

WHITNEY

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**2017
BIENNIAL**

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**ACTIVITY
GUIDE**

WELCOME

The 2017 Whitney Biennial is an exhibition of what's happening in contemporary American art. The exhibition features the work of 63 artists and artist collectives. Many of the Biennial artists explore how the times we live in affect our sense of self and community. Some artists draw attention to important social and political issues, while others ask us to pause, reflect, and consider new ways of experiencing the world around us. A few of these artists might even change your ideas about what art can be!

A number of the activities in this guide were designed by the Biennial artists. We hope they will inspire the artist in you too. Have fun!

Join Us

Check out our lineup of tours, drop-in programs, art-making workshops, and artist-led programs at whitney.org/Families.

FLOORS 1 AND 5 SAY IT LOUD!

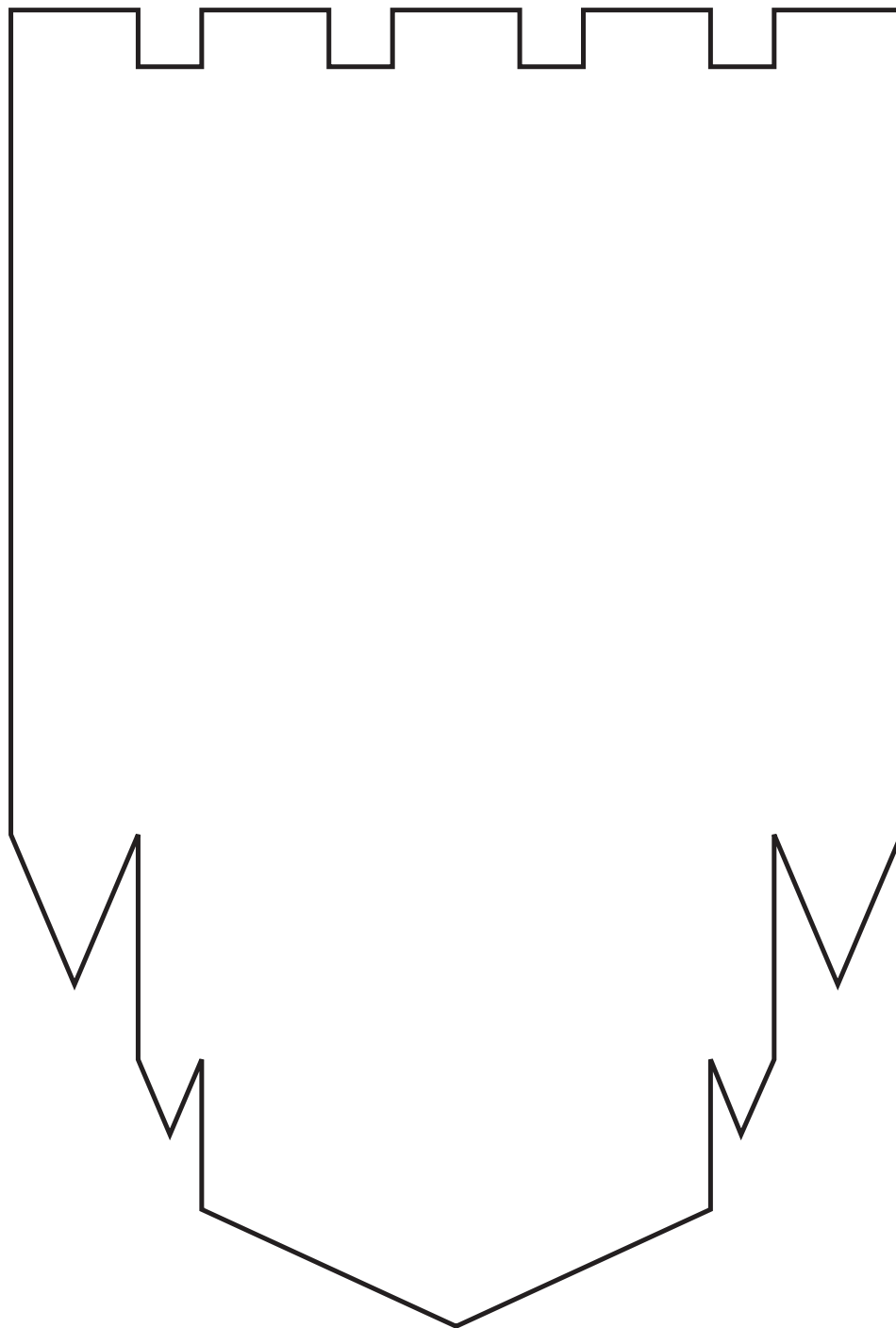
Cauleen Smith

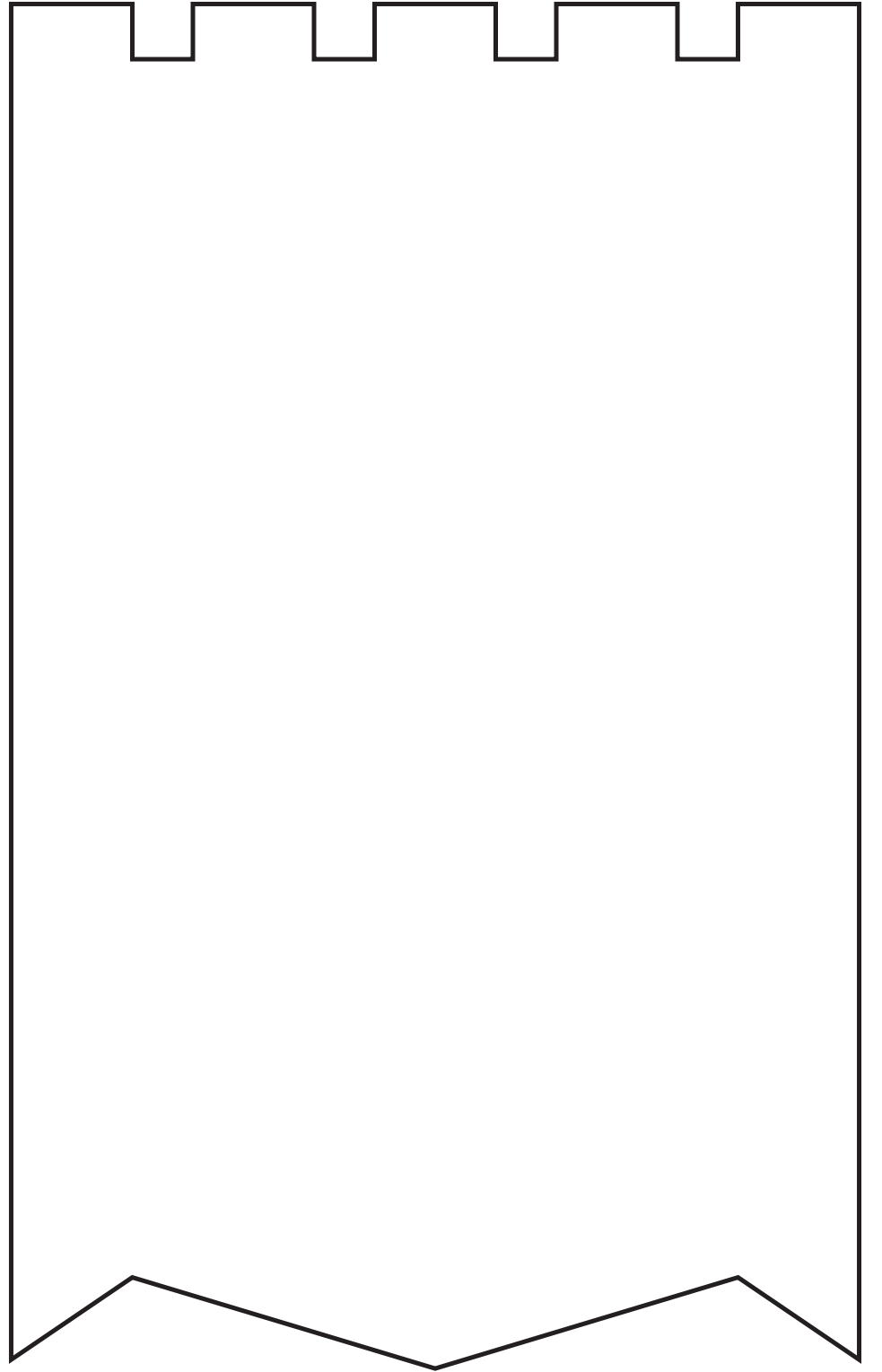
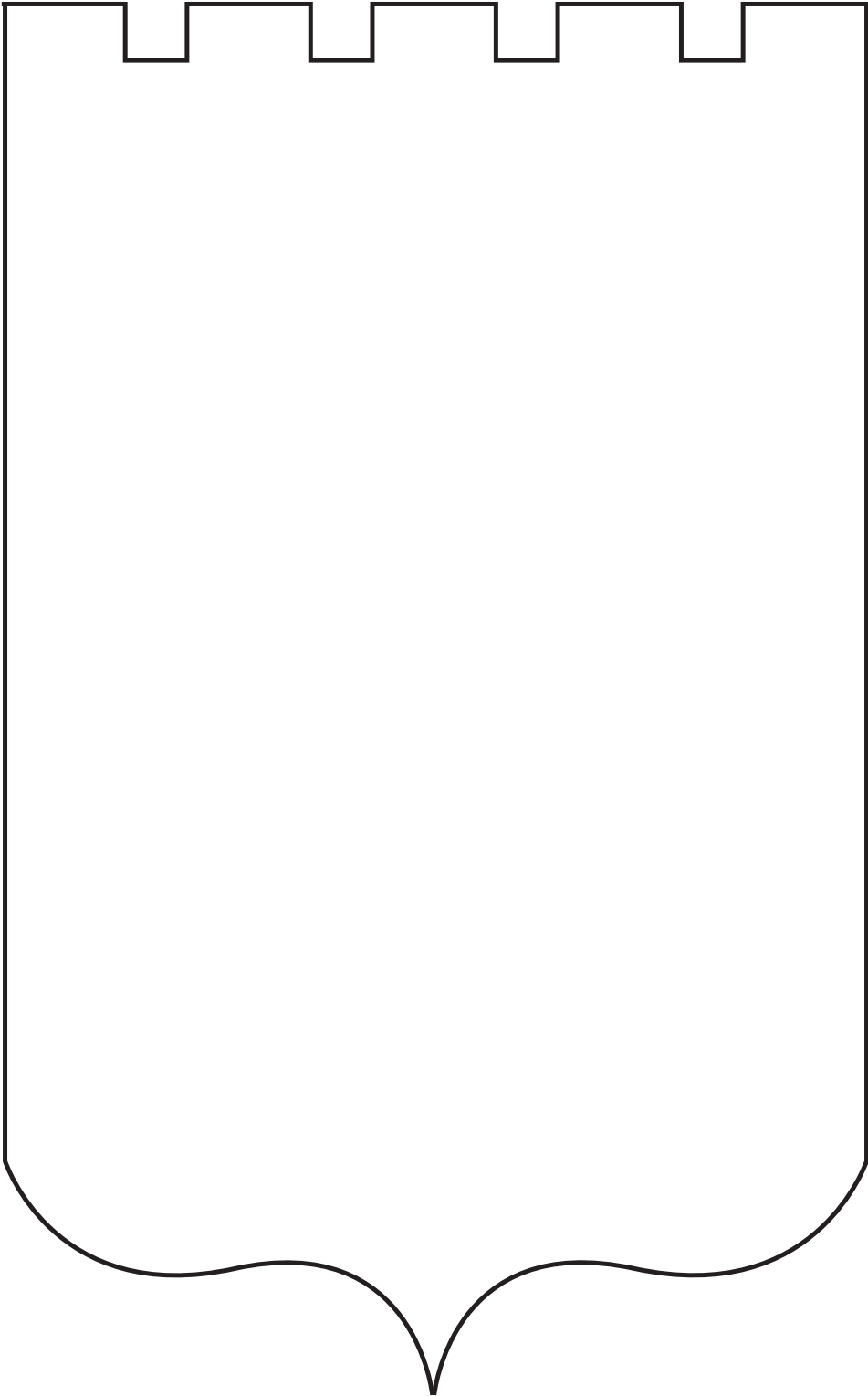
Sixteen hanging fabric banners, 2017

The hand-sewn words and symbols on these banners represent issues that are important to Cauleen Smith, such as prejudice, racism, and people's inability to understand one another. Smith says that the pencils and microphones suggest communication and that the crows represent overlooked people, or flight and freedom. Talk with your family about the words and symbols on each banner and what they mean to you.

Smith invites you to make your own banners that represent something you feel strongly about. What symbols and words will you use to communicate your message? What will your banners look like?

Use the shapes to make banners about issues that are important to you.





FLOOR 1

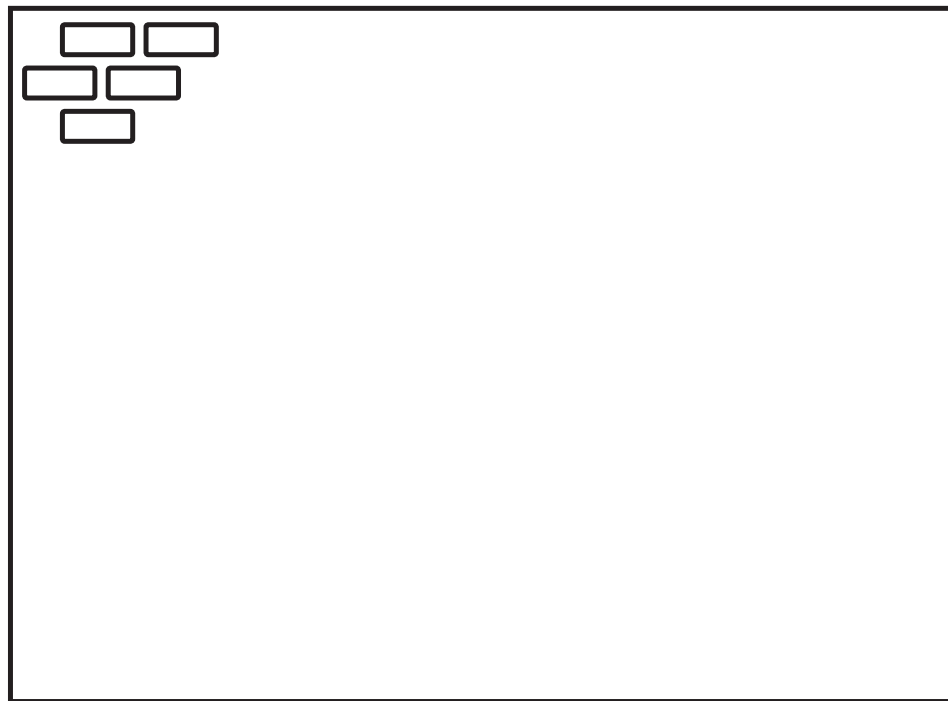
PLAY YOUR PART

Rafa Esparza

Figure Ground: Beyond the White Field, 2017

Rafa Esparza built this circular structure with thousands of adobe bricks! He and his crew made the bricks in California out of dirt, clay, straw, and horse dung(!), which they mixed with water, shaped, and then dried in the sun. Esparza's Mexican-born father taught him how to make adobe bricks and helped him with this installation. Esparza believes that working together builds community, so he has invited other artists to contribute an artwork, a poem, or a performance to this structure. Step inside. How does it feel to be in this space?

If Esparza invited you to write a poem or make a work of art for this structure, what would you create? Draw or write your proposed piece here.



FLOOR 5

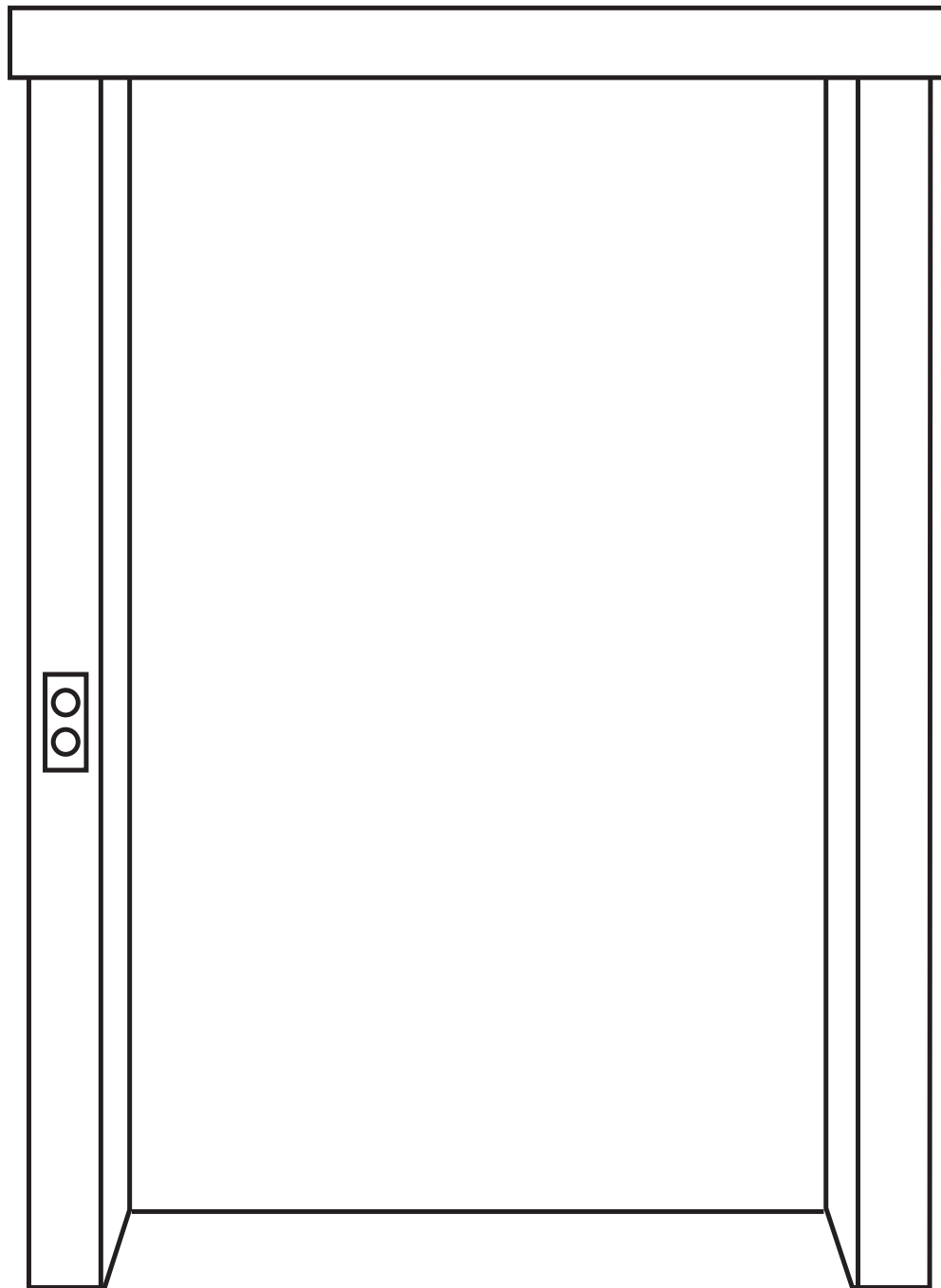
FILL IT UP

Dana Schutz
Elevator, 2017

Dana Schutz invites us to think about human experience, the everyday world, and our own place in it. Her paintings are often organized around enclosed spaces where people are contained and crowded together. This painting shows people squished in an elevator. Look for parts of figures and clothing. What else is going on?

Take a ride in one of the Whitney's elevators if you haven't already. What was it like? Compare your experience with Schutz's painting.

Draw a crowd in the Whitney's elevator. Fill it up with people of all shapes and sizes. Cram them in! Look at the people around you for inspiration.



FLOOR 5

CLIMATE CHANGE

Jon Kessler

Evolution, 2016

Jon Kessler is interested in how global warming and climate change affect our planet—from mass migration of people to rising sea levels and the loss of animal habitats. Kessler invites you to explore his artwork, *Evolution*, and look for:

Driftwood
The artist found this wood on the banks of the Hudson River.

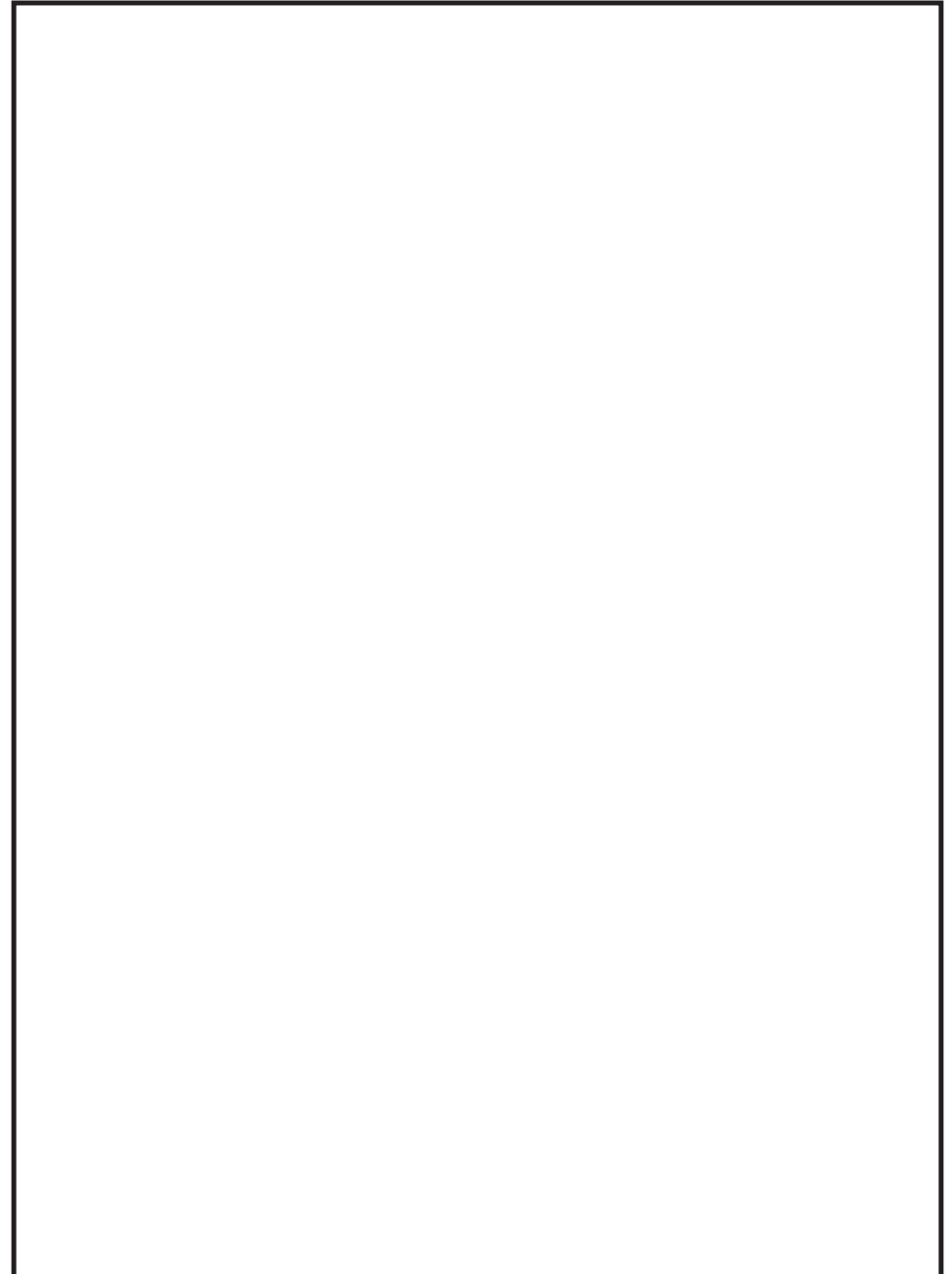
Coral
As the sea becomes warmer and more acidic, coral dies and loses its color.

An image that looks like waves
Investigate what is creating the waves.

Virtual Reality Goggles
Imagine what the figures wearing these goggles are looking at. Can they see one another?

Fish
Do they look alive or dead? Why?

Kessler challenges you to draw a human who has evolved to cope with climate change. How will you alter parts of their body? What devices and tools will they need to survive? What will their surroundings look like?



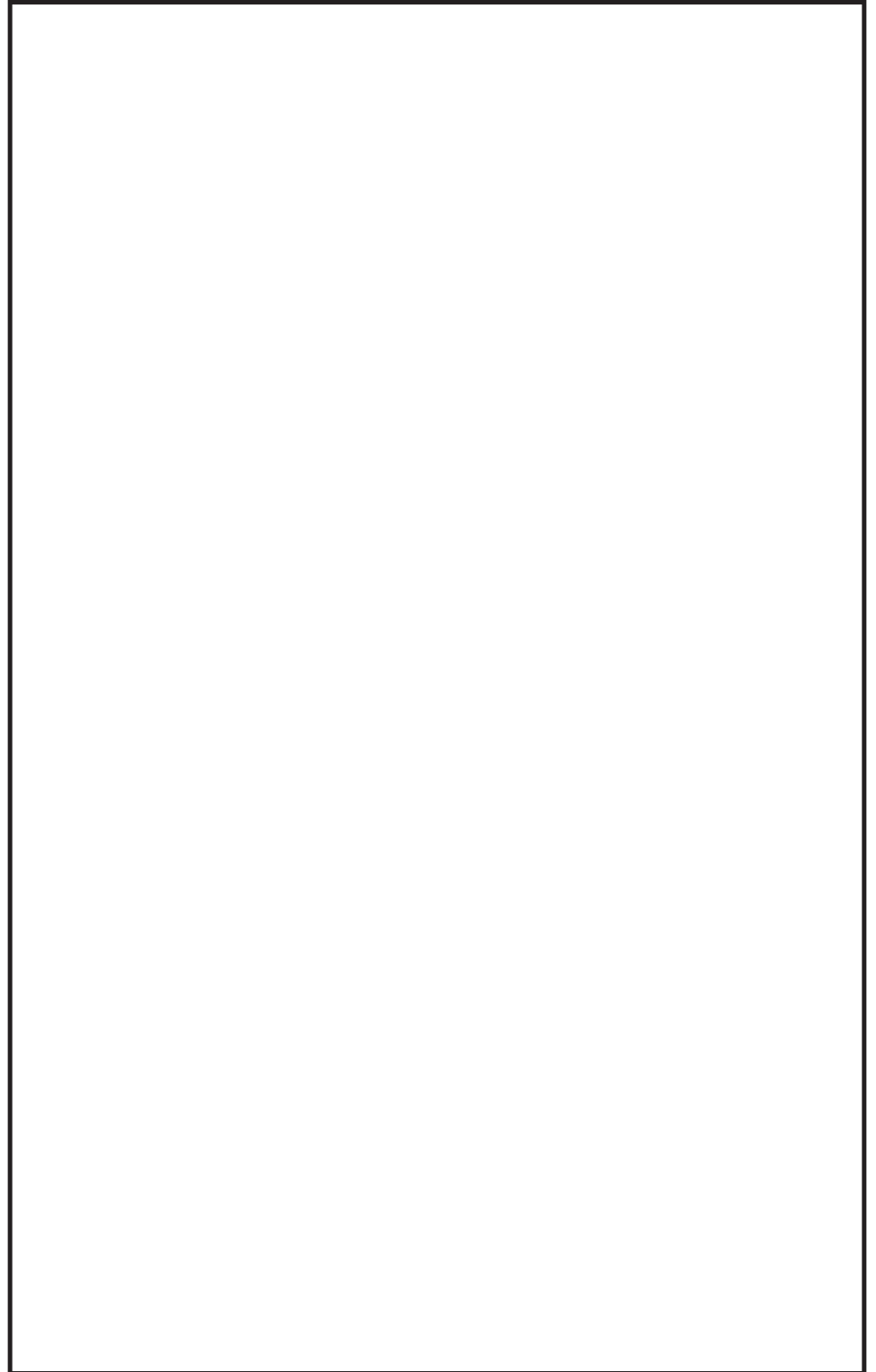
FLOOR 5

COLLABORATE

John Riepenhoff
Handler, 2015

John Riepenhoff likes to support other artists. He is interested in what happens when artists work together. These sculptures are casts of Riepenhoff's own legs, holding up artworks by other artists. If you collaborated with another artist, whose work would you hold up for everyone to see? Riepenhoff invites you to make a collaborative artwork.

- 1.** Draw a nice big shape on the page. Be sure to leave enough space for drawing inside and outside the shape. Next, fill in the area outside of the shape with anything you like.
- 2.** Now invite someone you're with to draw a picture inside the shape. Their drawing can be of anything. How do your drawings look together?



FLOOR 5

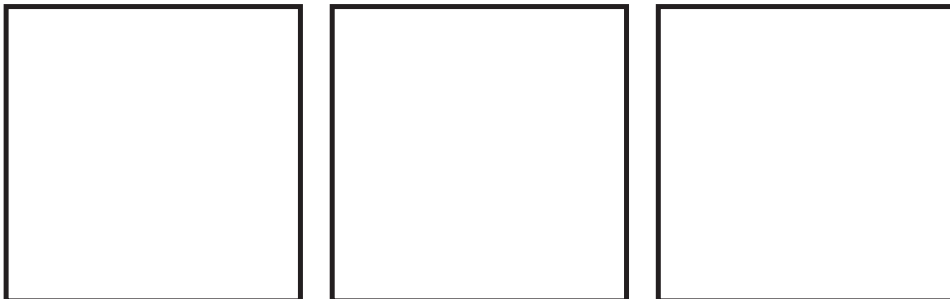
ON THE MOVE

Aliza Nisenbaum

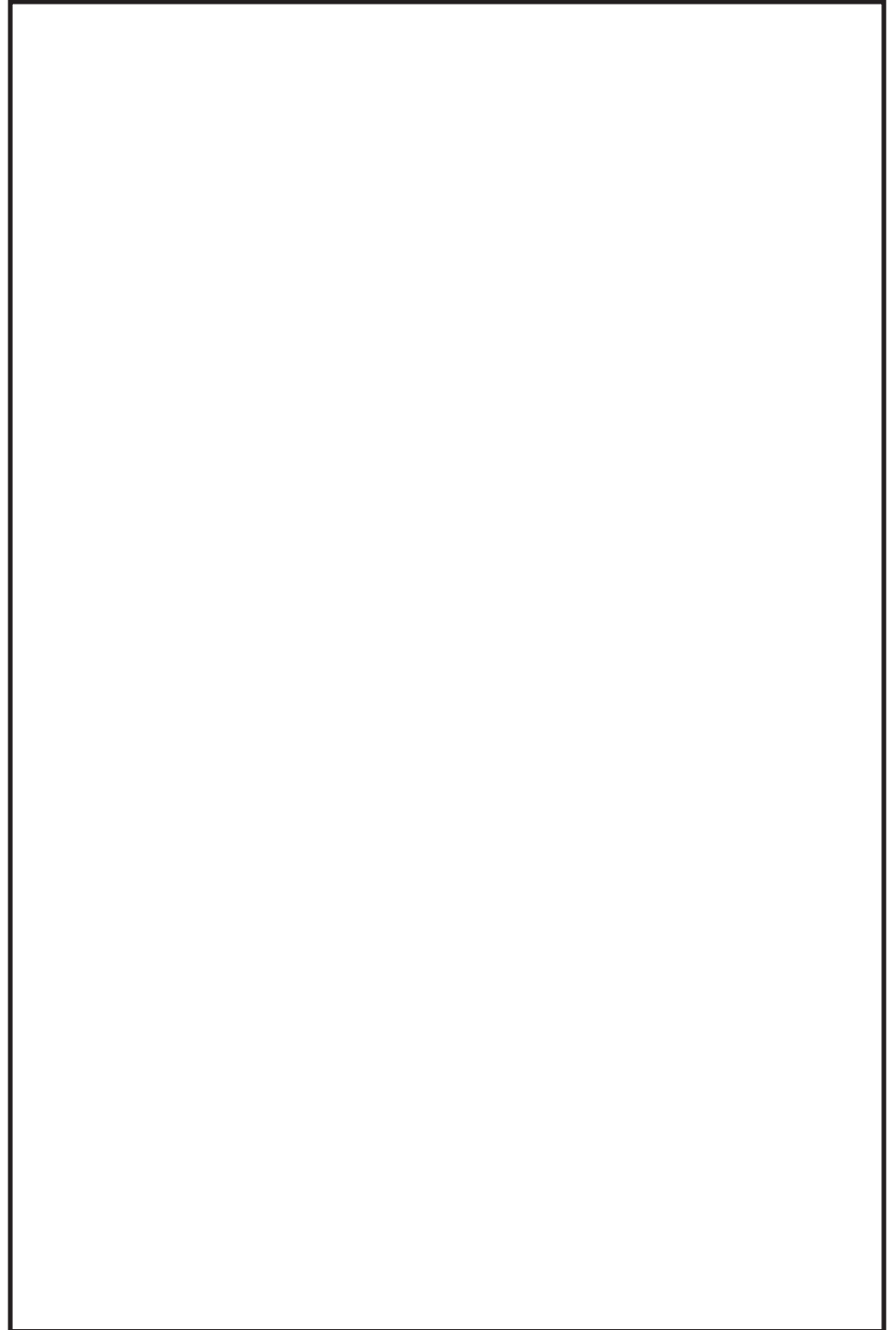
La Talaverita, Sunday Morning NY Times, 2016

Aliza Nisenbaum met many of the immigrants featured in her work while she was teaching art classes in Queens, New York. She asks her subjects to model for her so that she can get to know them well. Her paintings include textiles and other objects that relate to where her subjects are from. Notice how Nisenbaum represents the lives of these immigrants. Now compare Nisenbaum's portraits with images of immigrants that you've seen in the media. How are they different?

If you moved to another country, what objects would you take with you? What do they represent to you?

Three empty square boxes arranged horizontally, intended for drawing objects that the student would take if they moved to another country.

Draw a self-portrait with two or three of those objects.

A large empty rectangular box intended for drawing a self-portrait incorporating the objects drawn in the previous section.

FLOOR 5

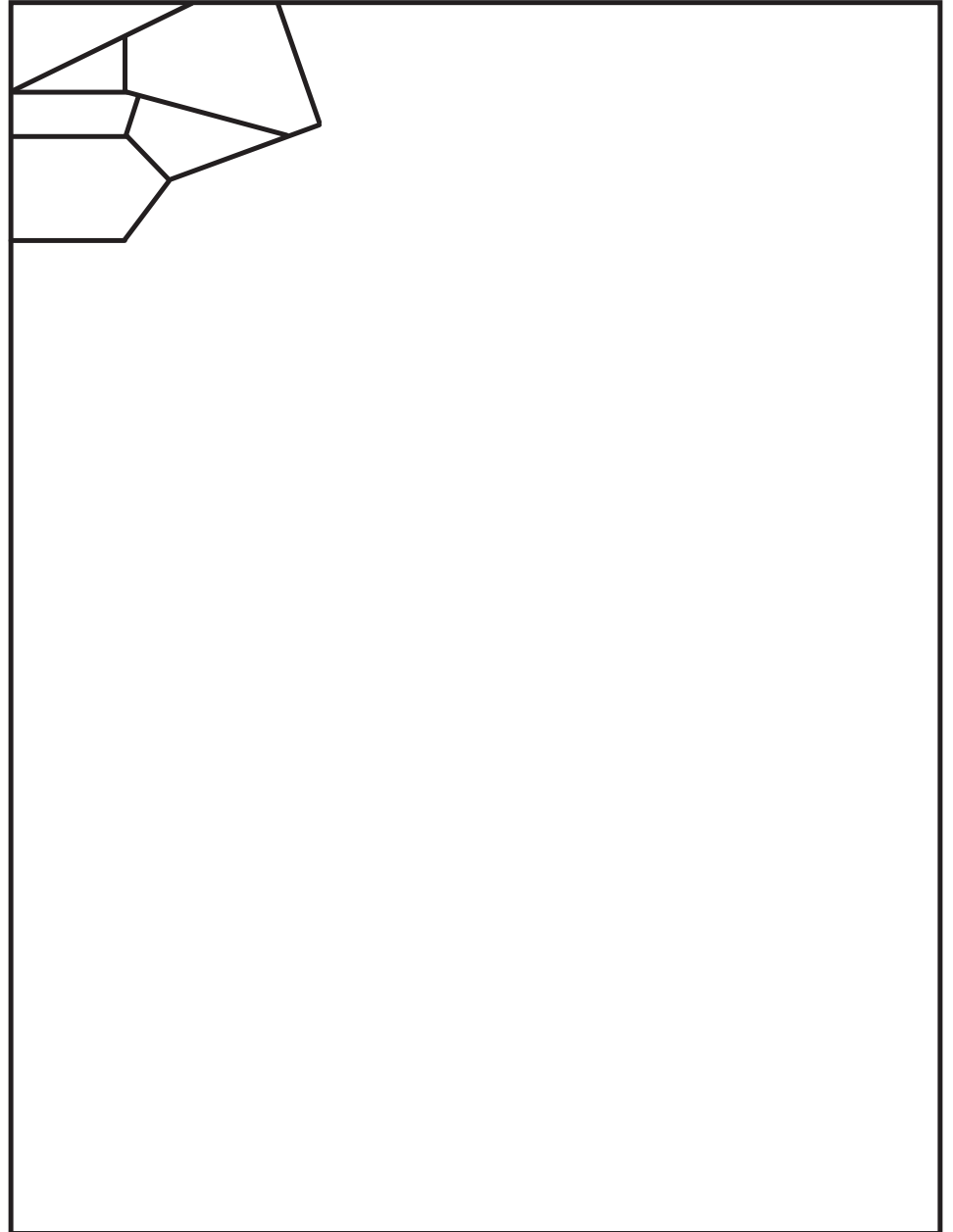
LOOK AT THE LIGHT

Raúl de Nieves

*beginning & the end neither & the otherwise betwixt
& between the end is the beginning & the end, 2016*

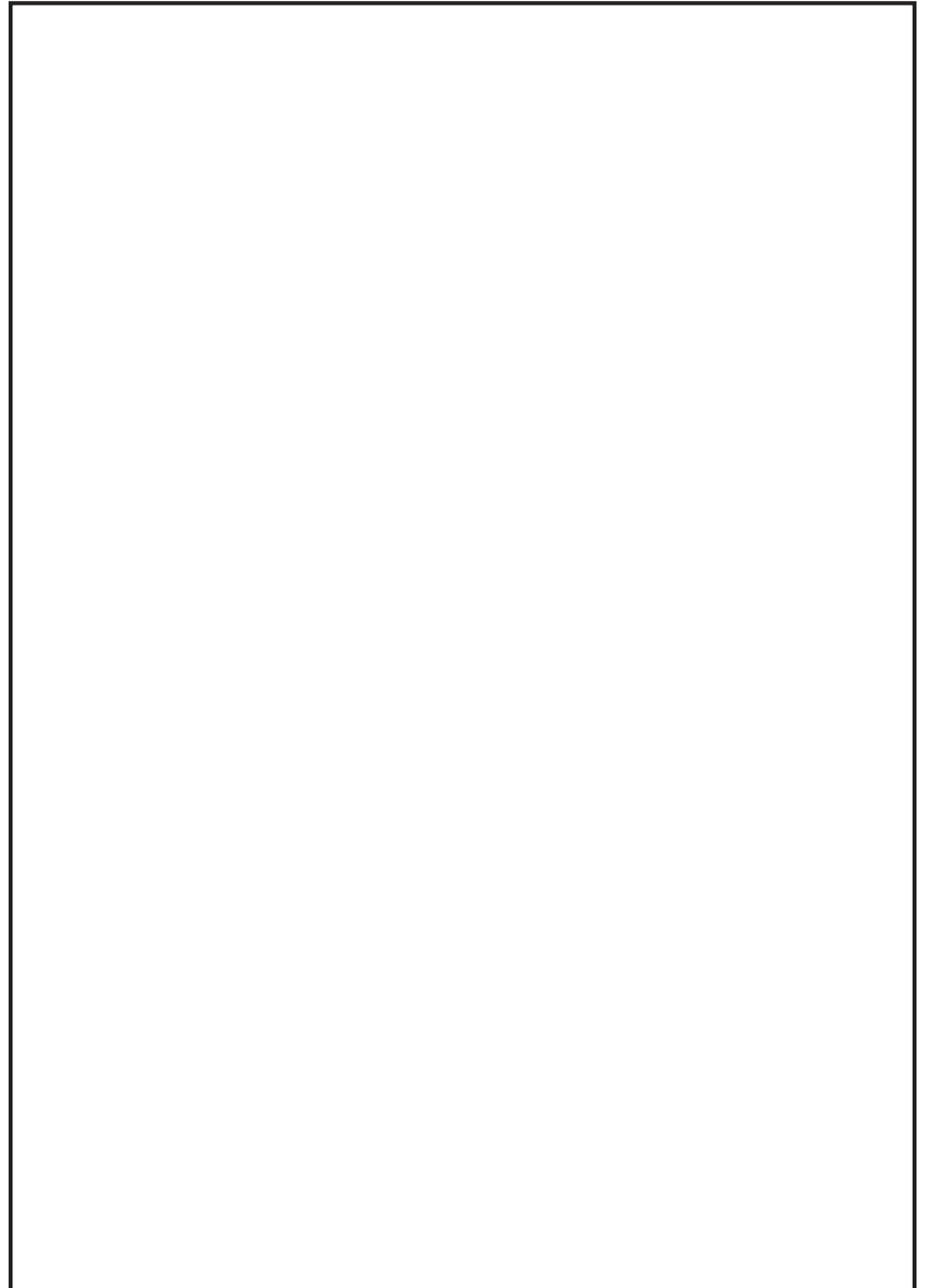
Check out this huge stained glass mural by Raúl de Nieves. He created each panel by hand, with paper, wood, glue, and acetate sheets. De Nieves often transforms everyday materials into something fantastical. Look closely at the colors, shapes, symbols, and figures in the windows. Who are the characters? What are they doing? Tell your family a story about what you think is happening.

De Nieves wants you to notice the light and shadow coming in through the windows. Observe how the light interacts with the gallery space. Now design your own stained glass panel. What shapes, symbols, and figures will you include? Add color to your drawing at home.



FLOORS 5 AND 6 DRAW IT INSIDE OUT!

Think of a couch, chair, or other piece of furniture that you often use at home. Imagine it turned inside out! What would it look like? Draw a picture of it.



Jessi Reaves

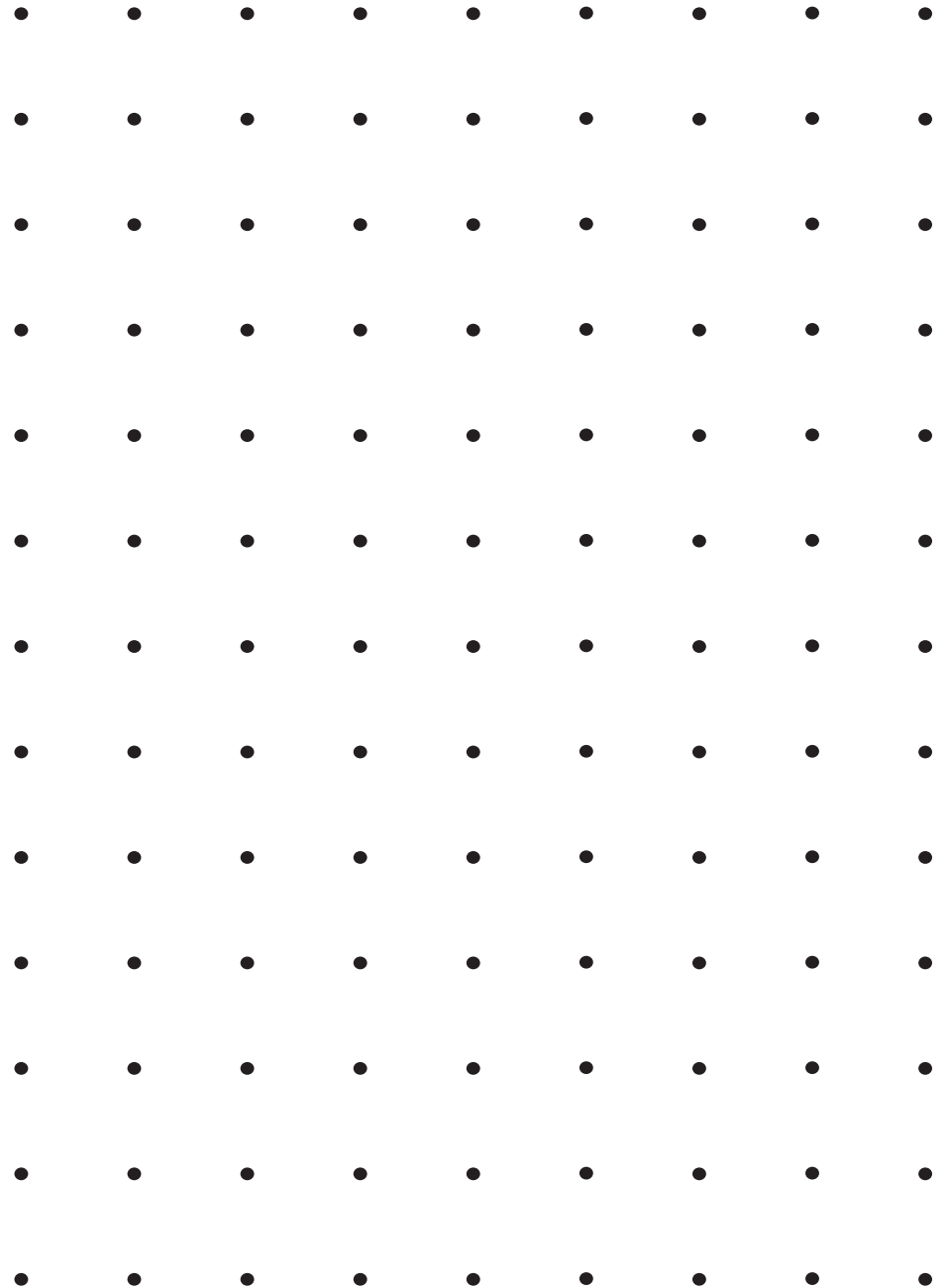
Ottoman with Parked Chairs, 2017

Take a seat on some unusual used furniture that is also artwork! Jessi Reaves constructs her chairs, couches, and shelves so that we can see the materials—including plywood, sawdust, and foam padding—that are normally hidden inside furniture.

FLOORS 5 AND 6

EXPAND AND COLLAPSE

Use the dots to invent your own grid composition.
Try expanding your lines across the page or collapsing
them together.



Matt Browning
Untitled, 2016

Matt Browning hand-carved each of these artworks from a single piece of wood. The interlocking sections of the grids are joined together like the links of a chain. Each grid can be expanded and hung on the wall, or collapsed into a neat pile. Look closely at these simple grids and notice how the forms interlock.

FLOOR 6

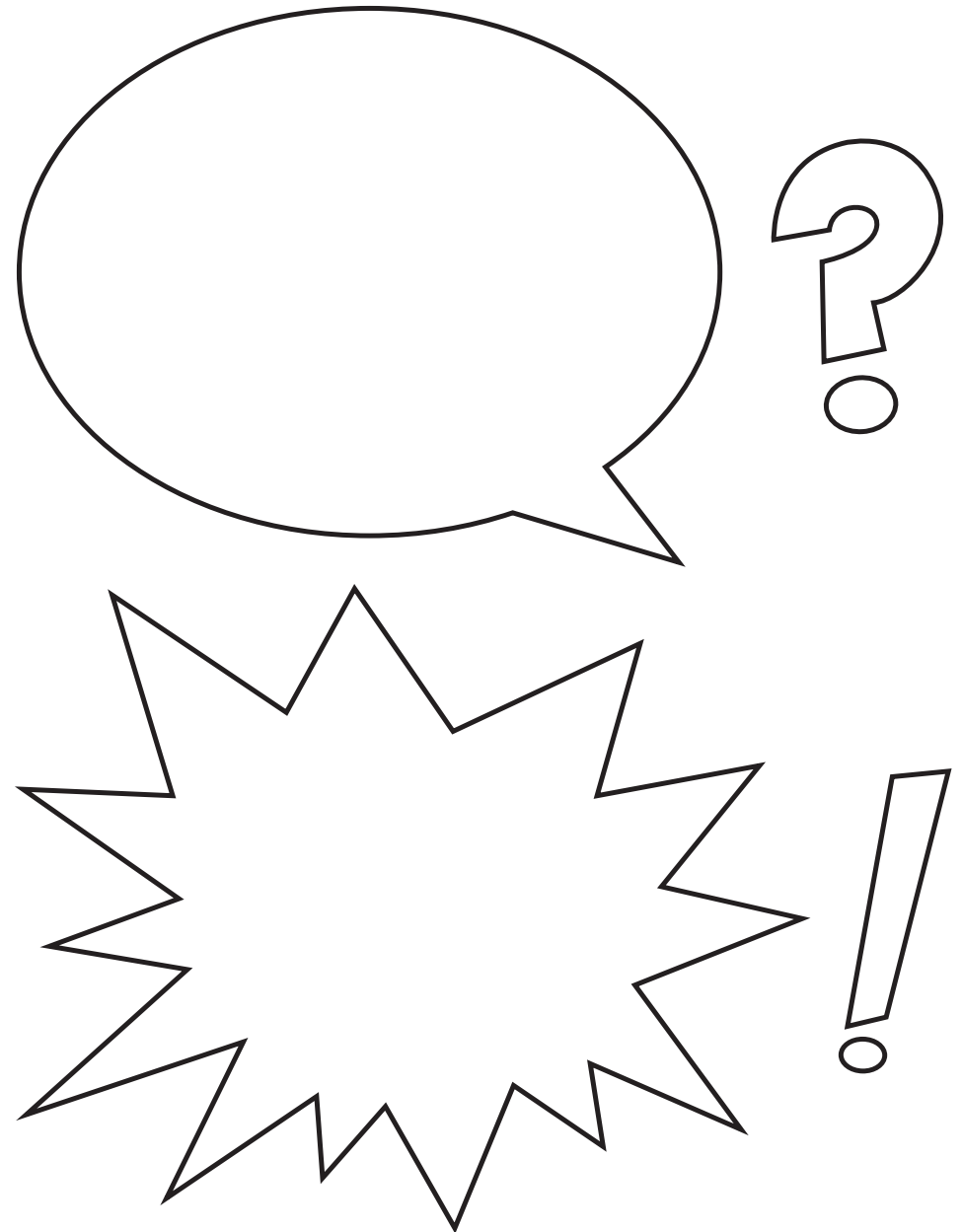
COMMUNICATE

Communicate a message to someone you're with using a language that is different from the one you speak most often. Use another language that you know, make one up, or communicate just with your hands and body. How did it feel? Did the person understand you?

Sky Hopinka

Visions of an Island, 2016

Sky Hopinka's film is a portrait of Saint Paul Island in the Bering Sea, which is part of the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. The Aleut (al-yoot) people who live on the island have their own ancient language, but it is hardly spoken anymore. In one scene of the film, silhouetted figures struggle to communicate in the language of their ancestors, showing that although language can lead to knowledge, it might also be difficult—or even impossible—to understand.



FLOOR 6

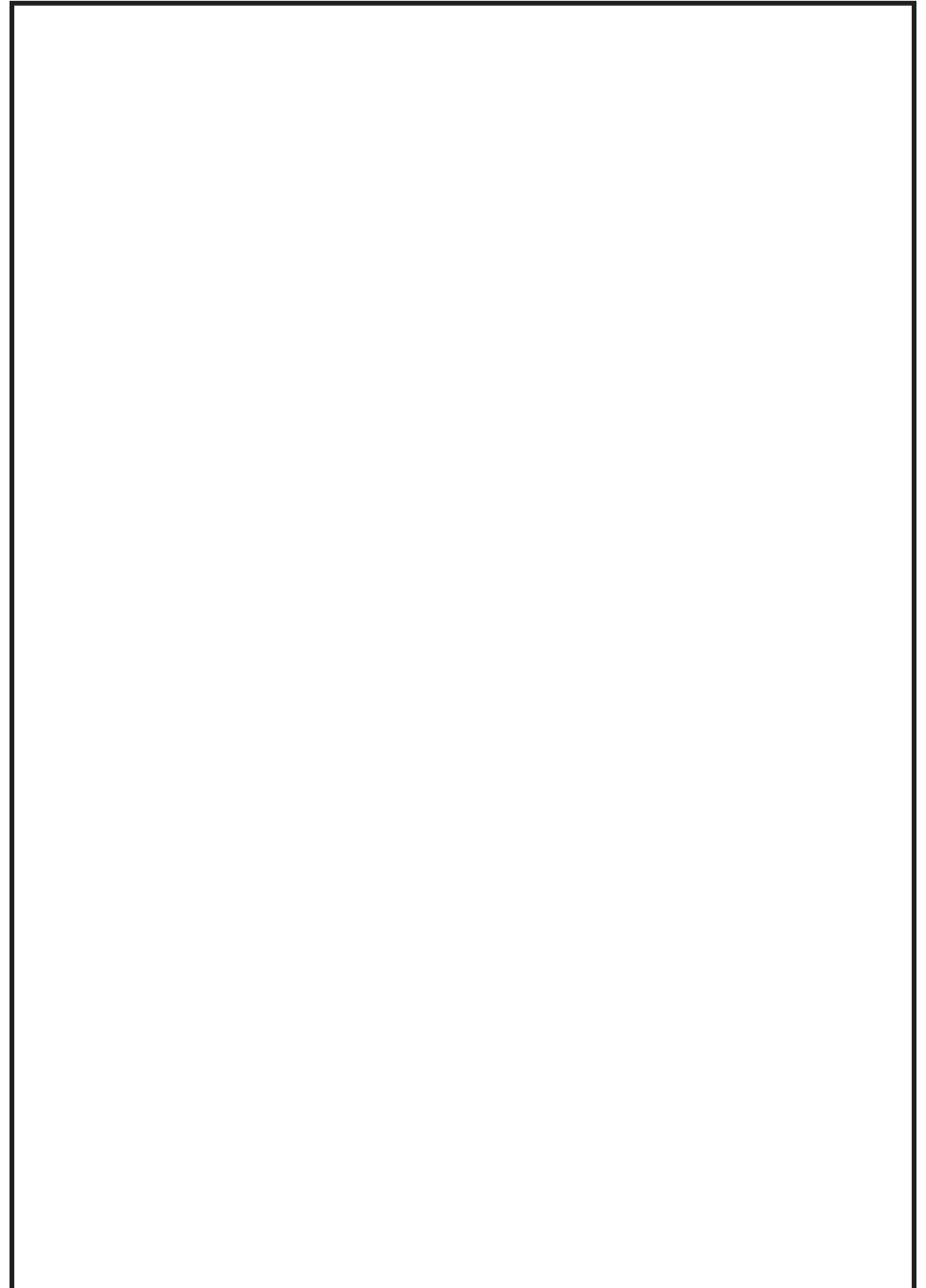
MAKE A PORTRAIT

Make a portrait of someone special. Include a background, clothing, and objects to provide clues about this person.

Henry Taylor

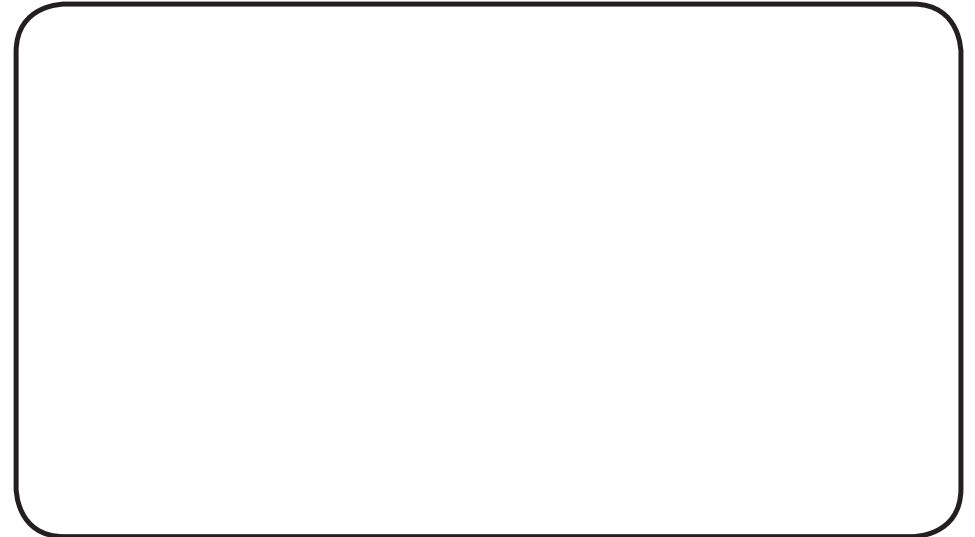
The Love of Cousin Tip, 2017

Henry Taylor often paints portraits of his family and ancestors, such as his mother, cousin, and grandfather. The artist has said: “I paint those subjects I have love and sympathy for.” Look closely at the people in Taylor’s paintings. Notice where they are, what they are wearing, and which objects are around them. What can you tell about them? If you made a portrait of someone important to you, who would it be?



FLOORS 1 AND 6 CREATE A SIGN

As you explore the Museum, think about your surroundings. What do you want people to notice? Look for something inside or outside of the Museum. Make your own sign to grab people's attention. You can design it any way you like!



Make another one!



Park McArthur

Another word for memory is life, 2017

Park McArthur's artwork draws on the shared experience of how people access places and information. She had these signs made in the size and shape of highway road signs. Brown signs like these are used to draw attention to points of cultural or historical interest, like museums, parks, and battlefields. Notice what is different about McArthur's signs—they are blank! Because they are blank, they can be filled in by your imagination.

Don't miss these works in the 2017 Whitney Biennial. Here is a list of other artists whose works you may want to visit.

Floor 3

Harold Mendez

Floor 5

Larry Bell

Oto Gillen

Samara Golden

Shara Hughes

Carrie Moyer

Julien Nguyen

Chemi Rosado-Seijo

Anicka Yi

Floor 6

Jo Baer

KAYA

An-My Lê

Asad Raza

Kaari Upson

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