

**WHITNEY**  
**KIDS**

**JASPER  
JOHNS**



**ACTIVITY GUIDE**

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Jasper Johns, New York, 1982. Photograph © Serge Cohery/Opale

Jasper Johns, *Three Flags*, 1958. Encaustic on canvas (three panels), 30 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 45 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (78.4 x 116.2 cm) overall. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from the Gilman Foundation, Inc., The Lauder Foundation, A. Alfred Taubman, Laura-Lee Whittier Woods, Howard Lipman, and Ed Downe in honor of the Museum's 50th Anniversary 80.32. © 2021 Jasper Johns / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

Jasper Johns, *In Memory of My Feelings—Frank O'Hara*, 1961. Oil on canvas with objects (two panels), 40 x 59 in. (101.6 x 151.8 cm) overall. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; partial gift of Apollo Plastics Corporation, courtesy of Stefan T. Edlis and H. Gael Neeson, 1995.114.a-d. © 2021 Jasper Johns / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. The Art Institute of Chicago; photograph by Jamie Stukenberg, Professional Graphics, Rockford, Illinois

Jasper Johns, *Painted Bronze*, 1960. Bronze and oil paint, 13 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 8 in. (34.3 x 20.3 cm). Kravis Collection; promised gift to the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in honor of David Rockefeller. © 2021 Jasper Johns / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Photograph courtesy the Wildenstein Plattner Institute, New York

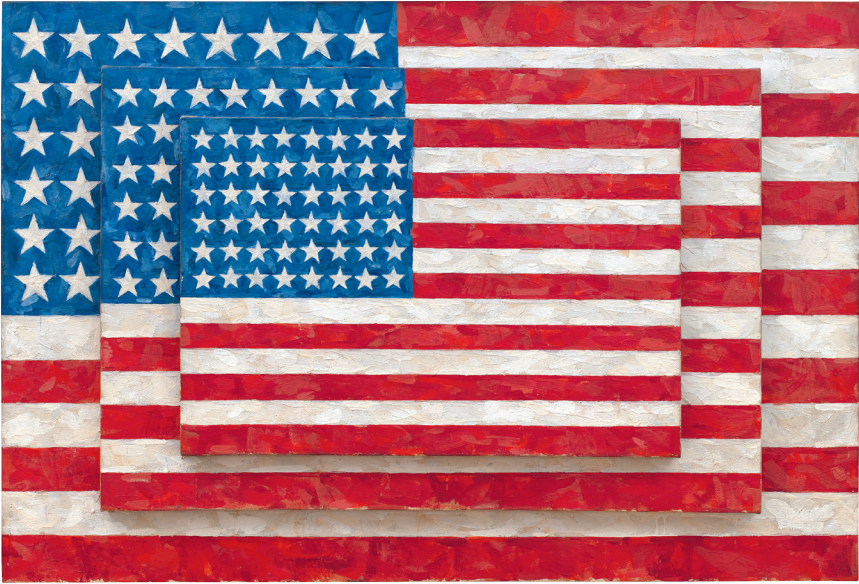
# WELCOME!

Jasper Johns (b. 1930) is one of the most influential American artists of the twentieth century. He became famous for making art depicting commonly recognizable symbols—everything from maps and flags to letters from the alphabet. This exhibition features paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints from Johns’s seven-decade career staged simultaneously at two museums, the Whitney and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Jasper Johns helps us see ordinary things in new ways!

This Whitney Kids activity guide is designed to introduce you to Johns’s art, and we hope it will inspire the artist in you too! Use this guide to explore the exhibition and experiment with your own ideas.

Check out [whitney.org/Families](http://whitney.org/Families) for a full list of our Family Programs.

# FLAGS AND MAPS



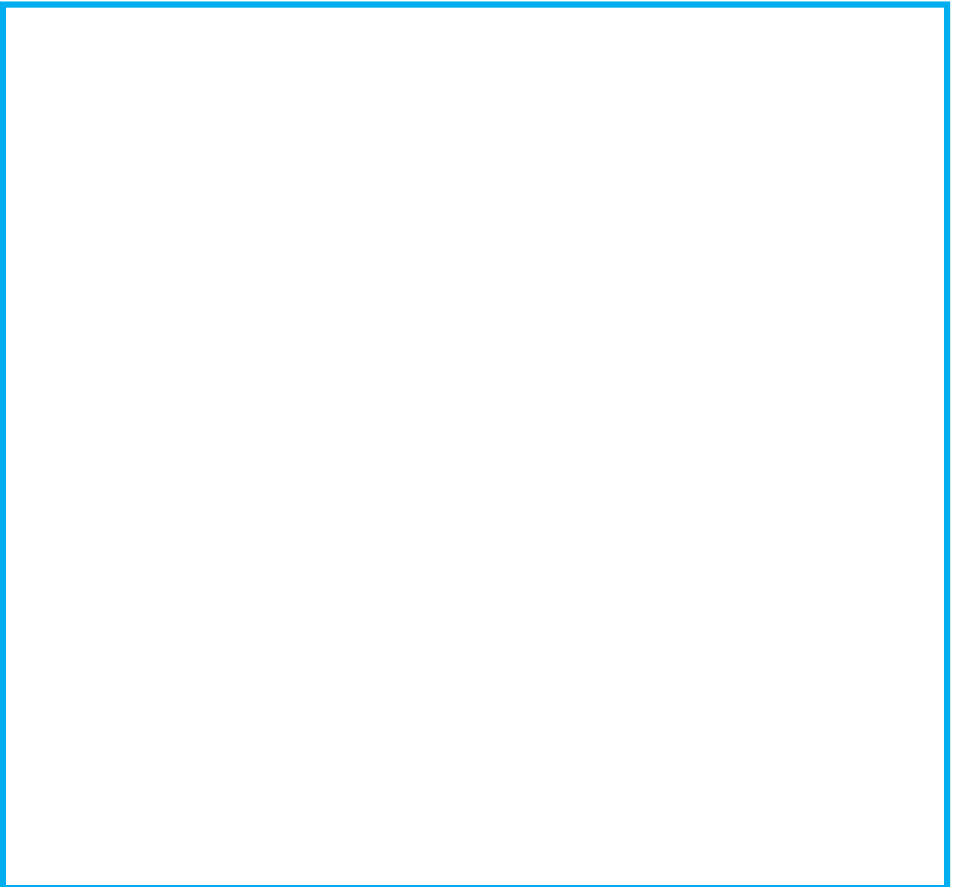
Jasper Johns, *Three Flags*, 1958.

In 1954, Jasper Johns dreamed he painted an American flag, and the next day he went ahead and did it! He made many paintings of other familiar signs and images, including maps, targets, alphabets, and numbers, subjects he described as “things the mind already knows.” These paintings shocked some viewers, who found them to be more like everyday things than works of art. For Johns, it was interesting to make a painting of symbols like a flag or a target because they could be seen both as the image of something and as the thing itself. You wouldn’t shoot an arrow at Johns’s picture of a target—but if you did, you’d know how close you got to the bulls-eye, just like with the real thing.

# ART WITH LETTERS

Transform your name into a work of art. Write your name in the space below. Then look closely at the shape of each letter. Draw (don't write) them one by one in the box below. See if you can fill the entire box with letters. Scramble up the order and experiment by making some letters big, small, upside down, backward, solid, or open.

Your name \_\_\_\_\_



# POEM TO PAINT



Jasper Johns, *In Memory of My Feelings* - Frank O'Hara, 1961.

Take a close look at this painting. Dripping blocks of grey brushstrokes cover the canvas, a fork and spoon dangle from a string. How do you think Jasper Johns felt when he created this work? He named this painting after a poem called *In Memory of My Feelings* by his friend, the poet Frank O'Hara. Read the first few lines of the poem:

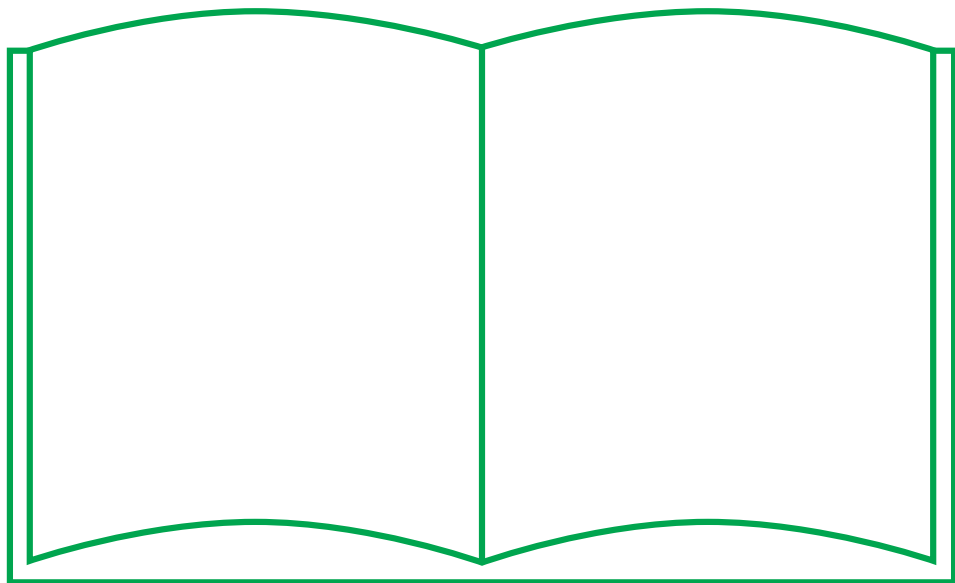
“My quietness has a man in it, he is transparent  
and he carries me quietly, like a gondola,  
through the streets.

He has several likenesses, like stars and years,  
like numerals.”

Poets like O'Hara often express their ideas or feelings using images that suggest meaning but aren't literally true. Johns never explained why he named a painting after this poem. He didn't illustrate it,

# PAINT TO POEM

Choose a nearby artwork or subject that inspires you. In the space below, write a poem in response to what you see and how you feel while looking at it. Remember, a poem could be made up of any words you decide to put together. It does not need to rhyme or make any kind of logical sense.



making pictures of transparent men or stars. Instead, it seems to have been inspired by the feeling of the words. Look closely at the painting. Think about the choices Johns made to paint it. Can you imagine ways he might have been responding to his friend's poem?



# REPETITION



Jasper Johns, *Painted Bronze*, 1960.

The sculpture *Painted Bronze* looks like an old coffee can filled with paintbrushes, something you might find in an artist's studio. If you look very closely you can see that this is in fact a bronze sculpture made carefully to look like Johns's painting tools. The work is kind of like a self-portrait, only it substitutes the tools he used in his studio for his face. Johns went on to create many prints inspired by the same subject, each one a bit different.



# LOOK, DRAW, REPEAT

Make a series of drawings inspired by the same subject! Take a look around you, and choose an object that you find interesting. Draw the object you chose over and over in the spaces below. Consider what new things you discover in this process. Follow these ideas for inspiration, or make up your own rules. Reimagine your subject a different way in each box.

- 1.** Focus on a close-up detail and draw only that
- 2.** Draw that image backwards!
- 3.** Reverse the words if there are words
- 4.** Sketch upside down!
- 5.** Draw four mini versions of your image in one box
- 6.** Draw only with swirly lines/spirals
- 7.** Mix up the parts of the image—move things around!


# SKETCHING SCAVENGER HUNT

Explore the exhibition and see if you can find six of the following things hiding in the works on view. Make a sketch inspired by each image you find!

Skeleton

Ladder

Bite mark

Handprints

Four 3-D faces

Light bulb

Arm or leg

The *Mona Lisa*

Wristwatch

**KEEP  
DRAWING**

