

Brooklyn Museum

Teen Guide to Art





Getting started

About this guide

Use this unique guide made for teens by teens as a tool to help you look at art. The guide includes information and questions to help you understand how to:

- Read label information
- Look at different types art
- Look at the Museum's architecture

The Brooklyn Museum is known for its many collections of various types of art. This guide features art made by three contemporary Americans, highlighting work we feel is exciting for teens.

We hope this guide helps you gain a better understanding of how to look at other artworks in the Museum.

Here's the rundown on how to get around . . .

A map of the Museum is located at the circular desk where you obtained your entrance ticket.

Feel free to ask our friendly Museum guards if you need any help finding your way around the Museum.

There is one elevator in the lobby to the left of the coat check. Two more elevators are located on the first floor at the end of the long windowed hallway that begins in the back left corner of the Museum's lobby.

General admission

General admission for students with a valid I.D. is \$4, but admission prices are suggested. This means exactly that: suggested. You can donate the full amount or contribute as little as quarter—it's up to you.

Cell phone tours

A brochure entitled PocketMuseumSM Audio Gallery Guide can be picked up at the Visitor Center. Use this guide to explore additional artworks throughout the Museum.

To take a picture or not to take a picture?

Here are the photography basics: It's allowed in the Museum as long as the pictures are taken without flash. Photography is often restricted in special exhibition galleries because the Museum does not own the objects.

Look for a sign, ask a guard, or check with the Visitor Center. Thanks!

Above: Teen Guide to Art writers and artist. Photograph by Cheri Ehrlich

The parts of a label

PAT STEIR
(AMERICAN, BORN 1940)

Everlasting Waterfall, 1989

Oil on canvas

1990.109, Purchased with funds given by the National Endowment for the Arts Museum Purchase Plan and the Contemporary Art Council and gift of Edward A. Bragaline, by exchange

In her Waterfall series, Pat Steir has explored the imagery of water, continuing her fascination with landscape. This work, which verges on abstraction, is nevertheless an evocative representation of a waterfall. The artist applied a number of horizontal brushstrokes loaded with thinned paint at the top of the canvas, and the paint streamed down in lines, drips, and rivulets, emulating the properties of water.

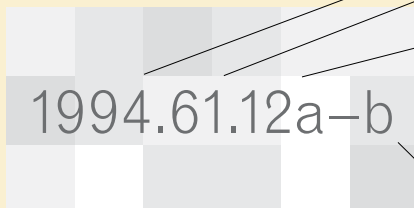
- 1 Artist's name (nationality, year born–year died)
- 2 Title, year of completion
- 3 Medium (the materials the artwork is made of)
- 4 Accession number, collection, gift of/purchase
- 5 Description

How to read an accession number

Every object that enters the Museum's collection is assigned an accession number.

Use this identification code to look up an artwork using the computers in the Luce Center on the fifth floor.

Example of an accession number:



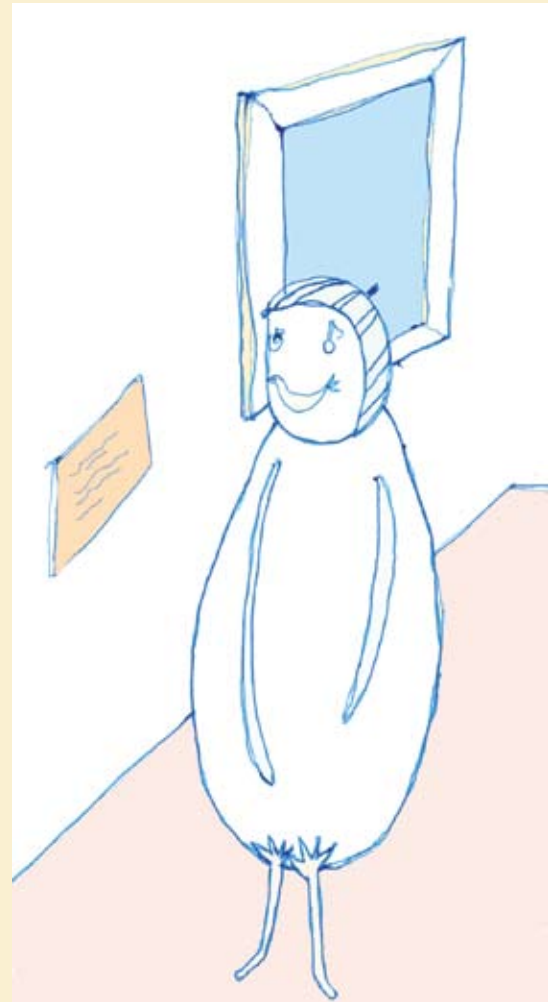
Notice that the accession number itself is made up of a series of numbers separated by periods.

The first number denotes the year an object entered the Museum's collection.

The second number represents the order in which the object entered the Museum's collection that year. This piece was the 61st gift or purchase to enter the Museum's collection in 1994.

Some accession numbers, like this one, include a third number. It means that the object was part of a gift or purchase that included a number of items (in this case, 12), which may or may not be related.

Finally, some accession numbers also have letters. These indicate that the object (for instance, a teapot with a lid) has multiple components.



Looking at paintings



Kehinde Wiley. Courtesy of Kehinde Wiley Studio

Begin by looking

Find Kehinde Wiley's *Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps*, in the Museum lobby. When approaching the painting, give yourself a few minutes to examine it. Let your eyes work for you.

Check out both the figure and the background.

What might the figure's stance and facial expression be suggesting?

As you continue to look, what ideas emerge?

What might the size and the artist's attention to detail in the painting signify to you about the person being depicted?

As you begin to ask yourself questions, make connections between the imagery you see and what you know. This process will help you interpret the work of art.

Facing page: Kehinde Wiley (American, b. 1977). *Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps*, 2005. Oil on canvas. Collection of Suzi and Andrew B. Cohen, L2005.6

Make connections

Kehinde Wiley models his composition of an African American in hip-hop attire after an 1800 painting entitled *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps* by the French artist Jacques-Louis David (see wall label).

Why do you think Wiley borrowed from European portraiture instead of creating an entirely new scene with the same man in a contemporary setting? In what visual ways does Wiley refer to masculinity?

If the artist has a message, what do you think the message might be?

A quote from Kehinde Wiley on the Brooklyn Museum's Web site says: "Painting is about the world that we live in. Black men live in the world. My choice is to include them. This is my way of saying yes to us."

How does this quotation help you to further interpret the painting?

Contemporary artists often push the limits of what has traditionally been accepted as the truth.

What do you think: Does Wiley's artwork break the stereotypes of African American men or does it reinforce them?

Look around

Look on the fifth floor in *American Identities* for other paintings that have recognizable subject matter. Take your time looking at these paintings and figure out if you can make connections between what you see and what you know to better understand the painting.



Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps, 2005,
by Kehinde Wiley
Location: Museum lobby

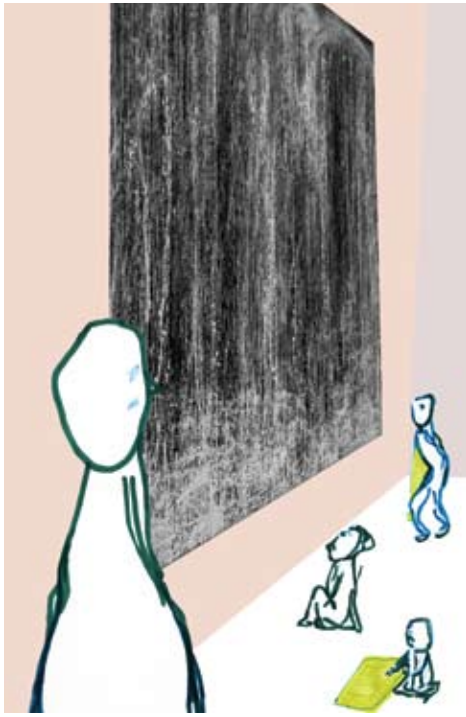


Everlasting Waterfall, 1989,

by Pat Steir

Location: *American Identities* (green section), fifth floor





Louis Remy Mignot (American, 1831–1870). *Niagara* (detail). Oil on canvas. Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Arthur S. Fairchild, 1993.118

"I took just the brushstroke and let gravity play with it."

—Pat Steir

Identify with the artist's process

Artists like Pat Steir change, simplify, or exaggerate what they see to express emotions, share a personal style or convey an idea. Steir has developed an iconography, or visual language, with her use of color and dripping paint.

Find her painting *Everlasting Waterfall* on the fifth floor.

Stand back so you can see the entire painting.

Is it possible to see where the waterfall begins and ends?

Move up toward the painting, being careful not to touch it.

How does it look different up close versus farther away?

Think back to your own past experiences with nature. Imagine you are under a waterfall and the water is coming down.

Now imagine you are the artist painting a waterfall in your art studio. How would you show the properties of water using paint?

Compare and contrast

Compare the paint texture in *Everlasting Waterfall* to Louis Remy Mignot's painting *Niagara* to the right in the gallery. *Niagara* is considered a realistic representation of a waterfall. Mignot's brushstrokes are made with the brush directly touching the canvas, while Steir drips and splatters paint with a brush.

Compare the colors. In your opinion, which painting has a darker mood than the other?

The title of an artwork can be useful in understanding its subject matter. You can also find more information on the wall label.

Why do you think Pat Steir named her painting *Everlasting Waterfall*?

Facing page: Pat Steir (American, b. 1940). *Everlasting Waterfall* (detail), 1989. Oil on canvas. Brooklyn Museum, Purchased with funds given by the National Endowment for the Arts Museum Purchase Plan and the Contemporary Art Council and gift of Edward A. Bragaline, by exchange, 1990.109

Look around

As you walk through the Museum, look for other paintings in which you see images abstracted from real life.

Think about how real life is being transformed and the techniques the artist is using to create a sense of mood and to spark your personal memory.



Pat Steir. Courtesy of Cheim & Read

Looking at mixed-media art



Judy Chicago. Photograph by Donald Woodman

Facing page: Judy Chicago (American, b. 1939).
The Dinner Party, 1974–79. Ceramic, porcelain, textile.
Brooklyn Museum, Gift of the Elizabeth A. Sackler
Foundation, 2002.10. Photograph by: Donald Woodman

You are invited to *The Dinner Party* on the fourth floor.

Relax as you take your time to walk around and look at this multimedia installation by the artist Judy Chicago. *The Dinner Party* is divided into three main parts. Check out the wall label to the right of the installation's entrance for a diagram of the layout.

Examine the dinner table

The table itself is divided into three sections. Start by walking to your right. As you look, think about the lines, colors, textures, shapes, and forms that you see.

What shapes and forms do you see on each plate?

The butterfly, a symbol of liberation, and the vulva, a symbol of womanhood, are merged in the designs of the plates. The butterfly-vulva forms are a unifying characteristic meant to signify the women's strength and willingness to free themselves from the bonds of a patriarchal (male-dominated) society.

What is similar about each plate setting? What is different?

Next, start to connect what you see to what you know about history.

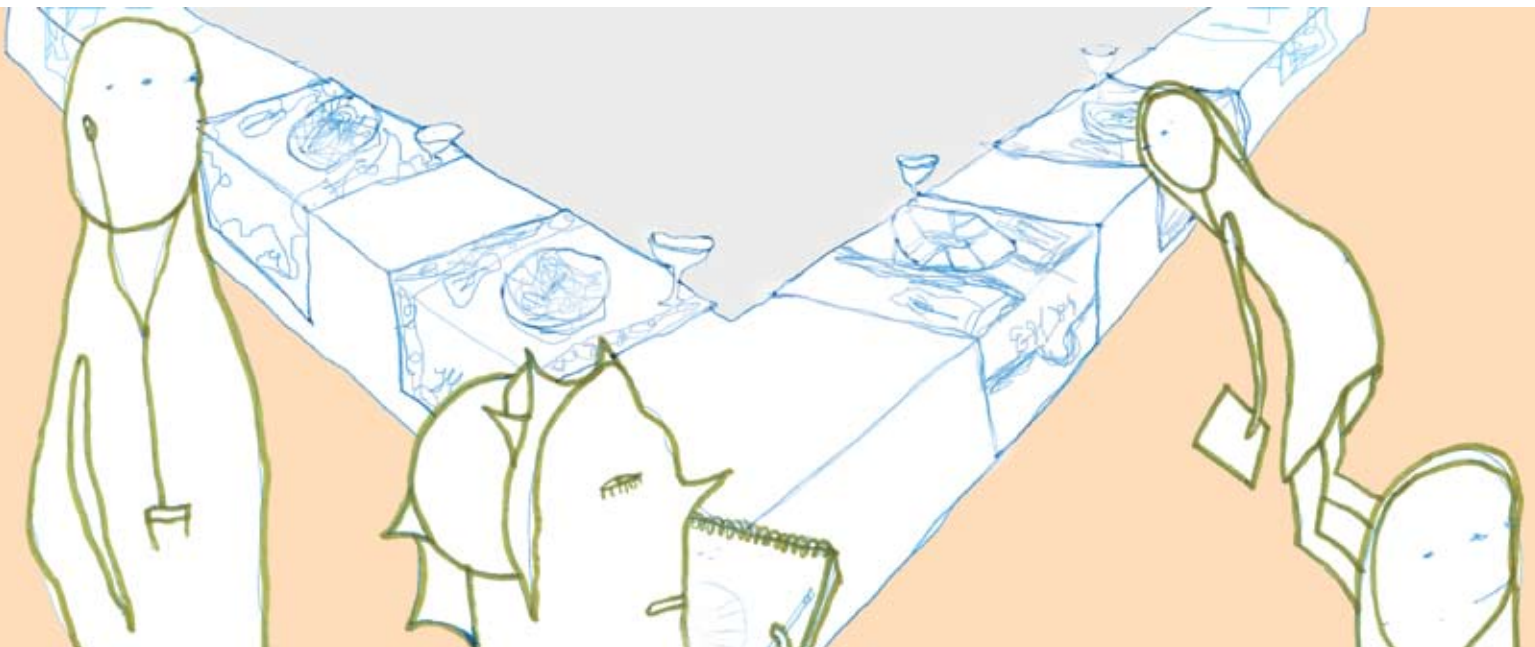
How are the runners under each table setting designed to tell you about the woman the place settings honor?

Learn more:

- Visit the room to the right of the installation's entrance. You can view a 28-minute video entitled *The Dinner Party* made by Judy Chicago and Diane Gelon in 1976. Or use the computers and visit www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/dinner_party/. These computers are for education research only. Please be considerate of other visitors when using this space.
- Take a cell-phone tour by grabbing a PocketMuseumSM Audio Gallery Guide.
- Use the interactive touch-screen computer at the end of the "Heritage Panels."

Look around

Look in the Contemporary Art gallery and in special exhibitions for other multimedia artworks. Think about how the varied materials are used in the artworks to convey ideas.



The Dinner Party, 1974–79,
by Judy Chicago

Location: Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art,
fourth floor



The Brooklyn Museum's architecture: a closer look



The west wing of the Museum, 1898

Explore the Museum's front entrance from the outside.

Think about the design and materials

The architects McKim, Mead & White designed the original Museum in 1898 with a 28-foot-high staircase leading up to a third-floor entrance. In 1934, visitors were able to enter more easily from the first floor when the staircase was removed. In a further effort to make the Museum more welcoming, in 2004 architects Isozaki and Polshek completed the renovations on the entrance you see today. The design mimics the shape of the original staircase, circling around to welcome visitors from all directions, letting more light into the lobby, and creating an indoor/outdoor feel.



The central section and west wing, 1904

Why would a public museum want to have a more approachable and welcoming entrance?

What materials do you think are part of the original construction? What materials are part of the modern design? What do you think about the mix of old and new?

To the left and right of the glass entry pavilion, you can climb the stairs to a walkway that looks down on the lobby.

Does the walkway, made out of wood and reminiscent of a boardwalk, remind you of another Brooklyn attraction?



The Museum with the completed grand staircase, 1907

Look up

The statues at the top of the Museum's façade are symbolic representations of ideals rather than actual individuals and bear no relationship to the names below, which are those of people from both ancient and modern times who contributed to the arts, science, literature, and philosophy.

Two larger statues to the right and left sides of the glass entrance symbolize Manhattan and Brooklyn. In 1963 they were moved to the Museum from the entrance to the Manhattan Bridge. The figure symbolizing Brooklyn holds a plaque engraved with the Dutch expression, now the borough of Brooklyn's motto, *Een Draght Mackt Maght*, which means "In unity there is strength." At the figure's feet is a boy reading a book. The figure representing Manhattan holds a winged globe, and at her side is a peacock.

Find Brooklyn and Manhattan.





The Brooklyn Museum today

Want to know more?

More information about the Museum and its collection are on our Web site, www.brooklynmuseum.org

The Museum has a research library open to the public on the second floor. For more information on how to use this library, contact library@brooklynmuseum.org.

The Visible Storage ■ Study Center invites visitors to come look at the way the Museum stores its objects. The center is located on the fifth floor and has touch screen computers you can use to search for information about the objects.

Shop and Café

The Museum Shop and Museum Café are both located on the first floor. (Just remember: no food is allowed outside the Café.)

Interested in teen events?

Check out: the Teen Programs Brochure available at the Visitor Center. You can also visit www.brooklynmuseum.org/education/teens.php or contact the Museum's Teen Programs Coordinator at (718) 501-6588 or teen.programs@brooklynmuseum.org

Acknowledgments

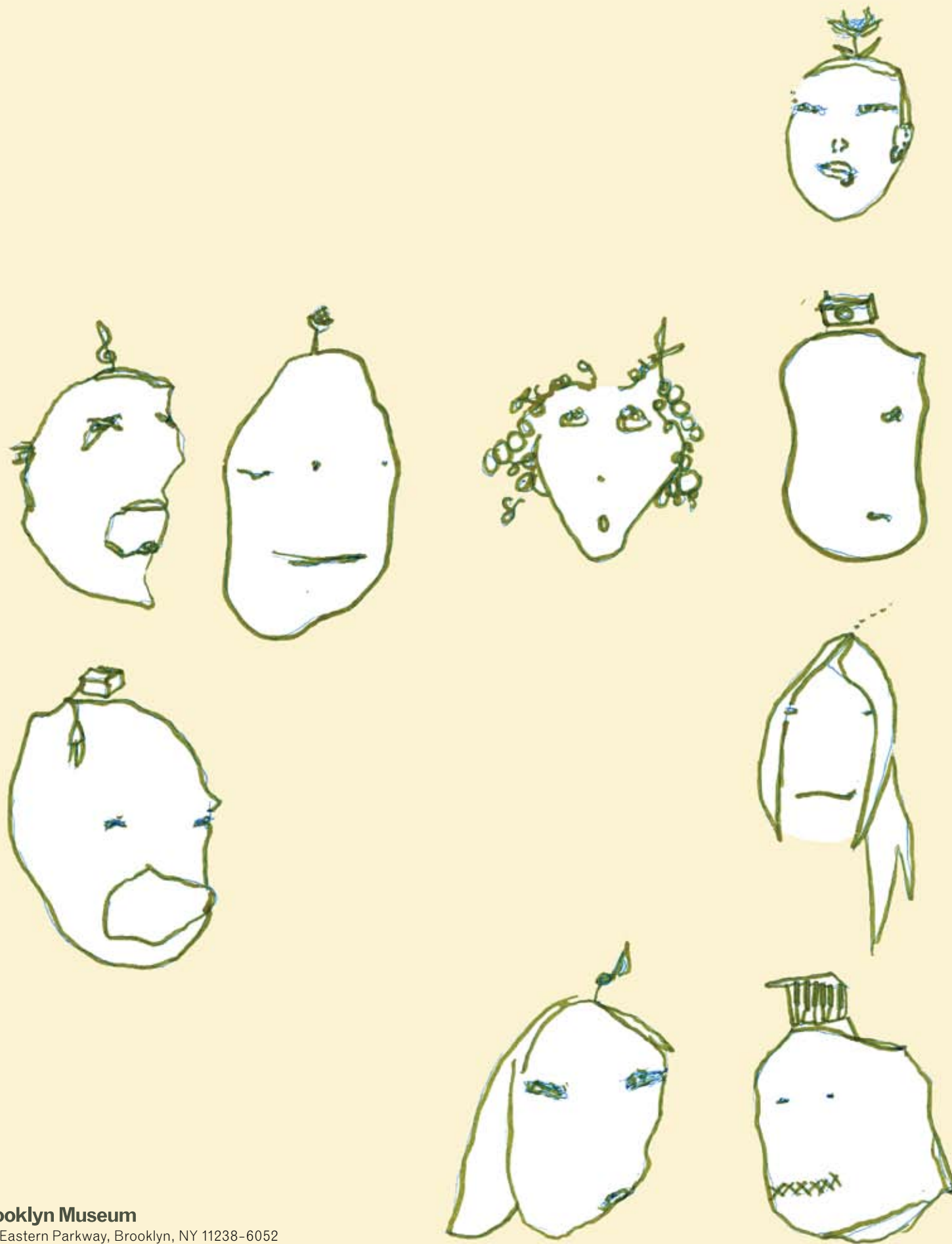
Teen writers: Nashyra Allebrand, Ishimabet Boyce, Emily Connuck, Steve Kong, Greem Lee, Ashemsa Lewis, Natasha Pugh, Diana Ro, May Syeda
 Teen Programs Coordinator: Cheri Ehrlich
 Drawings: Greem Lee

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Let us hear from you

We'd like to know what you think about our guide. Please contact us at teen.programs@brooklynmuseum.org to tell us what you think.



Brooklyn Museum

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