

Minneapolis Institute of Art

# Talking About Race

## Mia Guides

November 18, 2021

# Mia

David Barthold, George  
Floyd, In Memoriam  
2020, 2020, Screenprint,  
Anonymous gift, 2020.91



# Record

# Agenda:

## Welcome!

- Questions on the feedback form
- Talking About Race: summary of ideas for museum practice
- Black American Arts and Artists tour
- Racism as a Public Health Crisis: Professional and Student Artists Respond
- Small Group Reflection (optional)

## Questions/Comments from our last session:

- “There was lots of confusion about the welcome statements.”
- “I want to hear more possible land acknowledgment statements.”
- “Do we have to give a statement at the start of every tour?”
- “I would like to know more about the history of the Native people who live in this area.”

Our last session was the **START** of more conversations we will have on welcome statement practice. This statement is not a requirement, and we encourage folks who want to learn more about the history of Native peoples in Minnesota to seek out that information. A list of resources will be added to the session post on the guide website. We are **ALL** learning--including educators and the Mia staff who are working with the Native community members--so accept and expect non-closure at times as we navigate these conversations together.

# 10 Principles for Talking About Race: Museum Tours Practice

*Create space to have constructive and successful conversations about race*

## 1. Create a Welcoming Environment

- *empathy can be a key factor in student success*
- *giving choices accommodates different interests and learning styles*

## 2. Examine Biases and Barriers

- *examine your own bias and the ways you may be privileged or unaware*
- *consider expectations for behavior that might be barriers to learning and success*

# 10 Principles for Talking About Race

## 3. Encourage Self-Expression

- *give students an opportunity to share their experiences, perspectives or stories*
- *don't expect one individual to represent their racial or cultural group*

## 4. Be Open About Yourself

- *share different dimensions of your own racial identity and cultural background*
- *push yourself to take some risks using honesty and humility*

# 10 Principles for Talking About Race

## 5. Engage, Don't Avoid

- *be willing to lead uncomfortable conversations and turn them into teachable moments*
- *let go of perfection and expect some messiness*

## 6. Create Opportunities for Discussion

- *use pop culture references (music, movies, sports, celebrities) to engage young people and supply subjects for conversation*
- *recognize that students at all levels—even very young—are already aware of, and affected by, race*

# 10 Principles for Talking About Race

## 7. Talk About Racism and Racial Equity

- *systemic racism—inequities based on history, institutions and culture—advantages white people and disadvantages people of color*
- *racial equity (or racial justice) is the systematic fair treatment of all people, resulting in fair opportunities and outcomes for everyone*

## 8. Establish and Embrace Group Norms

- *focus on actions and impacts rather than assumptions and intentions*
- *listen deeply, allow disagreement, appreciate feedback instead of getting defensive*



# 10 Principles for Talking About Race

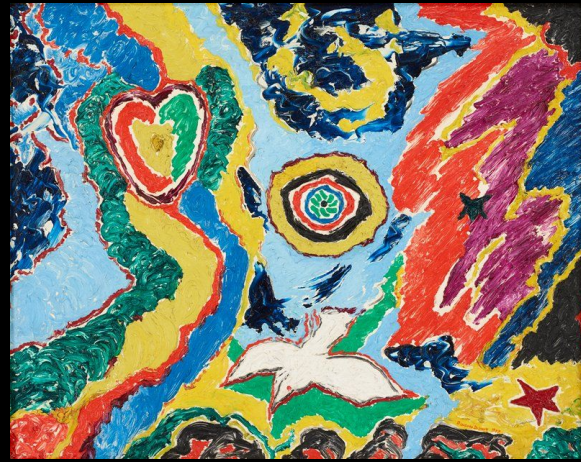
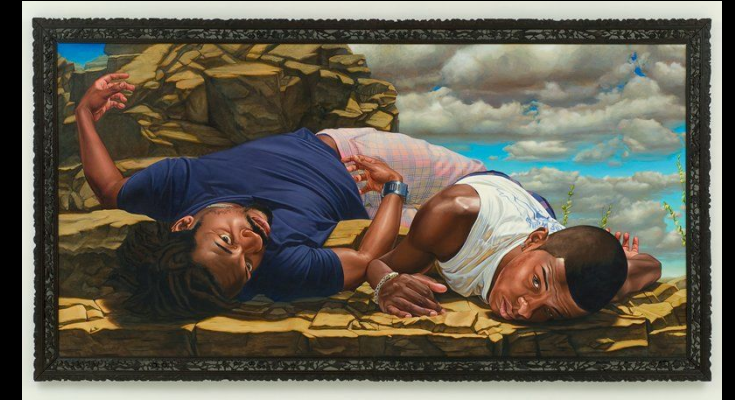
## 9. Process is as Important as Content

- *let the conversation be mostly generated by the audience; focus your role on facilitating the conversation, only adding content as appropriate*
- *allow for disagreement, as long as you've followed your group norms and everyone feels heard and respected*

## 10. Model Your Values and Vision

- *actions, more than words, will have the greatest impact*
- *discuss strategies to move from awareness and analysis to action and impact*

# Black American Arts and Artists tour



# Black American Arts and Artists tour

Sheila: Kehinde Wiley, *Santos Dumont - The Father of Aviation II*, 2009

Debbi: Nellie Mae Rowe, *Rocking Chair*, 1981

Kara: Clementine Hunter, *Picking Cotton*, 1950s



Kehinde Wiley, United States, 1977, Santos Dumont - The Father of Aviation II, 2009, Oil on canvas, Gift of funds from two anonymous donors, 2010.99, © 2009 Kehinde Wiley

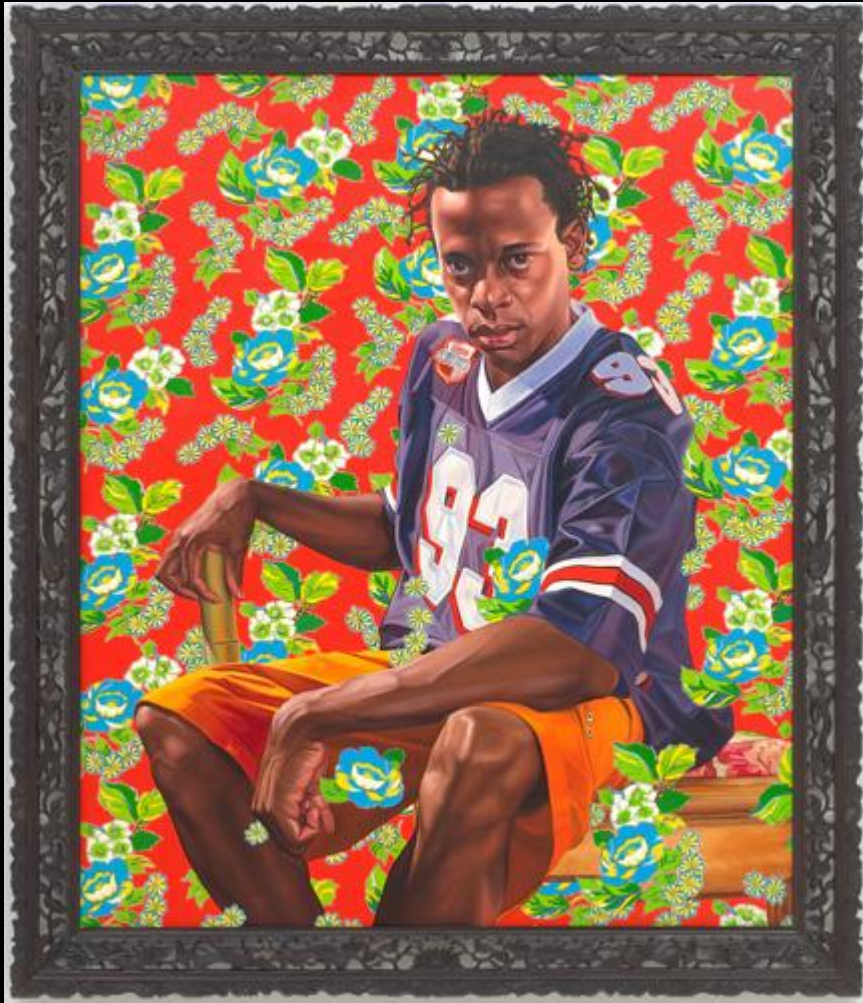
Above, Kehinde Wiley,, The Guardian.



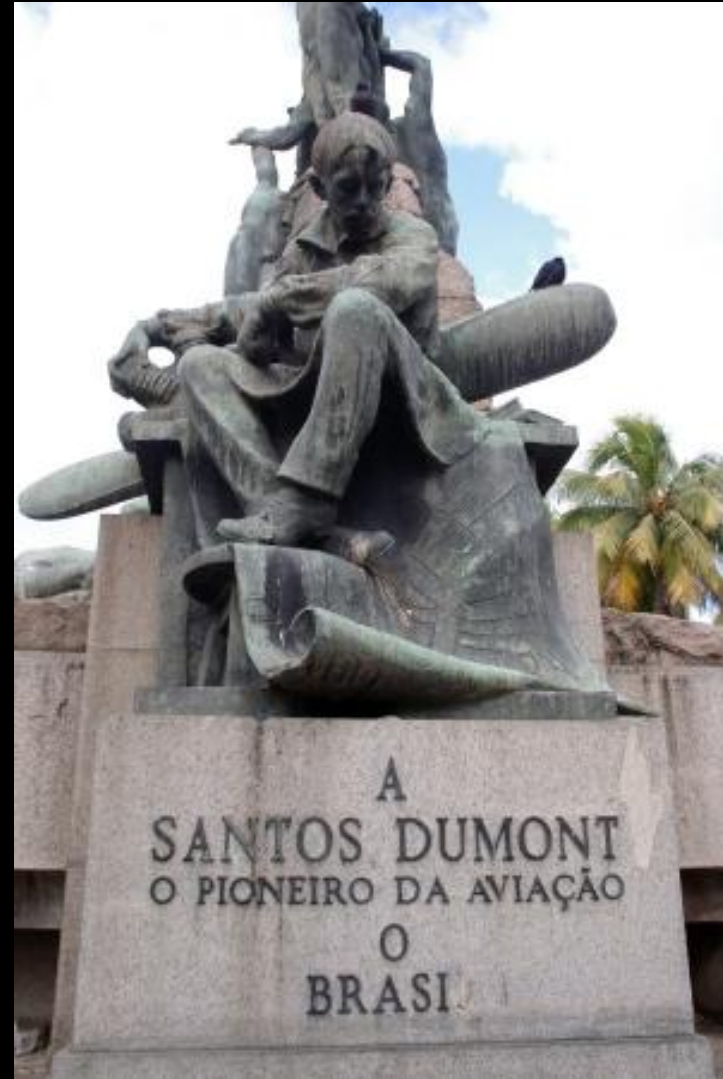


The monument to Alberto Santos-Dumont at the Rio de Janeiro airport in Brazil. R: Medium.com  
L: aerosteles.net

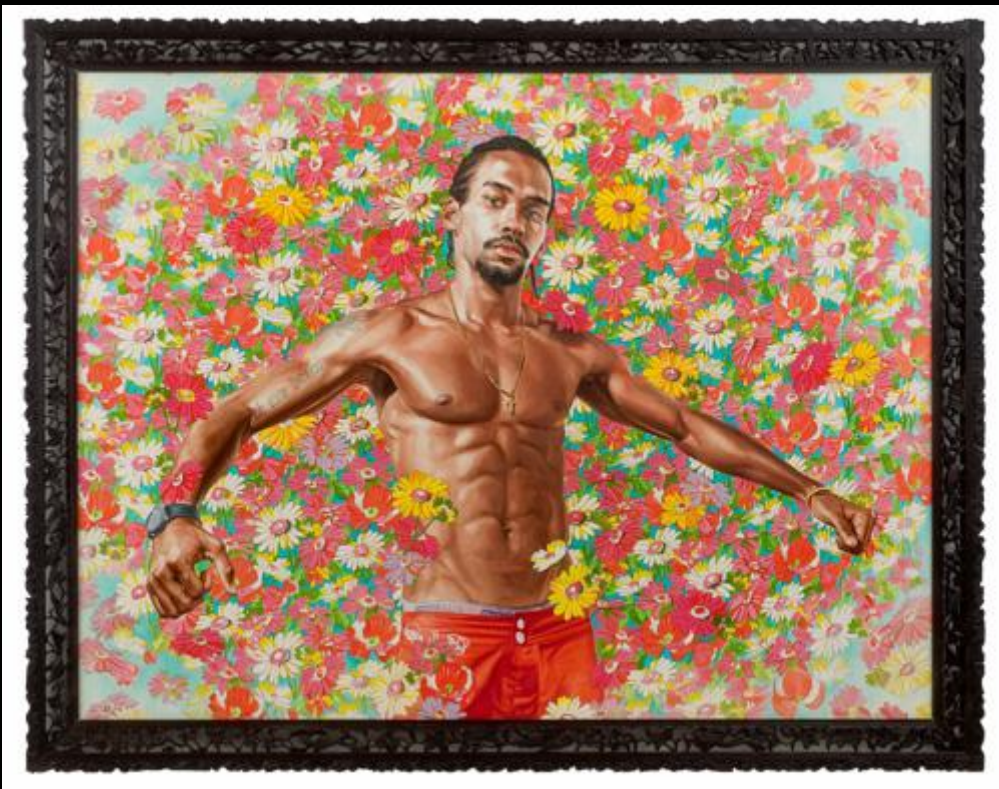




Santos Dumont- The Father of Aviation I, 2009  
kehindewiley.com



The monument to Alberto Santos-Dumont at the  
Rio de Janeiro airport in Brazil. welweb.org



Santos Dumont -- The father of Aviation III, 2009  
[kehindewiley.com](http://kehindewiley.com)



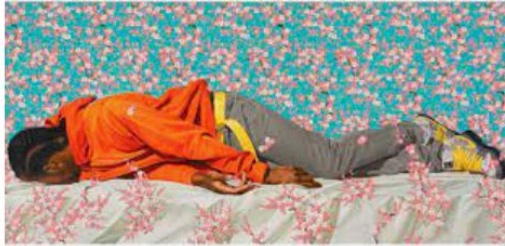
The monument to Alberto Santos-Dumont at the  
Rio de Janeiro airport in Brazil. [aerosteles.net](http://aerosteles.net)







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# Kehinde Wiley



Left, Kehinde Wiley, Photo Los Angeles Magazine. Right: Kehinde Wiley, President Barack Obama, 2018



# Nellie Mae Rowe

Nellie Mae Rowe, *Rocking Chair*, 1981,  
Crayon, felt-tip pen, pencil on paper,  
2019.16.29





Nellie Mae Rowe, Photo: Souls Grown Deep



*“I didn’t go to school to learn drawing. I guessed at it when I was a little gal. Because we had to go to the fields, pick cotton and all like that, I didn’t have a chance to draw like I do now, and every chance I had, I would get my pencil, get down on the floor and draw . . . . That was just in me and it is still in me. I would draw whatever I thought of, just like I do now.”*

--Nellie Mae Rowe







Lucinda Bunnen, Nellie Mae Rowe's House (1971). Photo ©Lucinda Bunnen, collection of the artist, courtesy of the High Museum of Art, Atlanta.



*“Because of the talent God gave me, many people started visiting and taking pictures. What is exciting and surprising and makes me feel good is to think about the people I would never have seen if I had not been doing things that were interesting to them.”* --Nellie Mae Rowe

thegotham.org



# SOULS GROWN DEEP FOUNDATION

- name comes from the last line of a Langston Hughes poem, *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*: "My soul has grown deep like the rivers."
- advocates including Black artists from the Southern United States in the American art history canon.
- fosters economic empowerment, racial and social justice, and educational advancement in the communities that gave rise to these artists.

*I've known rivers:*

*I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human  
blood in human veins.*

*My soul has grown deep like the rivers.*

*I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.*

*I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.*

*I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.*

*I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New  
Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.*

*I've known rivers:*

*Ancient, dusky rivers.*

*My soul has grown deep like the rivers.*

--Langston Hughes



## SOULS GROWN DEEP FOUNDATION

- stewards the largest and foremost collection of works by Southern Black artists, with some 1,000 works by over 160 artists, two-thirds of whom are women.
- advances its mission through collection transfers, exhibitions, education, public programs, and publications.



From Mia's exhibition website:

These artworks are sometimes called “folk” or “vernacular,” and the artists who made them labeled “self-taught.” Within the context of art museums, institutions rooted in colonial endeavors and oppression, such terms diminish the thoughtfulness and creative autonomy of both artwork and artist; we do not use these words. The works speak for themselves, centering Black voices, material traditions, and visions.

Nellie Mae Rowe, *Rocking Chair*, 1981,  
Crayon, felt-tip pen, pencil on paper,  
2019.16.29



# Stretch Break (5 minutes)



Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Shelves for Dynamite, 2018, Oil on linen, Gift of Mary and Bob Mersky, 2020.11.1a-c, © Lynette Yiadon-Boakye





Clementine Hunter, United States, 1885–1988, *Picking Cotton*, 1950s, Oil on board, The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund, 91.88.1

Gallery 324





Clementine Hunter, United States, 1885–1988, *Picking Cotton*, 1950s, Oil on board, The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund, 91.88.1



Right: Sharecroppers in the cotton fields, 1907,  
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/emmett-sharecropping-mississippi/>





PHOTO COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Left: African House murals, Melrose Plantation, Library of Congress. Above: Clementine Hunter at Melrose Plantation

Quote: Painting is a lot harder than pickin' cotton. Cotton's right there for you to pull off the stalk, but to paint, you got to sweat your mind.

--Clementine Hunter

# Racism as a Public Health Crisis

## Youth and Professional Artists Respond

This exhibition features artworks created by high school students in Minneapolis and St. Paul to address the impact of racism on their lives and on the health of their families, communities, and beyond. This project is sponsored by Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® of Minnesota as part of a larger campaign to address racism as a public health crisis.

In an equitable world, all people—regardless of race, income, ZIP code, or other factors—would have opportunities to live their healthiest lives possible. But the world is not just. Racism impacts public health in many ways, from devaluing Black and Brown lives, to negatively affecting the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian Pacific Islander, and other people of color across lifetimes and generations. All too often, people and institutions look at race—not racism—as the root cause of health inequities, where no biological basis exists.

Created by students at North High School and Minnesota Transitions Charter School in Minneapolis and St. Paul's Como Park High School, these artworks grew out of conversations and activities with local artists Kprecia Ambers, Nancy Ariza, Juan Lucero, and Akiko Ostlund. The artist-mentors shared their experiences and approaches to art making as inspiration for the students' own artworks. They also created screen-printed posters, exhibited here. Their designs express the power of words and images in response to the crisis of racism.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield, as the state's largest nonprofit health plan, and Mia, as an art museum that recognizes its colonialist roots, acknowledges that much ongoing work needs to be done to combat systemic racism in our own organizations and our state. Our partnership represents one way we can collaborate to create a healthier and more equitable future for all.

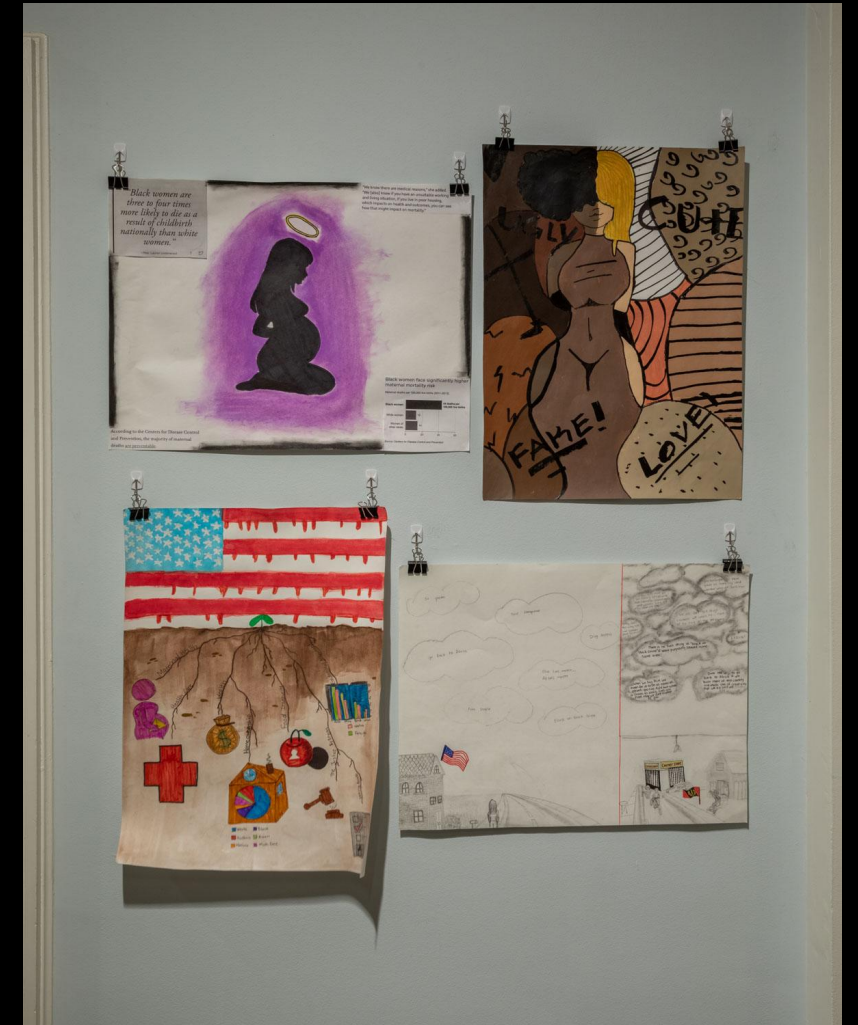


**Resources from Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® of Minnesota**  
Blue Cross has created many tools, including a group of short videos, and extensive resources to help all of us learn about racism and its impact on health. To access these resources, scan the code or visit [www.bluecrossmn.com/about-us/corporate-social-responsibility/health-equity/antiracist-video-resources](http://www.bluecrossmn.com/about-us/corporate-social-responsibility/health-equity/antiracist-video-resources)

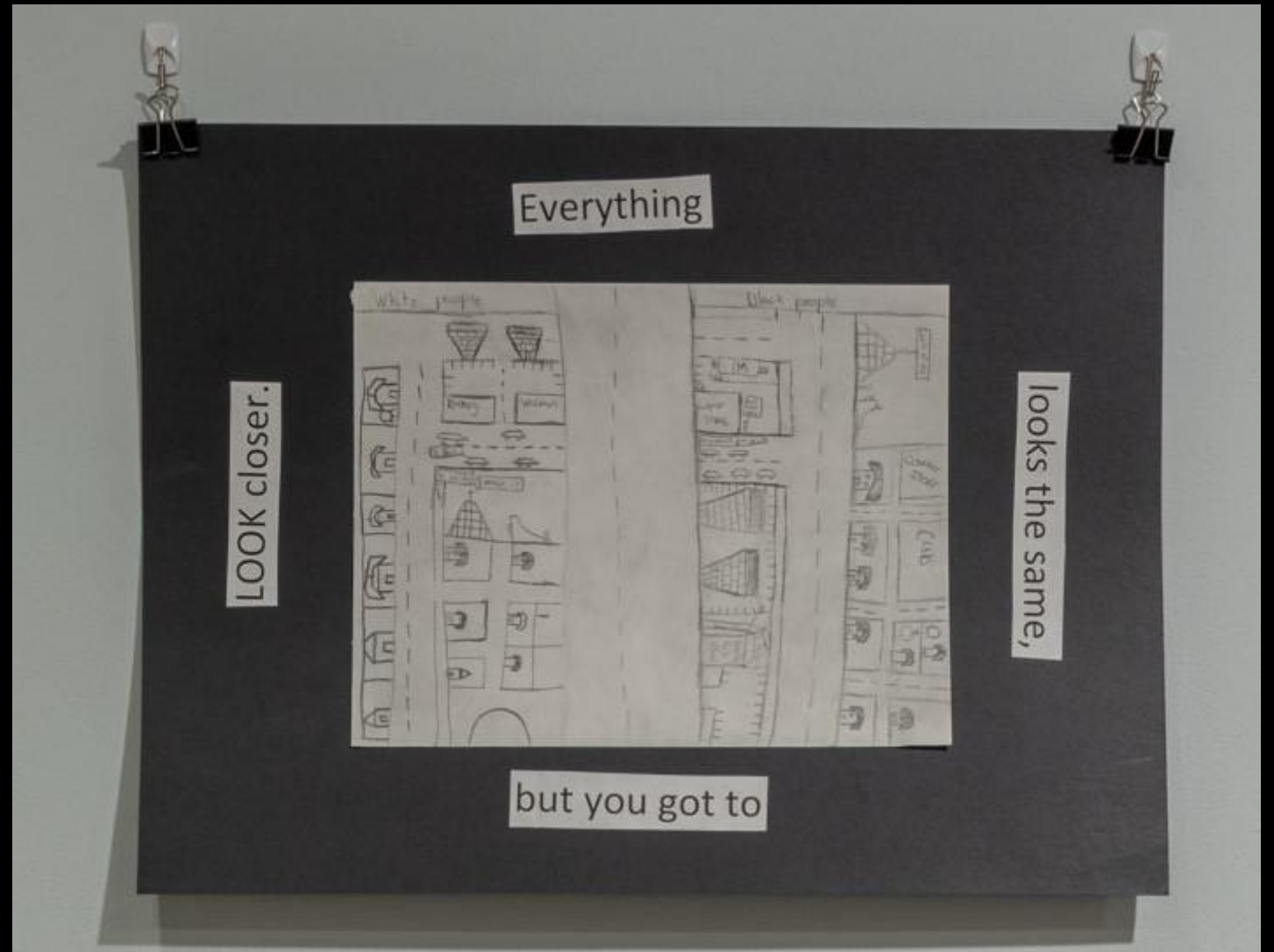


# Racism as a Public Health Crisis: Professional and Student Artists Respond

an exhibition in the Community Commons Gallery



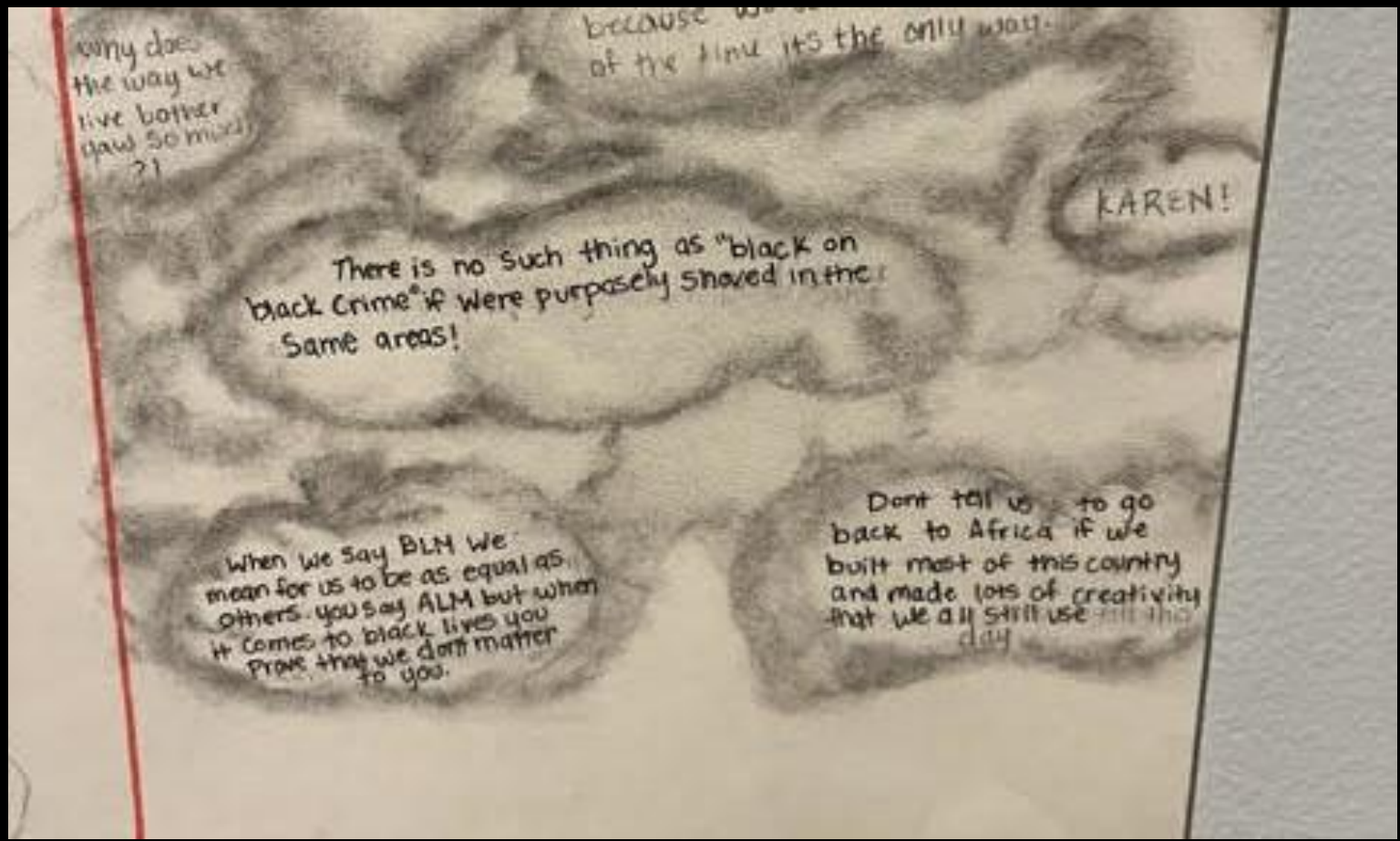




# Racism as a Public Health Crisis: Professional and Student Artists Respond

an exhibition in the Community Commons Gallery





# Racism as a Public Health Crisis: Professional and Student Artists Respond

an exhibition in the Community Commons Gallery



# Homework

Assignment will be sent out on Monday, November 29

No class November 25 - have a great holiday with family and friends!

December 2, 1 to 3 pm, virtual (combined session for all guides)



Naomi Schindler, Boy Reading, 2nd half of the 20th century, Woodcut, 2018.125.5, © Estate of Naomi Schindler

# Small Group Meeting Agreements

These agreements are intended to create a space for dialogue and ideation, aiming to create equity of voice. No one knows everything; together we know a lot. We have something to learn from everyone in the room. We also have a responsibility to share what we know, as well as our questions, so that others may learn from us.

- Assume good intentions
- Take Space, Make Space (aka Step Up/Step Back)
- Use “I” statements
- Listen for understanding and approach with inquiry; we may not agree
- Accept and expect non-closure at times
- Take care of yourself - take a break if you need to
- Honesty and confidentiality: What’s said here, stays here. What’s learned here, leaves here

# Optional: Small Group Reflection

We are taking time to reflect together on the events affecting our communities and lives that occurred with George Floyd's murder and the subsequent racial reckoning and civil unrest.

- In what ways did the events impact you, personally? In what ways did the events impact those you know?
- How did your thoughts shift on the presence of racism in our community?
- In what ways might this racial reckoning impact how we (guides and staff) interact with visitors at Mia?

# Other Questions?



Question on feedback form: “I have concerns about the use of cell phones on tours. It could be distracting and I anticipate situations that may be disrespectful to the art.”

A question for you: What do you see when you look at this picture?

