



BkM Art Hangouts
Process

Goals

In Art Hangouts, learners will:

- Look closely at a work from the collection
- Explore new artistic processes through close looking, conversation, and art-making
- Reflect on their own art-making processes

In this lesson, learners will:

- Observe Beverly Buchanan's shack sculptures
- Create a structure out of everyday materials
- Make connections between the use of everyday materials in art-making and vernacular architecture

Materials

- Cardboard/box base
- Scissors
- Strong glue (e.g., hot glue or tacky glue)
- Everyday materials to embellish (e.g., cardboard, wood scraps, natural materials, discarded objects)

BkM Art Hangouts are adapted from a series of virtual classes that took place in spring 2021. These thirty-minute lesson plans are designed for teachers and caregivers to engage learners with works from our collection and to explore hands-on, artistic processes. Lessons are created for ages 9–14, but can be adapted for any age group. In each lesson, participants will look closely at a work of art, consider how an artist finds inspiration, and create their own artworks inspired by these approaches. Art Hangouts are open ended, and students are invited to continue working on their projects even after the lesson ends.

Beverly Buchanan

American, 1940–2015

Over a forty-year career, Beverly Buchanan explored the relationship between personal, historical, and geographical memory. Buchanan's series of small-scale shack sculptures are ruminations on the aesthetics of southern vernacular architecture. Vernacular architecture refers to local or regional structures built from traditional materials or resources from the same area. Monuments to impermanence, Buchanan's shacks memorialize quarters for enslaved people, tenant-farmer dwellings, and churches, which often fell into ruin while plantation houses were preserved as historical sites.



Left: Beverly Buchanan (American, 1940–2015). *To Prudence Lopp*, n.d. Metal, plastic, wood, 17 7/8 × 10 3/8 × 16 1/2 in. (45.4 × 26.4 × 41.9 cm). Brooklyn Museum; William K. Jacobs, Jr. Fund, 2017.32.1. © Beverly Buchanan; Right: Beverly Buchanan (American, 1940–2015). *Lillington, NC Harnett Co.*, 2007. Acrylic on foamcore, 8 1/2 × 10 1/2 × 11 in. (21.6 × 26.7 × 27.9 cm). Brooklyn Museum; William K. Jacobs, Jr. Fund, 2017.32.2. © Beverly Buchanan

● Part 1: Look!

Before looking:

- Ask students to define the word “shack.” Where have they seen images of shacks, or heard the word used before? What does it mean to them?

Invite students to look closely at Buchanan’s [*To Prudence Lopp*](#) and [*Lillington, NC Harnett Co.*](#)

- What do you notice about the works?
- What do these shacks have in common? How do they differ?

Share that Beverly Buchanan’s work questions the methods and effects of history, asking why some things are commemorated while others are not. What types of buildings are preserved and cared for? Whose homes fall into disarray? Buchanan uses everyday, ordinary materials to make her shacks. She is inspired by southern vernacular architecture and the use of local materials and knowledge. In her practice, Buchanan examines why Black-owned homes built in this style often fall into ruins, while other historically white-owned structures, such as plantation houses, are meticulously preserved.

- Why do you think Buchanan uses everyday materials to make her shack sculptures?
- Why might Buchanan create buildings that appear run down or in ruins?
- What is a place that is special to you that may be overlooked by others?
- Can you think of a contemporary connection that asks us to consider what gets commemorated or preserved?

Teacher tip: You might make a connection with commemorative statues honoring Confederate leaders, which have recently sparked debate. You might use this as an entry point for students to think about the difference between preservation and commemoration, and how they convey specific values. Ask students: What do you think these statues commemorate? Why? How might this connect to the previous discussion?

Use this moment to prompt students to reflect on their associations with the word “shack.” Where did students’ initial associations with the word come from? Have their ideas changed during this lesson?

● Part 2: Explore!

Beverly Buchanan made shacks inspired by vernacular building techniques local to the South. She used ordinary materials that honor impermanence and celebrate the everyday.

→ How will you use everyday objects to make a structure of your own?

Step 1: Find a box to use as your base. Later, you'll add your everyday objects to this box. Its shape will inform how your structure looks. You can trim it to make it smaller or add a second box to make it larger. Just be sure it's sturdy enough to stand on its own.

→ Tip: Raid your recycling bin! Milk cartons, shoe boxes, cereal boxes, and oatmeal canisters are some examples of awesome bases.

Step 2: Gather your everyday objects. These can be anything! Consider what your material choices say about your structure. You might even choose a material that others disregard.

→ Example: I used eggshells to build my structure. I liked the idea that eggshells are something most people throw away, but they provide protection for the eggs within them before they are cracked. By gluing the shells together, I formed a protective layer for my structure.

Step 3: Embellish your house. Use everyday objects to build your structure.

→ What features will you include? A roof? Windows? Doors? An awning or a deck? You can add things that stick out of the structure.

→ Tip: Use a strong glue when attaching heavy objects.



Installation view, *Beverly Buchanan—Ruins and Rituals*. Brooklyn Museum, October 21, 2016–March 5, 2017.

● Part 3: Reflect!

What materials did you use? What do the materials you chose reveal about your structure?

Beverly Buchanan's artwork was inspired by buildings from a specific time and place. What people, places, or things inspired your structure?

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