

OBJECT^{out} ARMAN and LOUD: NICK CAVE

At the Katonah Museum of Art October 15 – January 7

Dear educators,

We are thrilled to welcome your students to *Object Out Loud*, a visually striking and thought-provoking exhibition that highlights two important artists who both use “**objects**” to comment on or “**object**” to social issues. In this dynamic pairing of works that span the 1970s to the present day, **Nick Cave**, a leading contemporary artist uses performance and sculpture in surprising ways, while **Arman** transforms and redefines familiar objects and the residue of everyday life. Both work through a process of **accumulation** and **assemblage**, creating complex and often magical compositions.

Through inquiry-based tours, students will discover rich and meaningful ideas expressed through the work of these two artists: the memories and associations evoked by objects; how artists use **found objects** as materials of transformation; reflections on **identity** and **mass consumerism**; and how artists respond to social issues through their work.

Class visits to the Katonah Museum provide a unique learning experience for students. While having the powerful experience of viewing original works of art, students will use artworks as **visual text** to:

- Practice close observation, and detailed description
- Use critical and creative thinking to interpret what they see
- Listen to each other and make connections between concepts
- Support ideas using evidence and acquired vocabulary
- Integrate acquired knowledge and classroom content into discussions

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 and Artists’ Bios
- 2 images from the exhibition with questions for discussion
- Pre-visit activity: *The Meaning of Objects*
- Glossary, Resources, and Connections to Common Core Standards

Before your students arrive:

- Discuss the words *Object, noun* and *Object, verb*. Think of ways the two meanings of these words intersect.
- Review bios and reference videos (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeis2TojXNUL6k5roabqs3A>) for each artist and discuss some of the larger social issues that each address in their art: consumerism and racial injustice.



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. 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
Curator of Education

UPCOMING PROGRAMS TO NOTE ON YOUR CALENDAR:

- **Performance Artist: Sunday, November 5, 3:00 – 3:45 PM, Free**
Tamar Ettun and The Moving Company present a performance in which bold colors, inflatables, sound, and dance collide.
- **Family Day: Art Out Loud! Sunday, December 10, 12:00 – 4:00 PM, Free**
A spectacular afternoon of assemblage art, costume-making, dancing and musical fun.

Introduction by curators Olga DeKalo and Darsie Alexander

Object Out Loud: Arman and Nick Cave—featuring two prominent artists separated by time and place—is designed as a visual dialogue. Incorporating work that is fundamentally sculptural and often political, the exhibition asserts the power of artists to transform everyday materials into symbolic relics replete with information and symbolism. Though emerging from vastly different moments and backgrounds, both Arman (1928-2005) and Nick Cave (b. 1969) share a love of the commonplace, from colorful sequins and chains to buttons and figurines. Through these diverse materials, often configured in dramatic standalone compositions, the artists reflect on their experiences, shaped by the reality of the world around them.

Arman's bold appropriation of mass-produced objects was a form of realism that captured a new relationship to commerce exploding during the 1950s. Increasingly during this period, artists were moving away from the conventional materials of studio creation to draw their ideas from popular culture. Materials and themes once considered too low for the aims of fine art were embraced by Arman's generation, which relished in turning highly familiar objects into fantastical and at times poetic artworks. Many of his objects have an aged patina, suggesting another time and use. Arman was the son of an amateur cellist and musical instruments appear frequently in his work, for example. So, too, does the cacophony of the street resound in the urban relics that crowd his compositions and infuse them with tactile energy.

Nick Cave is a multi-media artist whose work varies in scale and context from glittering installations to the iconic freestanding *Soundsuits*. A messenger and activist himself, his sustained interest in garments and their relationship to culture underlies his creation of sculptures built on themes of adornment, armor, and disguise. The first *Soundsuit* was made in response to the 1991 assault of Rodney King and the consequent uprisings in Los Angeles. At once ornately beautiful and powerfully political, Cave's work often returns to conversations about society, justice, and black lives. Visually dense, they suggest the intricacies of life, threaded together by many different textures and histories. The result is a visual matrix that inspires the double meaning of the exhibition's title, *Object Out Loud*. An object can refer to a tangible thing in the world, like sculpture. Yet the word can also be used as a verb—to object—to express disapproval and opposition. Here in this installation, these meanings are brought together in an animated dialogue spanning two visions and generations.

The exhibition is made possible in part by the generous support of Sara T. & Joshua Slocum, Judy & Tony Evnin, Jack Shainman Gallery, Stephanie French, and Armand Bartos.

The organizers wish to thank the Arman Marital Trust, Corice Arman, Trustee, and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, for their generous assistance with the exhibition.

The Katonah Museum of Art is supported in part by ArtsWestchester with support from the Westchester County Government, the New York State Council on the Arts with support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Artists as Activists

On your visit to the KMA, you will see the work of two artists, Arman and Nick Cave who use objects as their media – collecting, accumulating, and repurposing found objects, mementos, personal belongings, and other materials. Just like people, objects have their own stories, their own “memory bank,” as Cave puts it, and bring to mind certain meanings and associations, unique to everyone who comes into contact with them. These artists incorporate objects that hold special meaning into their work, transforming the objects and giving them a voice, creating artworks imbued with social commentary.

Arman responds to mass produced, over commercialized and wasteful consumer culture by accumulating goods and literally exposing the trash of his contemporaries. Nick Cave creates bedazzling, intricate, and sensuous sculptural works that act as a protective outer layer to mask identities and hide traditional qualifiers such as social status, race, and gender. Cave engages artists of color and disenfranchised communities to perform in his artworks, activating the social implications of his work.

As viewers and visitors, we experience the beauty, intrigue, and power of these artworks, allowing us to reflect on personal connections to the objects we see, and think more deeply about the role of artist as social activist and communicator of ideas.



ARMAN (1928-2005)

“I didn’t discover the principle of accumulation; it discovered me. As a witness of my society, I have always been very much involved in the pseudo-biological cycle of production, consumption, and destruction. And for a long time, I have been anguished by the fact that one of its most conspicuous material results is the flooding of our world with junk and rejected odd objects.”

The artist **Arman** (Armand Fernandez) was born in France in 1928. Although he originally studied philosophy and mathematics, his interest in art led him to become a member of a group of artists who thought painting had lost its relevance as the preeminent art form. . Instead, these artists used manufactured items, or ready-mades, putting them together to create sculptural artwork called “assemblage.” By using these objects, they were calling attention to mass production in the modern world and our tendency to collect and discard things at a rapid rate. They called their art the “New Realism.”

Arman created “Accumulations,” placing many identical objects such as clocks, musical instruments, or cars together so that the viewer lost sight of their original form and purpose. He made “Poubelles” or “Trash Cans” of household waste, collected from people and put into glass cases to be viewed. These works are biographical because they tell us something about the original owners, but they also highlight how we flood our world with things that are then just thrown away.

Arman was attracted to New York City in the 1960s because it was so full of the “stuff” he used for his art. He moved there permanently and became a naturalized US citizen. He was an active member of the New York art community, connecting his “New Realism” with the then emerging Pop Art world. He lived and worked in New York City until his death in 2005.

To learn more, view an interview with Arman’s wife, Corice on KMA’s YouTube channel:

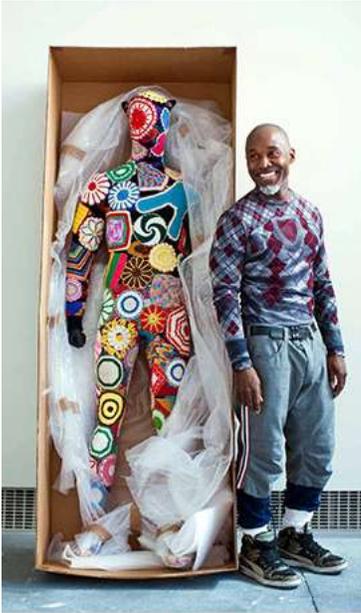
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QC0maAocW4>

Topics for discussion:

- Arman was concerned with mass consumption and consumerism cultures. Have your class discuss the relevancy of this topic in today’s world.
- What do you notice about the way people use (or reuse) everyday objects? What do you think your trash could say about you?



Arman’s work has been labeled the “archaeology of the Real.” Discuss the meaning of this phrase. Compare this concept to Cave’s description of himself as “a recycler of material and cultural artifacts.”



NICK CAVE (b. 1959)

“My work does comment on the surplus of objects...the despairing aspect of this abundance...I’m concerned with the discarding and dismissive nature of objects... objects that once held deep feelings and significance for their original owners... That’s the value of an object... its memory bank. An object is located within a specific time and place and can take us back to that specific time and place.”

The contemporary artist Nick Cave was born in Missouri in 1959 and studied art, fashion, and dance. He is currently based in Chicago where he is also a professor at the School of the Art Institute. Cave’s artwork incorporates both the visual and performing arts, using a range of media and materials. He has used materials as varied as yarn, sticks, toys, chains, found objects, and fabric in sculpture, videos, installations, and sound works.

Nick Cave is best known for his “Soundsuits,” human-shaped sculpture made of a wide variety of found and repurposed commonplace materials. The wearer is camouflaged, and their identity, race, gender, and class are hidden, forcing the viewer to look without judgement or bias. Cave regularly invites community dance troupes to perform in these Soundsuits, transforming the work into both a costume and a musical instrument, as the materials rustle and clatter. However playful they appear, they were first created as a metaphorical suit-of-armor in response to the social unrest, gun violence, and racial injustices that are experienced by black men in the United States. He is very interested in using his work to positively empower people saying “It’s my purpose to... to use art as a vehicle for change...”

Nick Cave has artwork in major museums across the US, including a recent massive immersive installation *Until* at MASS MoCA, (2016-2017), and solo exhibitions at the Cranbrook Art Museum (2015), St. Louis Art Museum (2014-2015), the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (2014), and the Denver Art Museum (2013). In 2017 he was awarded the International Medal of Arts by the US State Department

To hear the artist talk about his work and see more of it, the following is a short video from PBS:

<https://art21.org/watch/extended-play/nick-cave-thick-skin-short/>

Topics for discussion:

- Nick Cave said: “I feel called to action, and I’m trying to find a way, as a visual artist with a specific sense of responsibility, to be proactive.”
 - How do you or your parents respond to the things you find troubling on the news and in the world around you? Cave responds by creating art. How do you think art can help in this situation? Do you think art can carry a message? In what way?
- “I don’t have a clear reading of my work myself...what’s most important is honesty...for the work to remain in an honest place,” says Cave. His art makes us ask a lot of questions but then doesn’t provide the answers. Why would Cave want to do that?



Suggested activity for High School students: Art with a Message

(Adapted from the MASS MoCA Educator’s Guide for *Nick Cave: Until*, 2016-2017)

“I’ll do whatever it takes to elevate my work to a level where it can be an ‘activist,’ a ‘perpetrator’... I don’t want to push people away, I want to find a way that we can have this amazing diplomacy, this amazing conversation about ideas and difference.”

Collectively brainstorm social issues of concern to students. Invite students to create an activist artwork based on an issue of their choosing. Identify a question they want to ask in regards to that topic, followed by research (e.g. statistics, historical context, etc.) that helps find answers to their question. Have students identify a target audience and conduct research with that group in order to build empathy—seeing the topic from their audience’s point of view will help them design a better method for communicating their message. What medium(s) would speak to this audience? What imagery and materials best communicate the students’ messages? What venue would students choose to show their artwork?



Assemblage Art

An arrangement of various objects or materials combined into a composition.

Describe this artwork – what do you see?

Look closely at the objects included in this sculpture. Name and describe the items you see.

What memories and associations come to mind when you think about these objects?

What do you think of when you see a vintage spinning toy?

What ideas come to mind when you look closely at the horse?

What does the fabric patterns on the figure remind you of?

The artist Nick Cave has carefully selected and assembled all of these objects. Describe how he has manipulated and arranged the various objects.

Consider the placement and repetition.

How do the parts of this sculpture interact with each other?

What connection can you make between the objects?

When you put all these ideas together – the kind of objects, the associations elicited by the objects, and the way they are arranged in this sculpture, what feeling and ideas do you think about?

NICK CAVE, *Soundsuit*, 2016

mixed media including a large toy horse, toys, gloves, wire, metal and mannequin , 118 x 60 x 55 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Cave is best known for the richly adorned, wearable sculptures he calls *Soundsuits*. Functioning as both garment and sculpture, Cave's first *Soundsuit* originated during a historic moment in America: the 1991 assault of Rodney King and the subsequent riots in Los Angeles. Channeling his reaction to violence, racism, and profiling, Cave's first *suit*, was conceived as a suit of armor. Constructed out of twigs found on the ground, it rendered the artist's body invisible and created a powerful persona, with protruding twigs resembling defensive porcupine quills.

His subsequent suits continued to conceal the wearer's appearance while taking on a celebratory and playful dimension. An avid collector, Cave began sourcing vintage objects and personal items, such as doilies and materials he associates with childhood. Speaking to the autobiographical aspect of the suits he says, "An object is located within a specific time and place and can take us back....My memories are very significant. In terms of the objects I utilize, it's where the emotion lies...where what *was* and what *is* intersect and become a reality."

Object Portraits

Character sketch using objects

Look carefully at this artwork. What do you see?

Name and describe the objects you see.

Notice unique details about the objects.

Consider the placement and arrangement of the items

Why do you think the artist included these objects in this work?

Think of each object as having its own story: What kind of story would the objects tell?

The artist calls it a “portrait.” Discuss how this is *like* or *unlike* a traditional portrait.

What does it tell us about the person being portrayed?

If you created a portrait of yourself using found objects, which objects might you use?

If you were to create a portrait of your class, what objects would you use?

ARMAN, *Robot Portrait of Arman*, 1992

Accumulation of personal belongings in a wood box with Plexiglas cover, 46 x 38 x 8 inches

Courtesy of the Arman Marital Trust, Corice Arman, Trustee

The series *Robot Portraits*—or, more literally, character sketches—formalized Arman’s accumulation aesthetic in the early 1960s. Arman gathered personal objects belonging to his friends and collaborators, as well as his own, into Plexiglas boxes to explore the symbolic power of one’s belongings and to offer an intimate look into personalities. Speaking to the criteria for creating the works, he said, “I prefer to know the model of a robot portrait, not just superficially but over time intuitively and completely.”



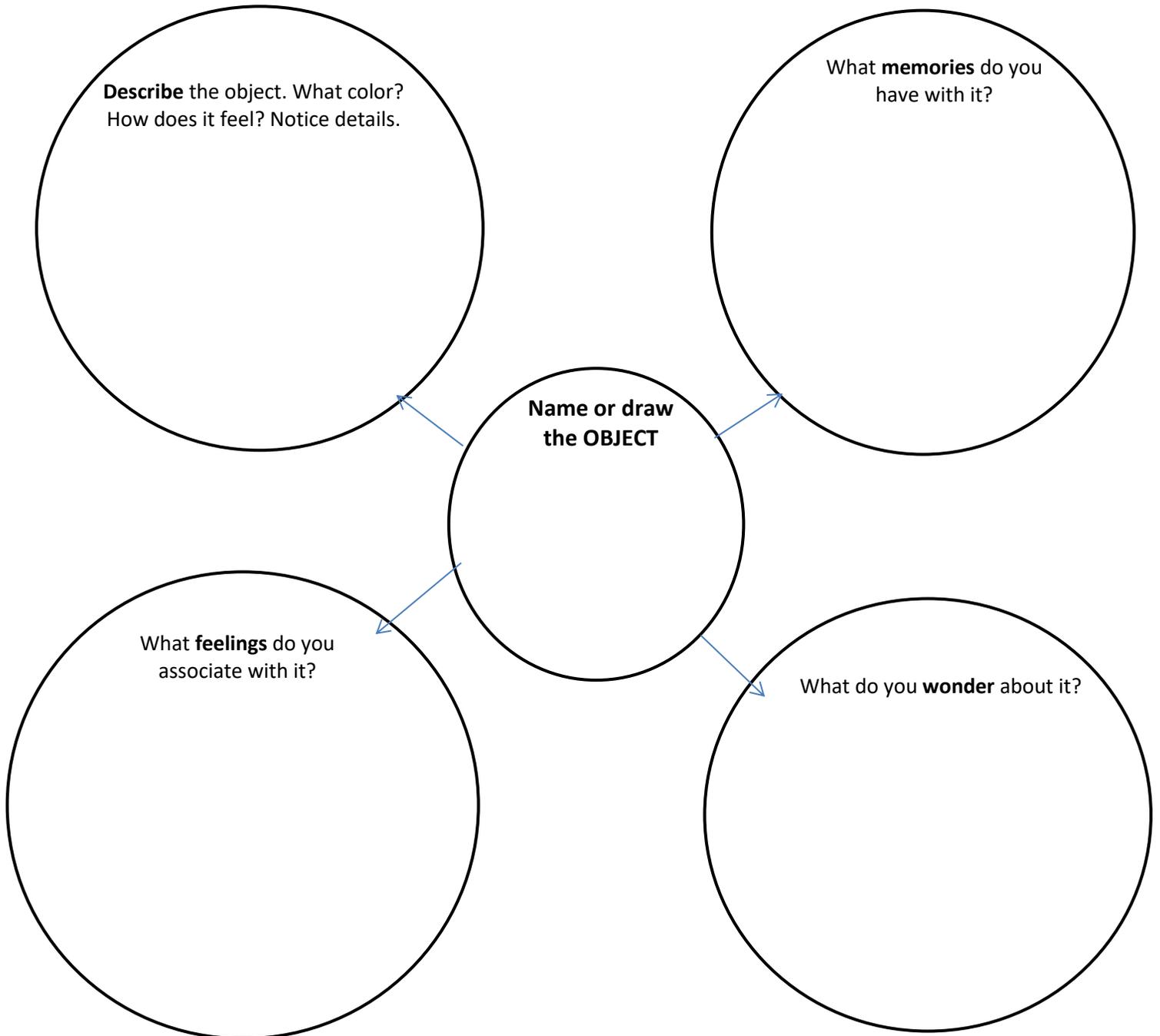
Topic for discussion:

How do we share information about ourselves with others? Which elements of our personal or cultural identity do we make public and which do we keep private? Why?

The Meaning of Objects

Objects evoke associations, meaning, and memory. They can tell a lot about a person, place, or event. Choose one of the following prompts and fill in the bubble chart below.

- 1) Think of one object that tells us something about *YOU*. Maybe it shows an aspect of your identity or personality, or suggests a favorite activity, sport or hobby, like a soccer ball, paint brush, or book.
- 2) Think of one object that reminds you of some *PLACE*. Maybe you got a souvenir while on your trip to see your grandparents? Or a shell from your favorite spot at the beach?
- 3) Think of one object that reminds you of a significant *EVENT* in your life. Do you remember the special shoes you wore on your first day of school? Or maybe the cast that was taken off your arm?



Name: _____

GLOSSARY

Accumulation: The collecting together of a large number of things over a period of time.

Assemblage Art: A work consisting of an arrangement of various objects or materials combined into a composition.

Collage: The technique and the resulting work of art in which pieces of paper, photographs, fabric and other materials are arranged and stuck down onto a supporting surface.

Collection: An accumulation of objects gathered for study, comparison, or exhibition or as a hobby

Contemporary Art: The art of today, produced by artists who are living in the twenty-first century. Contemporary art provides an opportunity to reflect on present-day society and the issues relevant to ourselves and the world around us.

Detritus: Waste or debris of any kind.

Disguise: Intended to conceal identity or character.

Elements of art: The components and techniques an artist uses to create a piece of art, including:

- **Composition** – The careful arrangement of parts in relation to the whole.
- **Line** – A continuous mark between points.
- **Color** – An important element of art that can affect mood, feeling, balance, energy, and memory.
- **Shape** – Two dimensional object in space.
- **Scale** – The size of an object relative to something else.
- **Texture** – The element of art that refers to how things feel, or look as if they might feel if touched.

Exquisite Corpse: Based on an old parlor game favored by Surrealists, artists build a figure on an absurd assembly line. Typically a piece of paper is folded into sections and passed around; the challenge is that each artist must work on one particular segment without having seen the others. The results are often monstrous, or at least mismatched.

Found Object: Originates from the French *objet trouvé*, describing art created from everyday objects or products that are not normally considered materials from which art is made.

Identity: Characteristics that highlight the uniqueness of an object or person.

Mannequin: A model of the human figure designed for display.

Consumerism: A social and economic order and ideology that encourages the acquisition of goods and services in ever-increasing amounts.

Mass produced: The production of large quantities of a (standardized) product by an automated mechanical process.

Mixed- Media: The integrated use of different media or materials, especially within the arts

New Realism: The term "Nouveau Realisme" refers to the European movement of contemporary art founded in 1960 by the painter Yves Klein (1928-62) in Milan. The principal concern of New Realism was how to respond to the changed role of art within the new consumer society, in view of the fact that (according to Restany) fine art painting was dying. Their approach was to challenge traditional art forms and materials by focusing on new types of art, such as assemblage, conceptualism, collage and experimental poster art.

Object (n): A material thing that can be seen and touched.

Object (v): To express one's disapproval of or disagreement with something.

Pattern: The repetition of anything – shapes, lines, or colors.

Portrait: A portrait is a representation of a particular person.

Public Performance: A dance, work of art, or play shared with an audience

Racial Injustice: The act of being unjust to an individual or group based on race, particularly concerning legally recognized rights.

Readymade: A term coined by Marcel Duchamp in 1915 to describe prefabricated, often mass-produced objects isolated from their intended use and elevated to the status of art by the artist choosing and designating them as such.

Regalia: Ceremonial clothes.

Self-Portrait: A portrait of an artist produced or created by that artist.

Social Activism: An intentional action with the goal of bringing about social change. If you feel strongly about a cause and are working towards a change, you could be considered an activist. An activist is anyone who is fighting for change or to make improvements in society.

Social Commentary: Social commentary is the act of expressing an opinion on the nature of society. It is most often done with the idea of implementing or promoting change.

Soundsuit: Sculptural full-body suits created by artist Nick Cave for performance and display.

Stereotype: An oversimplified or exaggerated generalization.

Three-dimensional (3-D): Refers to artwork that has mass which includes height, width and depth, such as a wire sculpture that may be viewed by walking around it.

Visual text: Visual literacy is the ability to interpret, negotiate, and make meaning from information presented in the form of an image (visual text), extending the meaning of literacy, which commonly signifies interpretation of a written or printed text.

For video references

- Katonah Museum's Youtube Playlist: ***Object Out Loud***

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEis2TojXNUL6k5roabqs3A>

Includes many videos showing the process and performative aspect of Nick Cave's work, as well as a few insightful interviews.

KMA Museum Visits and the Common Core standards

Class visits to the KMA enable you and your students to expand on the critical skills emphasized in 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 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 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