds and their habitats in our increasingly fragile ecological world.

This exhibition was curated by the Katonah Museum of Art's Associate Curator, Elizabeth Rooklidge, with assistance from Registrar Nancy Hitchcock. The selection of nests in the exhibition was curated for the KMA by artist James Prosek and Kristof Zyskowski, Collections Manager of the Division of Vertebrate Zoology at the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History.

Pre-visit discussion: **Nests 101** What do we know about nests?

Discuss with your class before their visit

What is a nest? Can you define it?

What does a nest look like? Consider: shape, color, size, materials

Think about the purpose of a nest: Who or what use nests?

What is the purpose of a nest?

How is it made? What materials is it made from? Where do you find nests?

Nests 101: some basic information

(adapted from: <http://smithsonianscience.si.edu/2015/04/bird-nests-variety-is-key-for-avian-architects/>)

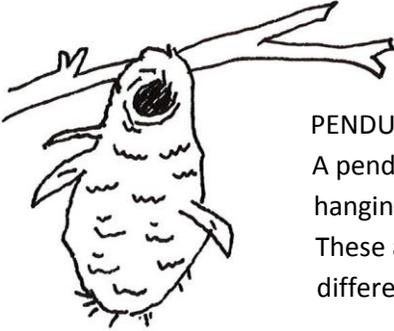
1. A nest is a structure or place made or chosen by a bird for laying eggs and sheltering its young. A roost is a place where birds regularly settle or congregate to rest at night or from protection from weather.
2. A bird selects a site for its nest that is concealed from or inaccessible to predators. They are careful about going to or leaving a nest so as not to attract a predator, or may actively attack an animal or person who gets too close.
3. Not all birds build nests. Some lay their eggs on bare rock or stones. Some birds, such as the cuckoo and cowbird, lay their eggs in another bird's nest and let that bird feed and raise their young. These are called brood-parasites.
4. Knowing how to build a nest is primarily instinctive, but some birds with intricate nests improve their building technique over time.
5. Some nests are so distinctive you know the species that built it immediately. Birds of the same species build similar nests.
6. The smallest nest is made by a hummingbird, less than 1 inch across. The largest individual nest recorded was a bald eagle nest measuring over 9 feet wide and 20 feet deep. African weaver birds build nest communes that can take over an entire tree.
7. In some species, just the female builds her nest. In others, it can be part of the courtship ritual.
8. Materials used vary based on availability. Some basic ones are: sticks, twigs, vines, grass, fur, feathers, hair, mud, moss, wool, spider webs, snakeskin, saliva. You can also find man-made materials in nests: string, yarn, tinfoil, paper. Birds only collect what they'll use.

For more information:

PBS video: *Animal Homes: Episode 1 | The Nest*: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/animal-homes/11674/>

Visit The KMA website for links to live bird cams: <http://www.katonahmuseum.org/exhibitions/TheNest/>

Basic types of nests:



PENDULUM

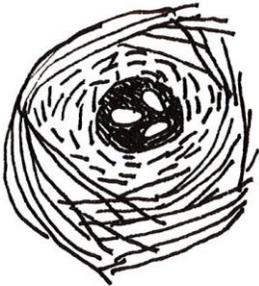
A pendulum nest is typically built from mosses, lichens, and small twigs into a pendulum or hanging sac-like shape, usually suspended from a small tree branch.

These are some of the types of nests that birds make. Can you find examples of two different ones in the exhibition?



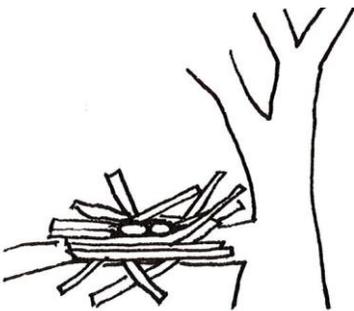
SPHERICAL

A spherical nest is globe or ball-shaped, usually made of grasses, with a single opening or hole on one side.



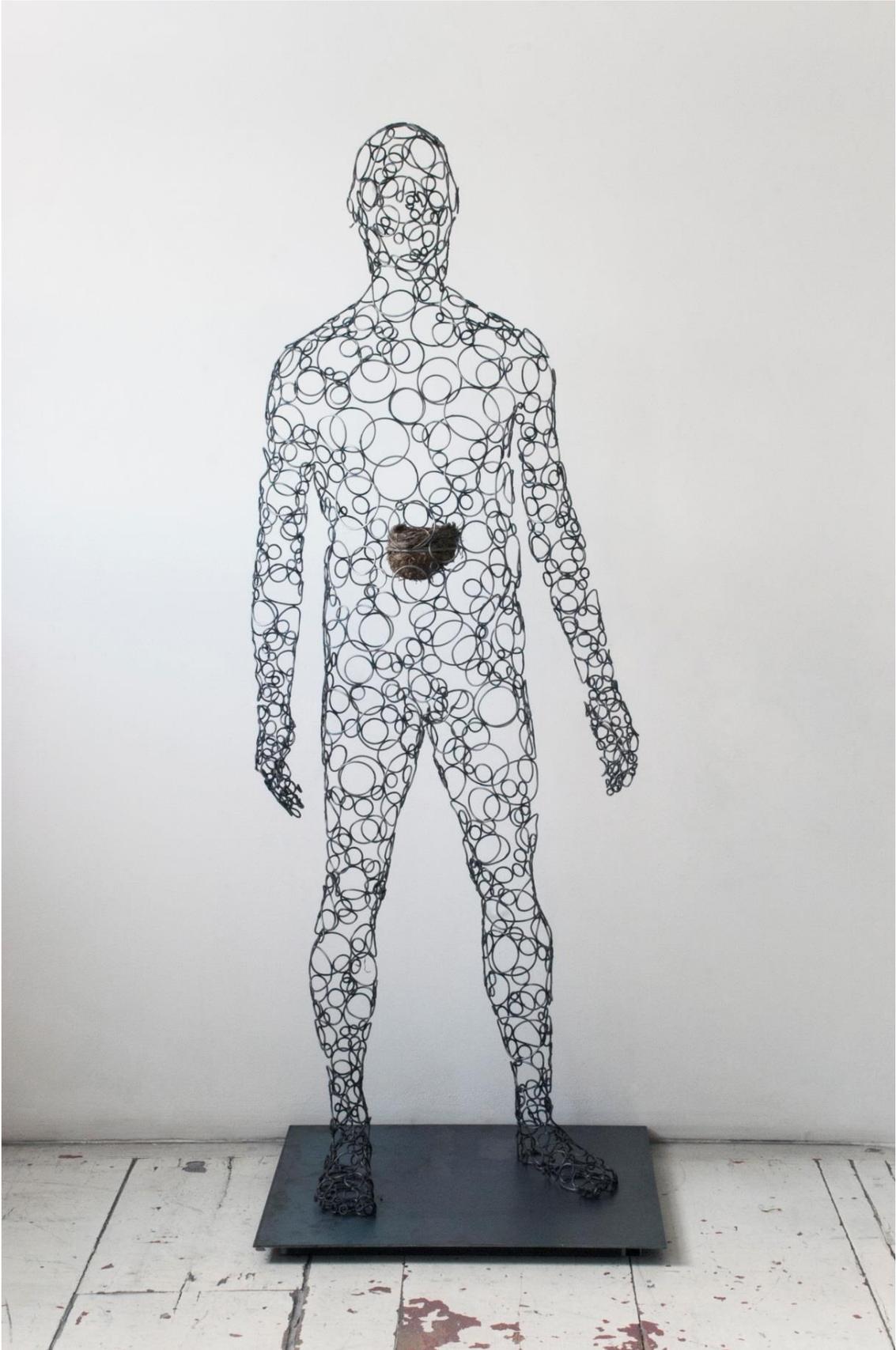
CUP

A cup nest is cup-shaped, and can be made with a variety of materials such as grass, moss, lichen, or spider web. The material on the inside is usually more soft and fine than the outside to cushion the eggs and keep them warm.



PLATFORM

A platform nest is mostly flat and supported by tree limbs. They can also be found on the ground in marshy areas.



Interpreting an artwork

Artists create work that evokes feelings, ideas, interpretations, and associations.

Look carefully at this artwork. What do you see?

Describe the elements and parts of this piece.

Think about the materials used, placement, and scale.

Consider the contrast between the human form and bird's nest.

Can you find any similarities?

How do they relate to each other?

What associations come to mind when thinking about a nest? How does that connect to the human body?



Discuss this quote from the artist:

"One notion that the piece tries to embody is the idea that "home" is inside us. I particularly feel this because as a child we moved incessantly ... So, the idea that we carry our real home within is very real to me."

Paul Villinski

Self-Portrait, 2014

Steel, bird's nest

Paul Villinski was born in 1950 and lives and works in NYC. He has been inspired throughout his life by flight, the environment, and adaptive re-use of materials "bringing things from a place of loss, poverty and despair into a new life." *Self-Portrait* presents an unexpected joining of the natural and human worlds. The figure, made from a plaster mold of the artist's body and slender steel rods, holds a nest inside its core. He says of this work:

"Important in the piece is the idea that there is really no separation between humankind and all other life forms on our planet. We will ultimately share the same fate. My hope for the piece is to eventually site it outdoors somewhere, with the hope that birds might discover and recycle the nest, the way they sometimes do. How fantastic it would be to have living birds inhabit and animate the sculpture. I am taken with this idea of live birds inside a "container" of the human figure."



Artistic process

Look carefully at this artwork and describe what you see.

Think about the shapes, colors, textures.

Talk about this artwork using unique adjectives and descriptive words.

Can you guess what any of the materials are?

What does this remind you of?

Think about the artist's process.

What steps were taken to create this artwork?

What choices did the artist make?

How does this compare to a bird's nest?

What about this is *similar* to a bird's nest?

What is different?



Is anything about the artist's process similar to how a bird builds a nest? How did Pfaff "borrow" or learn from the bird process. Discuss whether it is imitating a bird, expanding on it or paying homage to it.

Judy Pfaff (American, b. 1946)

Time is Another River, 2012

Honeycomb cardboard, expanded foam, plastics, and fluorescent light

Judy Pfaff's *Time is Another River* exemplifies the artistic strategy of assemblage. Employing this sculptural method—originating in the early 20th century and a prominent process in contemporary art—artists build a work piece by piece, carefully joining disparate fragments to create a whole. Since the 1970s, Judy Pfaff has used assemblage techniques to create vibrant installations and wall-bound objects that burst with visual energy. Pfaff weaves together a diverse array of human-made materials that, together, simultaneously suggest modern technology, architecture, and organic life. This accumulative process parallels that of a bird as it gathers bits of material to make the structure that will provide a home and protection for its young. Pfaff's nest-like construction evokes the shared impulse to gather and create as a function of both aesthetics and survival.



Narrative Artwork

Often artworks can tell us a story. Take a careful look at this tapestry and think about what story this piece could be telling.

Think about the birds in this piece as characters.

What is the bird on the ground doing?

What is the bird in the air doing?

How are these two birds connected to each other?

Describe the “setting” of this piece? Where do you imagine this is taking place?

What season?

What time of day?

How would you describe the mood in this scene?

What do you think will happen next?



The title of this work is *Guide*. Does knowing this change any of your ideas about it?

Kiki Smith (American, b. 1954)

Guide, 2012

Jacquard tapestry

The relationship between humans and animals is a central theme in Kiki Smith’s artistic practice. She often draws on symbolism assigned to animals, such as deer, cats, and wolves, found in mythological and religious traditions. Birds appear frequently in her work. The eagle, depicted here in *Guide*, has signified qualities such as wisdom, courage, immortality, and divinity in diverse traditions, from Ancient Rome to a number of Native American tribes. Smith’s chosen material, the jacquard tapestry, evokes both the eagle’s own woven nest and the human dwelling, bridging the spiritual and earthly worlds.

Thinking about *NESTS*: before and after your KMA visit

The artists, artworks, and objects in the exhibition connect to birds and nests in different ways, but you will see many different creations related to the idea of bird's nests. Let's imagine what you might see!

Before you visit the KMA. Discuss and write down or draw your answers.	After your visit to the KMA. Discuss and write down or draw your answers.
<p>Think about a bird's nest... Describe what it looks like. Consider: shape, materials, colors. What is the purpose of a nest? How is it made?</p>	<p>What surprised you? How were the artworks on view different from or the same as your idea of bird's nests? How did the artists change the nests?</p>
<p>Use your imagination... How might an artist expand on the idea of a nest? Consider: materials, size, and purpose. What interesting and surprising artworks might you see at KMA? Draw or write your ideas.</p>	<p>Draw an illustration of a memorable artwork you saw on your visit to the KMA:</p>

Matching Nest Idioms

Idioms are word combinations that have a different meaning than the literal meanings of each word.

Draw a line between the “nest idioms” on the left with its meaning in the right.



Stirring up the hornet's nest

A room or building built high up so that people inside can see things happening below them.



Rat's Nest

A place of great clutter or disorder.



Nesting

To create a lot of trouble.



Eagle's Nest

Overwhelming desire to get your home ready for your new baby.

KMA Museum Visits and the Common Core standards

Class visits to the KMA enable you and your students to expand on the 21st century skills emphasized in your classroom learning. Museums provide an alternative environment for students to strengthen skills supported by the Common Core Standards. Using art objects and installations as **visual text**, we lead students in inquiry-driven discussions requiring close observation, integrating content, and analyzing what they see (CCRA.R.1, 6, 7, 9). These conversations encourage students to make connections, communicate, and support their ideas using evidence and acquired vocabulary (CCRA.SL.1, 2, 3, L.4, 6). Tours also include an opportunity for your students to create their own artistic work based on the ideas and concepts of the exhibition. (CCVA.Cr.1)

Some of the Common Core standards addressed on a school tour include:

English Language Arts Standards:

Key Ideas and Details:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1](#): Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2](#): Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3](#): Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Comprehension and Collaboration:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1](#): Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2](#): Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3](#): Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4](#): Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.4](#): Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.5](#): Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.6](#): Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

Visual Arts Standards:

[CCVA.Cr.1](#): Generate and Conceptualize artistic ideas and artwork

[CCVA.Re.7](#): Perceive and analyze artistic work

[CCVA.Re.8](#): Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work

[CCVA.Re.9](#): Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work

The **Nest** exhibition will also connect to these science standards:

INQUIRY AND PROCESS SKILLS BASED ON ALL STANDARDS

The application of these skills allows students to investigate important issues in the world around them.

Classifying – arranging or distributing objects, events, or information representing objects or events in classes according to some method or system

Communicating – giving oral and written explanations or graphic representations of observations

Comparing and contrasting – identifying similarities and differences between or among objects, events, data, systems, etc.

Generalizing – drawing general conclusions from particulars

Observing – becoming aware of an object or event by using any of the senses (or extensions of the senses) to identify properties

STANDARD 4: The Living Environment

Students will understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories pertaining to the physical setting and living environment and recognize the historical development of ideas in science.

Key Idea 1: Living things are both similar to and different from each other and from nonliving things.

There are basic characteristics, needs, and functions common to all living things. Nonliving things are present in nature or are made by living things. Younger students' ideas about the characteristics of organisms develop from their basic concepts of living and nonliving things. As students are given opportunities to observe and classify living and nonliving things, they should be reminded that living and nonliving things are sometimes given attributes they do not really have. Understanding the variety and complexity of life and its processes can help students develop respect for their own and for all life. It should also lead them to better realize the value of all life on this fragile planet.

- *Nest is a home, place to grow up until you can be on your own.*

Key Idea 4: The continuity of life is sustained through reproduction and development.

It is essential for organisms to produce offspring so that their species will continue. Patterns of reproduction, growth, and development of an organism are stages in its life cycle. Life cycle stages are sequential and occur throughout the life span of the organism. The characteristics of the cycle of life vary from organism to organism.

Note: Younger students may have difficulty in recognizing the continuity of life. Using organisms with a short life cycle as examples will be important in getting the concept across. It is important for younger students to observe life cycle changes in selected animals.

- *Life cycle of birds: male/female, eggs, sitting on eggs, taking care of young, fledging or leaving the nest*

Key Idea 5: Organisms maintain a dynamic equilibrium that sustains life.

Students need many opportunities to observe a variety of organisms for the patterns of similarities and differences of the life functions used to sustain life. All organisms carry out basic life functions in order to sustain life. These life functions include growing, taking in nutrients, breathing, reproducing, and eliminating waste. Students need many opportunities to observe and compare these similarities and differences in a variety of organisms. Specimens that could provide these opportunities may include guppies, mealworms, and gerbils, as well as fish, insects, mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, plants, and fungi.

Key Idea 7: Human decisions and activities have had a profound impact on the physical and living environments.

Humans are dependent upon and have an impact on their environment. Students should recognize how human decisions cause environmental changes to occur. Students should be given opportunities to identify and investigate the factors that positively or negatively affect the physical environment and its resources; identify ways in which humans have changed their environment and the effects of those changes.

- *Respect and protect nests, eggs, birds; how are the artists highlighting this or using a nest to make a statement about humans and nests (ELA connection)*

The Nest, an exhibition of art in nature

We strongly encourage your students to wear nametags on their visit to KMA; it significantly helps our tour guides lead their gallery discussion.
Please clearly write the students' names on the bird silhouettes below or on your own name tags. Thank you!



On the lookout: birds and nests near you.

Go on a bird and nest listening and looking walk. Use the spaces below to document what you find. Draw a quick sketch of any birds or nests you see. Write notes about birds you hear and other observations and specific details. Research online to see if you can determine the type of birds and nests you observed.

Notes and sketches - Birds and bird sounds:	Notes and sketches - Birds and bird sounds:
Notes and sketches - Nests:	Notes and sketches - Nests:

The Nest, an exhibition of art in nature

At the Katonah Museum of Art March 6 – June 19, 2016

Use the checklist below to have your students research various bird's nests. Then create an artwork (collage, sculpture, installation, poetry, painting) inspired by their selected nest.

Nests from the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History



Eider nest of down
5 x 12 x 12 inches



Swift nest of sticks glued with saliva
5 x 3 x 3 inches



Hummingbird nest camouflaged with lichens
1 ½ x 1 ½ x 1 ½ inches



Malagasy Velvet Asity hanging nest of moss and bamboo
16 x 6 x 6 inches



Ovenbird (hornero) mud nest
10 x 10 x 9 inches



Firewood-gatherer stick nest
18 x 18 x 18 inches



American Robin nest of wire
4 x 11 ½ x 9 inches



Gray Jay nest insulated with wool
4 x 12 x 9 inches



Common Yellowthroat nest in old shoe
6 x 11 ½ x 4 ½ inches



Village Weaver nest
7 x 5 x 4 inches



Black-necked Weaver nest
6 x 15 x 4 inches



Crested Oropendola hanging nests
42 x 7 x 7 inches and 52 x 7 x 7 inches