

MCA FAMILY ACTIVITY: *MONUMENTS FOR SMALL THINGS*

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All Ages*

*We encourage adults to create with their kids

CREATE A 3D MONUMENT TO SOMETHING SMALL AND NOT USUALLY CELEBRATED.

We create monuments to things we want to uplift and immortalize. What do we choose celebrate and remember forever? What or who do we leave out?

By honoring a small thing, like a fly or an ant, we consider what everyone's purpose is in our shared community or ecosystem. We might even change our perspective about sharing space with these creatures that might give us the creeps sometimes! Let's take a moment to practice gratitude and honor even the smallest things as necessary to our survival.

TAKE A WALK

Before doing this activity, take a walk around your neighborhood. Pay close attention to what you see. Do you see any monuments in your neighborhood? Are there benches dedicated to people? What street names do you see? Is there a library named after somebody? Are there any parks, and what are they called?

What else can you observe? Are there birds perched on the trees? Ants underneath the bench eating food someone dropped while they were waiting for the bus? Is there a crack in the sidewalk you always skip over? Do you think the birds you observe today are the same ones you may have seen yesterday? What would happen if we named the streets after the birds that are always on the tree? What if we named the park after the insects that nest in the patches of grass? Imagine a world where we uplift the names of these seemingly invisible creatures.

CREATE

DECIDE WHO OR WHAT TO HONOR AND WHY

- 1 Before you get started, think about a small animal or pest. If you need help, you can look at the cheat sheet attached to this packet for some inspiration.
- 2 Research your small thing if you don't already know its purpose in the world. What does it contribute to the environment? Is its main purpose to be food for a larger animal? Does it help pollinate flowers?
- 3 Choose one of its functions and use that to guide your monument design. Think of what you would say about the small thing. World's smallest bug? Number one decomposer? You can be as literal or figurative as you want!

DESIGN YOUR MONUMENT

- 1 What do you want your monument to look like? You might be used to seeing big stone men on horses, but monuments can take many forms. Get inspired by the artworks on the next page.
- 2 Choose and gather your materials.
Materials for this activity are flexible! You can use anything to make your 3D monument. Feel free to use found materials that may be lying around your home. Here are some suggestions: empty toilet paper/paper towel rolls, pipe cleaners, aluminium foil, construction paper, glue or tape to help with assembly, sticks leaves, rocks, or other things you can find outside.
- 3 Think about scale – do you want your monument to be small enough for your small thing to hold? Should it be 20 times its size? Feel free to sketch it out on a piece of paper or dive right in to building.
- 4 Spread out your materials and get to work!

DOCUMENT + SHARE

Take a picture of your monument and share to MCA Family Activity Facebook page discussion. Let us know about the materials you used, your building design, and why you chose to honor that small thing.

REFLECT

After you make your monument, take a moment to talk together about these questions.

What is a monument? Do they need to be permanent? What would happen if a monument expired or was temporary?

How is the monument you made through this activity different or similar from others you've seen?

Where in your neighborhood would you put your monument?

What power do we have to decide who or what is worth celebrating in public?

1



Jeremiah Hulsebos-Spofford
Hyperlexia: Venus, 2020
Resin, filler, 70 x 35 x 12 in.
Courtesy of the artist

GET INSPIRED

Rethink what a monument can look like and be made of by checking out these artworks from the MCA Collection and *The Long Dream* exhibition.

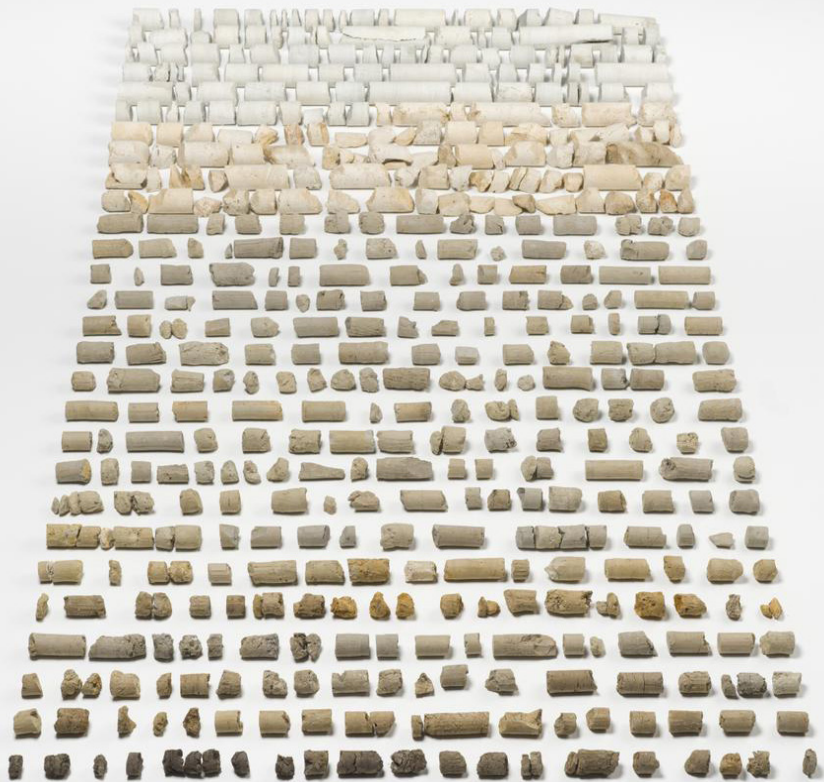
- 1 This piece looks like the kinds of statues and monuments we are used to seeing in public spaces and museums but broken apart, reassembled, and off-center.
- 2 This piece is a monument to the city of Chicago and not a single person or event.
- 3 The artist collaged together photos of tropical leaves to create this flag. It's a great example of using materials that aren't stone or steel.

Alan Sonfist, American, b. 1946, *Earth Monument to Chicago*, 1965–1977, Natural earth drillings consisting of :1) Sand, and gravel and clay mixture; 2) Very stiff gray clay silt; 3) Fine sand with gray clay; 4) Gravel with gray clay 5) Dense gray clay silt; 6) Hard pan; 7) Green shale; 8) Sandstone; 9) Dolomite with pyrite (a form of limestone)
Installed: 5.7 x 182.9 x 243.8 cm (2 ¼ x 72 x 96 in.), Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert R. Molner, 1980.2, Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago

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Edra Soto, *Tropicalamerican*, 2014
Inkjet print on silk, 5 pieces, each: 67 x 43 in.
Photo: James Prinz. Courtesy of the artist.

3



CHEAT SHEET: SMALL THINGS

There are small things all around us that deserve a closer look and a little celebration. Here are a few tiny creatures with big impacts.



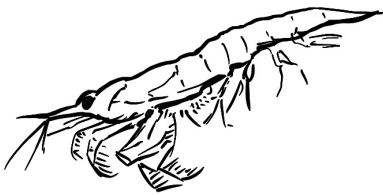
ANTS have been around for over 100 million years! There are over 12,000 identified ant species in the world. Ants allow air into the soil which allow water and oxygen to reach plant roots to help plants grow. They are also able to lift 10-50 times their own body weight. Can you imagine being able to carry 50 of yourself at the same time? What else could you celebrate ants for?

Source: <https://harvardforest.fas.harvard.edu/ants/ecological-importance>



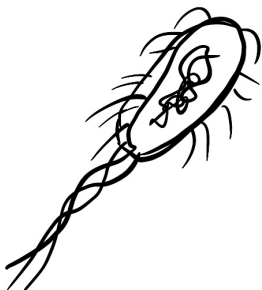
FLIES are insects that are both predators and prey! That means that they can eat other creatures, but they also are an important source of food for other animals and insects. Flies help to decompose, or break things down that have already died. Think of them as nature's clean up crew!

Here are some other facts about flies to consider: <https://sciencing.com/importance-flies-10016971.html>



KRILL are small, shrimplike crustaceans that live in the ocean. Their main purpose is to be a part of the diet of larger marine animals, like whales, penguins, and seals. Krill are one of the most abundant species on the planet, on land or sea! What would happen to larger animals if krill didn't exist?

Source: <https://www.ccamlr.org/en/fisheries/krill>



Did you know that BACTERIA is alive and that there is such a thing as good bacteria? Probiotics are microscopic little helpers that live in your digestive system and keep your belly healthy! How can you create a monument for something you can't even see?

Source: <https://www.webmd.com/digestive-disorders/what-are-probiotics>