

# Teacher Guide

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## *THIS WAY: A Houston Group Show*

On view | December 8, 2023–March 24, 2024



Michael Bennett, Imhotep Blot, and Studio KER, *Gumbo Chair, Gumbo Stool*, 2022–23. Furniture (two parts), Courtesy the artist's studio

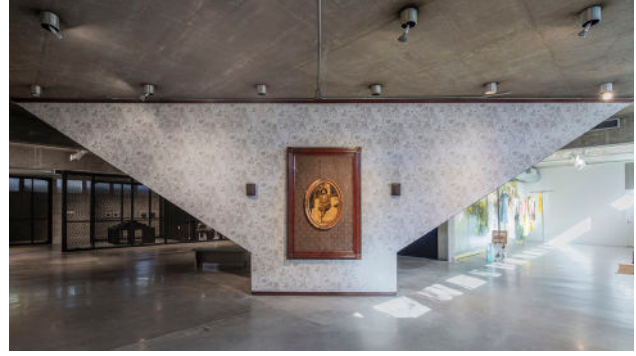
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Colby Deal, *Mrs. Lou*, 2023. Wood, polyurethane, fabric, and photo paper  
Courtesy the artist

This exhibition, *THIS WAY: A Houston Group Show*, presents a collective exploration by 12 Black artists focusing on the legacy and heritage of Houston’s Freedmen’s Town. The artworks encompass a variety of media, including architecture, furniture design, photography, film, sculpture, installation, and painting, aiming to bridge innovative artistic work with historical research and community advocacy.

Themes and emotions explored range from erasure of place to memories of celebration, addressing the past and present physical environment of Freedmen’s Town. The exhibition highlights themes and emotions explored range from Black histories, research and storytelling, to memories of celebration.

- Imhotep Blot, an artist featured in the exhibition, passed away suddenly in early 2023, leaving behind a poignant legacy within the Houston arts community. Three of his oil and acrylic paintings, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*, *Sacred Quilt* and *Untitled*, seamlessly merge into the show, offering an innovative approach to storytelling.
- Nahtan (Nate) Edwards, Nick Lloyd, and Unique James respond to the 1978 film *Who Killed Fourth Ward?* by producing a new film in the exhibition. Their work envisions Freedmen’s Town’s revival, utilizing visual effects to plant new memories and reimagine the present landscape with historical resonance.
- Artists in the exhibition were asked to care and respond to this community from a holistic perspective, by attending community meetings, consistently interacting with residents, and joining community tours.

## Key Questions

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For students and/or museum viewers:

- Think about where you come from. How much do you know about your hometown's history? What can you do to discover hidden stories and learn more about its past?
- Look at the different works on-view in the exhibition. What themes and feelings do the artists express as they explore the history and current situation of Freedmen's Town?
- Examine how artists in the exhibition use different things like buildings, films, and sculptures to share their messages about the legacy and history of Freedmen's Town.
- Discuss how the exhibition encourages us to keep preserving Freedmen's Town history?



Irene Antonia Diane Reece, *You Can't Pray A Lie*, 2023, Archives, oral history, and personal items courtesy of Albert Caesar, Henrietta Robinson, and Linda Preston Johnson; Slave Narrative Collection, Houston History Research Center, Houston Public Library, Courtesy the artist

## Curriculum Connections

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**History/Social Studies:** Research Freedmen's Town history, connecting it to the broader context of Black freedom after the Emancipation Proclamation. Explore the intentional erasure faced by the community. Discuss how historical narratives shape contemporary perceptions. For example, in Irene Antonia Diane Reece's work, *Give without sparing . . . Proverbs 21:26*, she directs listeners to a series of interconnected phone conversations from Freedmen's Town Legacy Residents, while Amarie Gipson's interactive binders *An Ode to the Motherward*, offers a tactile experience, allowing visitors to touch and interact with historical documents, photos, and materials.

**Art/Visual Arts:** Engage students in repurposing objects and creating artworks inspired by the exhibition. Experiment with different techniques and media to convey personal and cultural stories. Consider how diverse artistic expressions contribute to a holistic understanding of heritage

**Community Engagement:** Encourage students to explore their own communities' histories. Connect with local archives or community members to understand and preserve stories. Discuss the importance of engaging with and preserving cultural heritage.