Nina de Garis Davies. Copy of painting from tomb of Amenemhat (TT82), an official from the time of Thutmose III.
Create a Michael Rakowitz-Inspired Artwork

The OI is full of ancient art, but for the OI’s centennial, we invited a few contemporary artists (artists working today) to create and show work related to our collections.

One of the artists is Michael Rakowitz, who creates ancient artifact-inspired artworks as part of his The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist series. In these works, Rakowitz and his team of assistants create replicas of artifacts from the Middle East that are missing or have been recently destroyed. To create these pieces, Rakowitz uses modern-day newspapers and food wrappers from the countries where these artifacts were originally created thousands of years ago.

This piece in the OI combines an artifact in our collection, Relief with King Ashurnasirpal II (A34979), and Rakowitz’s recreation of the rest of the relief. The dark gray part in the upper right represents another piece of the relief that is on display in the British Museum. Take a close look at this picture. What is similar between the original piece and the reconstruction? What is different?

Why do you think Rakowitz creates these reconstructions out of fragile, everyday materials like food wrappers instead of out of stone, like the originals? What would be different about looking at a replica made of stone and one of Rakowitz’s recreations? Which would you prefer, and why?

Rakowitz has stated that his pieces are a sort of resurrection of missing artifacts, and that by using contemporary materials to recreate these pieces, he creates a connection between the ancient cultures and the lives of people today. He has described his work as a “compost of histories.” What does that mean to you?
Make Artwork Inspired by Rakowitz’s Piece

Think about something you have lost—maybe a favorite hat, umbrella, or stuffed animal. Do you remember what it looks like? If you can’t think of anything, you can choose your favorite artifact at the OI by searching for an image on our online database (oi-idb.uchicago.edu).

Sketch a picture of your object. To create a relief (a raised image above a flat surface), you can draw on a piece of cardboard and cut out your drawing.

Use newspapers, magazines, and clean food packages like cereal boxes, can wrappers, and chip bags to create a collage on your sketch. If you are creating a relief, wrap your paper scraps around the cut edges of the cardboard.

Create a collaged background for your image. If you are making a relief, glue your cardboard piece onto the background.

How is your recreation similar to the original object? How is it different? What do you like about your recreation? What is still missing from the original?

Details from The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist artwork at the OI. Photo credit Michael Tropea.
How to Draw Like an Ancient Egyptian

1. Draw the figure in profile (from the side).
2. Paint or color with flat colors (no shading or shadows) and add a background color.
3. Follow these body proportion rules:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Part</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Width</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feet</td>
<td>1 square</td>
<td>3 squares each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knees*</td>
<td>1 square</td>
<td>1 square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waist</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>3 squares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoulders</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>6 squares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arms</td>
<td>6 squares</td>
<td>1 square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands</td>
<td>1–2 squares</td>
<td>1 square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>3 squares</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Make sure the knees point to the side!
** Draw an animal or human head—it can be as wide as you need!
How to search for objects:
1. Go to oi-idb.uchicago.edu
2. Type or copy and paste the registration number for the object (Example: A9325)
3. Check the box “Images Only”
4. Press “Submit”

(E13704) This scribal palette was used to hold ink materials and reed pens or brushes, and contains its original pigments!
What is inscribed at the end of this palette?
___________________
___________________
___________________

(A24065) Although the Bull at the OI does not contain any traces of color, its “brother” in Persepolis contains traces of blue pigment and red ochre, meaning that it was once brightly painted!
Which period is this bull from?
___________________
___________________
___________________

(A12457) Pigment, such as the ochre fragments shown here, would have been used to create such vibrant wall paintings as those found in Neo-Assyrian royal buildings!
Which Assyrian ruler reigned during this time?
___________________
___________________
___________________

(A22212) This carved ivory plaque of a winged griffin shows signs of influence from the Greek world, like spiraling curls and overlapping feathers on its wings!
What country is this plaque from?
___________________
___________________
___________________
Relief with Assyrian Dignitaries, A7368, on display in the Yelda Khorsabad Court Gallery.

This relief of two Assyrian courtiers was part of a series of wall panels from the throne room of King Sargon II’s palace, showing officials and gift-bearers walking to the king. The person on the left is likely the crown prince Sennacherib, who is shown with a full beard, long curly hair, and a diadem (crown) decorated with rosettes (flowers), indicating his importance as royalty. Traces of red and black color on these reliefs suggest they were originally painted. The person to the right was once also pictured with these royal characteristics, but these features were carved away at some point. Can you see the traces of a beard and diadem with tassels?