DAVID HAMMONS DAY’S END ACTIVITY GUIDE
Day’s End is a permanent public art project by David Hammons (b. 1943), located in Hudson River Park along the southern edge of Gansevoort Peninsula, directly across from the Whitney Museum. It was fabricated out of stainless steel and installed in 2021.

This Whitney Kids activity guide is designed to introduce you to David Hammons, his artwork Day’s End, the ecology of the Hudson River, the history of the waterfront, and the Meatpacking District. We hope it will inspire the artist in you, too!
David Hammons's art includes prints, installations, paintings, and performance. As one of the most influential artists working today, Hammons has reimagined what art can be. He often transforms discarded objects such as bottle caps, paper bags, and hair collected from the floors of Black barbershops so as to address issues of race and class. He's made impossibly high basketball hoops from telephone poles covered in a mosaic of bottle caps, and even sold snowballs on a Manhattan sidewalk as works of art!
David Hammons's *Day’s End* was inspired by Gordon Matta-Clark’s 1975 work of the same name. Both artists began their artworks with a sketch. Matta-Clark and his assistants cut five openings into the floor and walls of the empty, run-down Pier 52 shed that occupied the site in the 1970s. One observer even called it a “sun and water temple” because of the ever-changing play of sunlight and water in the space. Hammons imagined an open structure that follows the exact outlines, shape, scale, and location of the Pier 52 shed that Matta-Clark used to make his *Day’s End*.

**Fun Facts**

Hammons's *Day’s End* is made from an extra-strong kind of steel called Super-Duplex. It won’t rust or corrode even while standing in the water.

The sculpture is 52 feet tall and 325 feet long—longer than a football field, or the Whitney Museum!

The artist wanted the steel pieces to be as thin as possible, so the sculpture would seem to disappear when the light was right. It’s not lit at night, either.
Find a place to sit and gaze at Hammons’s *Day’s End*. Look upward to the sky or across the river. Can you see a boat, a building, a bird, a cloud? Something else? Sketch what you see.
Hammons’s *Day’s End* is like a big line drawing in space. It shimmers and changes with the light and the weather. The artwork is not illuminated at night, so it disappears into the darkness at the end of the day. Its ghostly shape suggests a monument, too. A monument is a structure or a sculpture that honors the memory of a person or an event. This monument hints at the history of Pier 52, from its beginnings to today.
The Lenape are the original inhabitants of the area now known as the Meatpacking District. The name Manhattan comes from the Lenape word Manahatta, which means “the land of many hills.” The Whitney Museum is located near the Lenape fishing and planting site called Sapponckanikan, which translates as “the land of tobacco growth.” The Dutch sailed into Manahatta in 1609 and established a settlement on the island. The Lenape soon faced violence and disease brought by the Europeans. Today, Lenape communities continue their cultural and language practices across North America.

Take some time to look at the land around you. What do you notice? Look toward the river. Write a list of descriptive words. Next, create a concrete poem by arranging the words in a specific shape or pattern.

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Pier 52 was created in the 1840s as a place to dump trash. At the end of Gansevoort Street, garbage was put into boats docked at the pier, or thrown directly into the Hudson River. Gansevoort Peninsula—the outcropping of land adjacent to the pier—was built a few years later. The sites were used in a lot of different ways over the years. The peninsula once housed a market for meat and dairy products, and later an incinerator known as the “Gansevoort Destructor” burned trash there. At times, Pier 52 was also a recreation and swimming spot.

Today, *Day's End* shares the Gansevoort Peninsula with the New York City Fire Department’s Marine Company One, a fire station and dock on Pier 53. It is one of only three New York City fire stations on the water. The building opened in 2011. It has sleeping quarters, a kitchen, a workout room, storage space, and anchorage for several fireboats. The 343 is Marine One’s 140-foot fireboat. To put out fires, it sprays gallons of river water through its water-firing nozzles. Can you spot the fireboat at the dock today?
The Lenape, the original inhabitants of Manhattan and the surrounding lands, called the Hudson Shattemuc—the river that flows two ways. The current runs south from an Adirondack mountain lake in upstate New York called Tear of Clouds, 315 miles away. At the same time, the tide often pulls the water north. The section of the Hudson nearest New York Harbor is called an estuary because it is a mixture of saltwater and freshwater—where the river meets the sea. Wildlife teems below the river’s surface, including fish, eels, mollusks, shrimp, crabs, worms, oysters, and plants. Over seventy types of fish live in this part of the river—even seahorses! More than a hundred bird species live close by. Look out for ducks, geese, seagulls, and cormorants.

Use your observation skills and your imagination to draw a few animals and plants that live underwater and aboveground nearby.
The Hudson River is an important transportation route, also known as US Marine (or Blue) Highway M-87. It is traveled by barges, tugs, and the occasional tanker or cargo ship going back and forth to the Port of Albany, 150 miles upriver from the Whitney. The barges and tankers carry products such as oil, gasoline, machinery, and sewage sludge!

Look for boats on the river. Can you see a:

- Barge
- Cargo ship
- Cruise ship
- Ferry
- Kayak
- Tanker
- Tugboat
- Yacht
The Meatpacking District gets its name from the meatpackers who used to occupy the neighborhood. There are only a few meatpacking companies left here today. The corrugated iron awnings on the brick buildings shaded the meat from the sun. The Belgian granite blocks paving the streets had been used as ballast—heavy material placed in ships to stabilize them as they traveled across the Atlantic Ocean to New York City. The blocks were unloaded and tossed ashore before the return journey because the ships were now filled with cargo. Today, the Belgian granite has been replaced with newer granite stones.

KEEP DRAWING

Continue to explore the neighborhood and Museum.
Draw what you see!

Dibuja lo que ves!
Continúe explorando el barrio y el Museo.