

# Educator Guide



# Welcome to Bard Graduate Center Gallery!

Dear Teachers,

We are pleased to invite you and your students to the exhibition *Agents of Faith: Votive Objects in Time and Place* on view through January 6, 2019.

Throughout time and across cultures, people have made objects and offered them in acts of faith. Known as votives, these objects are expressions of fundamental human needs and concerns. This exhibition presents ways of understanding votive objects and practices that have existed from ancient times into the present. Contemporary religious and secular objects include rare votive paintings made by Mexican migrant workers from the Durand-Arias Collection; objects left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, such as a Harley-Davidson motorcycle; and Yoko Ono's *Wish Tree*. Student visitors will interpret and analyze how our dreams and hopes, as well as our fears and anxieties, find form in these votive offerings.

The *Educator Guide* introduces key themes and concepts from the exhibition to help you and your students prepare for a visit to the gallery. The lessons, resources, and reflection activities provided in this document are for you to use in your classrooms.

We look forward to your visit!

Carla Repice  
Manager of Education and Engagement



■ Snoopy doll with letter, deposited June 15, 1989. Vietnam Veterans Memorial, VIVE 22082.

# About the Exhibition

## ***Agents of Faith: Votive Objects in Time and Place*** September 14, 2018—January 6, 2019

Explore world cultures and draw meaning from material artifacts at *Agents of Faith: Votive Objects in Time and Place* on view from September 14, 2018, to January 6, 2019, at Bard Graduate Center Gallery.



Oxen in double yoke votive. Austria, 1601–1799 (?). Forged iron. Rudolf Kriss collection, Asbach Monastery, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, Kr E 501. Photo: Walter Haberland.

The exhibition brings together more than 300 votive objects—often created to fulfill a vow or a pledge and placed at a sacred space or site of communal memory—dating from 2000 BC to the twenty-first century. Powerful works from sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas represent the majority of world religions, exposing the global nature of votive practices and the profoundly personal nature behind their creation. Gallery educators lead student-centered tours to guide young learners on the analysis of the objects humans have chosen to offer in their votive transactions, and to then interpret how our dreams and hopes, as well as our fears and anxieties, find form in these votive offerings.

Featured works include more than one hundred votive objects from the Bavarian National Museum in Munich, which are unique to the folklore of European culture; a rare ancient anatomical votive from the Louvre; one of the earliest dated votive panel paintings from the Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris; and loans from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Contemporary religious and secular objects will include rare votive paintings made by Mexican migrant workers from the Durand-Arias Collection and objects left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, such as army-issue woolen gloves, food rations, and a Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

What are your hopes, dreams, and anxieties? Where does the power of objects come from? How can you draw meaning from familiar and unfamiliar objects? The votive objects in this exhibition tell a powerful story, and students leave with an enhanced appreciation of the material world, building transformative learning experiences.

*Agents of Faith: Votive Objects in Time and Place* is curated by Ittai Weinryb, Associate Professor, Bard Graduate Center, with Marianne Lamonaca, Chief Curator, and Caroline Hannah, Associate Curator, Bard Graduate Center Gallery.

For more information about the exhibition and events: <https://www.bgc.bard.edu/gallery/exhibitions/81/agents-of-faith-votive-objects>



Sailing ship votive, Italy, 19th century. Wood, metal bracket. Rudolf Kriss collection, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, Kr D 142. Photo: Walter Haberland.



# Pre-Visit Lesson Plan

Before a visit to Bard Graduate Center Gallery, we suggest covering some of the activities mapped out in this Educator Guide with students in your classrooms.

## Objectives

### See Deeply

Students will bring their personal knowledge, history, and insight to their relationship to objects.

### Think Critically

Students will draw meaning from objects that are familiar and unfamiliar.

### Build Freely

Students will reflect on the power of objects and build empathy.

## Theme: Migration Grades K–12

Introduce the theme of the exhibition. How do our dreams and hopes, as well as our fears and anxieties, find form in votive offerings?

## Essential Questions

What are you hopeful for?

What are you anxious about?

Do you think objects are powerful?

Where does the power of objects come from?

## Visual Inquiry Activity

Group class discussion. Teacher projects image and asks students key questions. Download image [here](#).



This painting focuses on Mexico-U.S. migration and depicts the trials and concerns of migrant workers and immigrants from Mexico. Over more than two decades of intensive fieldwork as part of the [Mexican Migration Project](#), Jorge Durand and Douglas Massey have assembled a collection of votive paintings prepared by Mexican migrants to the United States and their families. These simple yet powerful paintings provide a direct window into the world of the international migrant. You can learn more about this project at [Miracles on the Border](#).

## Key Questions to ask students:

What do you see?

What makes you say that?

What more can you find?

What do you think is the meaning of this object?

Do you think this object is powerful? Why?

Where does the power of objects come from?

## Suggested Readings

### Grades K–2

[Me and My Fear](#) by Francesca Sanna

[Marwan's Journey](#) by Patricia de Arias

### Grade 3–7

[La Frontera: El Viaje Con Papa: My Journey with Papa](#),

by Deborah Mills, Alfredo Alva, and Claudia Navarro

### Grades 8–12

[Across a Hundred Mountains](#) by Reyna Grande

## Additional Resources

[Teaching about Immigration - Social Justice Books](#)

[Who is Dayani Cristal?](#)

[Miracles on the Border](#)

Retablo of Amador de Lira for safe passage across a dangerous river in Texas. Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan de los Lagos, Jalisco, Mexico, undated. Oil on metal. Durand-Arias Collection. *Inscription translated:* Amador de Lira gives the most infinite thanks for the miracle of saving them as they crossed the dangerous river in Texas.

# Post-Visit Lesson Plan

After a visit to Bard Graduate Center Gallery, we suggest covering some of the activities mapped out in this Educator Guide with students in your classrooms.

## Objectives

### See Deeply

Students will bring their personal knowledge, history, and insight to their relationship to objects.

### Think Critically

Students will draw meaning from objects that are familiar and unfamiliar.

### Build Freely

Students will reflect on the power of objects and build empathy.

## Written Reflection

After a visit to the gallery, ask students to write about their experience. What do they know about votive objects? What more do they want to know? What stood out during a visit to the gallery? What questions do they have? Share out.

## Essential Questions

Where does the power of objects come from?  
What gives an object its power?  
What are qualities in an object you love?

## Grades K–2 Object Poetry

\*Students bring in an object that is important to them.

### Lesson Plan

1. Write down words that describe your object.
2. Sensory writing – How does the object smell, feel? Its weight? Does it make a sound?
3. What does the object remind you of?
4. What do you love about this object?

### Writing Prompt

Draw a picture and write a description that pulls from your entries about your object.

### Reflection

Students share out. Create a classroom gallery walk.



Standard. Iran, early 18th century. Silver with black inlay. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1984.504.2.

## Grades 3–6 Object Poetry

Adapted from Ama Codjoe by Carla Repice

\*Students bring in an object that is important to them.

### Essential Questions

What do I see?  
What previous knowledge and personal insights can I bring?

### Lesson Plan

1. You're from another planet and just landed on earth. You've never seen this object before. Write down words that describe your object.
2. Sensory writing – How does the object smell, feel? Its weight? Does it make a sound?
3. Write down questions you have about the object and/or asked directly to the object.
4. Memory and narrative – What does this object remind you of?
5. What qualities do you love about this object?

### Introduction to Writing Assignment

Read [Stone](#) by Charles Simic in class and circle words and phrases that stand out. Share out.



Group of votive heads, Northeastern Brazil, before 1960. Ceramic (far left); wood, paint. Collection of Beate Echols and Micheal Shub. Photograph: Bruce White.

### Writing Prompt

Write a poem and/or short story that pulls from your entries about your object.

### Writing Strategies

1. object description and qualities
2. brief narrative or memory
3. questions (asked of the object and/or asked directly to the object)

### Reflection

Students share out. Create an open mic.

## Grades 7–12

### Poetry Workshop

Created by Ama Codjoe

\*Students bring in an object that is important to them.

### Essential Questions

What do I see?

What previous knowledge and personal insights can I bring?

### Lesson Plan

1. Write down an objective description of your object (as if the object is a piece of evidence in a forensic report).
2. Descriptive writing – How does the object smell, feel? Its weight? Does it make a sound?
3. Write down questions you have about the object and/or asked directly to the object.
4. Write down a metaphor/simile.

Metaphor: An expression that describes a person or object by referring to something that is considered to possess similar characteristics: “A heart of stone,” “drowning in money.”

Simile: An expression including the words “like” or “as” to compare one thing with another. “As light as a feather.”

### Introduction to Writing Assignment

Close reading and discussion. Everyone take 5 minutes to read *My Mother’s Blue Bowl* by Alice Walker and circle words and phrases that stand out. In your groups, discuss for 5 minutes. Share out.

### Writing Prompt

Using multiple strategies, write a draft of a poem/short story/meditation that pulls from your entries about your object.

### Writing Strategies

1. objective description
2. brief narrative or memory
3. metaphor/simile making
4. questions (asked of the object and/or asked directly to the object)
5. assertions (all that you know, knew, don’t know about the object; any variation on knowing)
6. memory chain (x reminds me of y, which reminds me of z, which reminds me of a, etc.)

### Reflection

Students share out. Create an open mic.

## Grades 9–12

### The Problem Tree – Group Activity

Name the problem on the trunk – e.g., Humanitarian Crisis

List the manifestations of migration on the leaves – e.g., Migration

Name the roots of the problem on the roots – e.g., Climate Change, Political Unrest

- Draw a big tree on a piece of chart paper with roots and branches.
- Ask students to write the manifestations on leaves (which are pre-cut out of construction paper). Once students are finished they can tape the leaves to the tree.
- Ask a student to read the manifestations out loud to the class.
- The teacher facilitates a discussion and asks students: What are the roots of the problem? The teacher charts this onto the tree roots.

### Artistic Response

Design a protest poster that addresses the issue—and that features an object in the design. Example posters can be seen at [Amplifier](#).

### Reflection

Students share out.

## Book a Tour

### K–12 School Tours

K–12 visitors see objects up close and make meaningful connections to the world around them. Our student-centered tours are led by graduate student educators who engage young people in lively discussion and hands-on activities that promote critical thinking and visual literacy skills. Tours are adaptable to your school's curriculum and build thoughtful object-based inquiry and powerful learning experiences.

### Haptic Learning Lab

Bard Graduate Center acknowledges that tactile learning experiences are essential for a child's development and intellectual growth. The Haptic Learning Lab is a space for our K–12 visitors to: Touch everyday objects! Meet a visiting artist and learn about materials and methods! Participate in a hands-on workshop!

### English Language Learners

We offer customized tours for English language learners that explore exhibition objects through touch and hands-on making activities. ELL students are encouraged to draw on their personal knowledge, history, and insight during the object-based tour, which builds meaningful learning experiences.

### School Tour Fees

NYCDOE school groups: Free

For all other groups the 2018–19 rates are:

\$85 | for group of up to 15 participants

\$160 | 16–30 participants

\$210 | 31–45 participants

### School Tour Availability

Tuesdays through Fridays: School tours begin at 11 am

Advance reservations are required

Tour Length: 45 minutes

Haptic Learning Lab Experience: 45 minutes

### School Tour Booking

Email: [tours@bgc.bard.edu](mailto:tours@bgc.bard.edu)

Customized 1994 Harley-Davidson  
Police Special motorcycle, deposited  
1995. Vietnam Veterans Memorial,  
VIVE 15409. Photo: Bruce White.





# Bard Graduate Center Public Programs and Education

## Mission

Bard Graduate Center is a catalyst for deep reflection with objects, to build dialogue that imagines new ways of seeing.

## Vision

Bard Graduate Center is committed to forming the next generation of educators, curators, and historians who see deeply, think critically, and build freely.

## Values

### See Deeply

We believe in the power of careful observation, deduction, and research. We also acknowledge that audiences bring a wealth of personal knowledge, history, and insight to their relationship with objects.

### Think Critically

We value serious, disciplined thinking that is clear, open-minded, and informed by evidence. We want audiences to feel confident about drawing meaning from familiar and unfamiliar objects. We believe in open dialogue, debate, and big questions.

### Build Freely

We provide opportunities for people to build relationships and share insights. We hope to build an intergenerational movement of curators, scholars, historians, and visitors, in order to create democratic museums. We believe by reimagining the past that we can build an equitable future.



Gospel book, Armenia, ca. 1675-1725. Calfskin, mother-of-pearl, gilt-metal, beads, metal thread, coins, semiprecious stones. The Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.1149, Purchased on the Herzog Fund, 2006.



# About Bard Graduate Center

Bard Graduate Center is devoted to the study of decorative arts, design history, and material culture through research, advanced degrees, exhibitions, publications, and events.





At Bard Graduate Center, we study the human past through its material traces. We study objects—from those created for obvious aesthetic value to the ordinary things that are part of everyday life. Learning is what Bard Graduate Center is all about. Our accomplished [faculty](#) inspire students to strive for excellence, knowing that this will prepare them for the intellectual and professional rigors of careers in academia, in museums, and in the private sector. This high standard is equally the hallmark of the Gallery's acclaimed [exhibitions](#) and related [public programs](#).

Founded by Dr. Susan Weber in 1993, Bard Graduate Center is an academic unit of Bard College, through which it is [accredited](#) and a member of the [Association of Research Institutes in Art History](#) (ARIAH).

## Bard Graduate Center Gallery

18 West 86th Street  
New York, NY 10024




## How to Get Here

  to 81st St.  to 86th St.  M86 bus

## Gallery Hours

Tuesday, Friday–Sunday: 11 am–5 pm  
Wednesday–Thursday: 11 am–8 pm

## Follow Us

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