

CALIFORNIA ARTISTS

Projects for Kids

Betye Saar

Betye Saar (b. 1926) draws from her own personal heritage, African American, European & Native American, as she creates assemblages, artworks that combine bits & pieces of objects in new & meaningful ways. Invariably, her artwork combinations bring a different perspective on the deeper contemporary issues of race, gender, culture & religion. A sensitive & committed artist, Saar reminds us of our universal connections to family, memories & spirituality.

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Betye Saar, *Keep for Old Memoirs*, 1976, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Cirrus Editions Archive. Purchased with funds provided by the Director's Roundtable, and gift of Cirrus Editions Photograph ©2007 Museum Associates/LACMA, M.86.2.531 Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY

Family Assemblage

As a young child, Betye collected treasures like stones, beads & buttons to combine into art projects. Later, she gathered objects that held secrets of the past. When her Great Aunt Hattie died in 1975, she created assemblages about her family history with keepsakes from relatives. Gathered in glass-covered boxes, the laces, dark photos & mementos hint at the lives of others. Learn more at: [http://collections.sfmoma.org/Obj61\\$133520](http://collections.sfmoma.org/Obj61$133520)

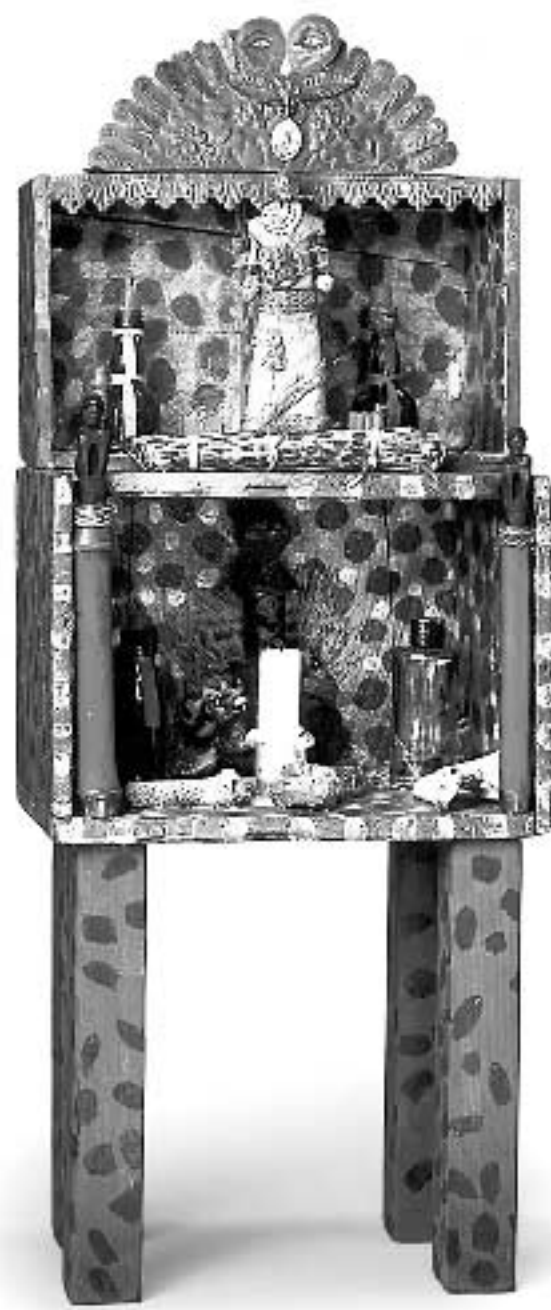
- ◆ Paint a shoebox lid inside & out.
- ◆ Gather family photos, letters, small mementos & fabrics. Arrange them in box lid.
- ◆ Attach papers with glue or tape. Punch holes in lid & tie on 3-D objects with string or wire.
- ◆ Hang your family assemblage in a special spot.

Look in the Mercury News

- ◆ Cut & combine various pictures from the paper to assemble an imaginary life for a make-believe person.
- ◆ Betye Saar draws from many cultures for her art. Find news about different cultures in the paper. How many different cultures are in today's news?

Talismans & Charms

Betye Saar explores the power people give to symbolic objects such as *gris-gris*, charms kept for good luck. In the *Gris Gris Guardian* sculpture, she combines objects of spiritual significance from many cultures: incense from India, finials from the Philippines, sculpture bits from Indonesia & eye motifs from Mexico. When put together in her sculpture, they remind us that different cultures often have similar traditions.



- ◆ Make a good luck talisman.
- ◆ Research symbols, practices & ideas connected to "good luck" from different cultures.
- ◆ Collect materials: feathers, string, beads, twigs & ribbons.
- ◆ Wrap, tie, combine materials together. Add a cord to your good luck charm.



Betye Saar, *Black Girl's Window*, 1969 Mixed Media assemblage, 35 1/4 x 18 x 1 1/2 in., Collection of the artist Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY

Self Portrait with Symbols

Betye Saar's artworks often tell about her own life. She uses windows in her artwork to show that you can look inside yourself for thoughts, feelings, & strengths. Each opening holds a different personal symbol. What do you think these symbols tell about the girl in the picture above? What symbols would you use to tell about yourself?

- ◆ Create a window grid with strips of dark paper.
- ◆ Fill the bottom opening with your self-portrait: a drawing, cut-paper silhouette or photo.
- ◆ Consider your special traits, thoughts & feelings & choose symbols for them.
- ◆ Fill each opening with your symbols. Use picture cutouts, drawings, small objects or photos.
- ◆ Alternate idea: draw a self portrait with symbols.



Student drawing by Erica S. grade 5

Learn more about Betye Saar at: www.ackland.org/art/exhibitions/saarwebsite/exhibition_page.html

Fight for Your Beliefs

Betye Saar used box sculptures to make strong political statements. Deeply upset about the treatment of blacks, she combined images that told of hurtful racial stereotypes. What would you like to change? What images would you use to convey your opinions?

Betye Saar, *Gris Gris Guardian*, 1990-1993 Wood, wire, glass, candles, braided rope, stones, nails, oil paint, feathers, beads, steel, bronze, corn husks, and petrified wood 28 x 11 x 7 1/2 in. (71.12 x 27.94 x 19.05 cm), Los Angeles County Museum of Art Purchased with funds provided by the Richard Florsheim Art Fund and the Modern and Contemporary Art Council Photograph ©2007 Museum Associates/LACMA, AC1996.162.1, Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY