

Then and Now Collage Inspired by Jayashree Chakravarty's *Personal Space*



Personal Space, 2001. by Jayashree Chakravarty (b. 1956, active Kolkata). Mixed media on paper. Asian Art Museum, Acquisition made possible by Jay and Marshalla Yadav, 2010.326. © Jayashree Chakravarty. Photograph © Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

Made of densely layered paper, fabric, and paint, *Personal Space* reflects Jayashree Chakravarty's idyllic upbringing in the lush countryside outside the city of Kolkata, India, as well as her anxiety at seeing this natural environment destroyed by the rapid spread of urbanization. The work serves as both a map and a diary, capturing how the artist remembers distant times and places — a dynamic and evolving experience that many of us share with respect to our own environments. In this activity, you will create your own layered collage to preserve your memories of a special place in your life.

DURATION

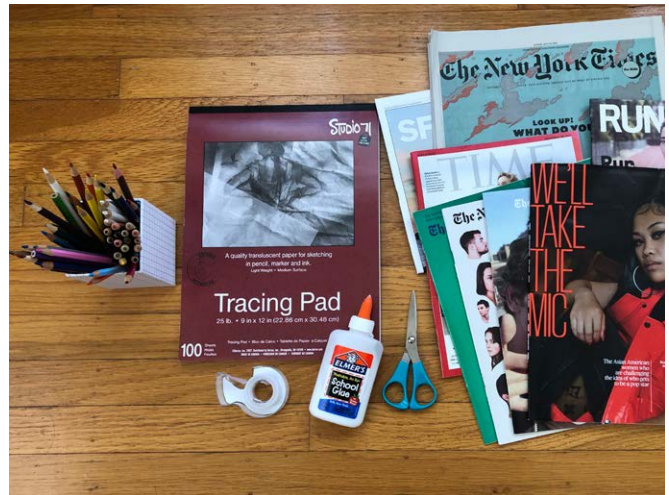
90 minutes

OBJECTIVE

- Reflect on why specific spaces hold personal meaning
- Explore how memories of a place, and the place itself, change over time
- Engage in collaging techniques

MATERIALS

- Video: [“Jayashree Chakravarty on Personal Space”](#)
- Then/Now Worksheet (below)
- Magazines, newspapers, photographs that you can cut up
- Tracing paper, tape, glue, pencils/pens, scissors
- Optional: materials from nature (leaves, grasses, flowers, bark, soil, etc.) that you want to include in your collage



PROCEDURE

Pre-Activity Discussion

- 1 Watch the video linked above to learn about Chakravarty’s inspiration and process in creating *Personal Space*.
 - a. While watching, observe and write down every material you can see Chakravarty use in her map
 - b. Note: What details in the map surprised you?
- 2 Discuss with a friend or in a small group:

Chakravarty is very interested in how places change over time. How does her layered map-making technique help show this change?

Art Activity

- 1 Using the Then/Now worksheet on the last page, brainstorm sensory details about a special place in your life that has changed over time (for example, your childhood home, classroom, neighborhood, bedroom, etc.). Look over your completed worksheet and reflect on how your feelings about this place have changed over time.

Your Special Place, Then and Now

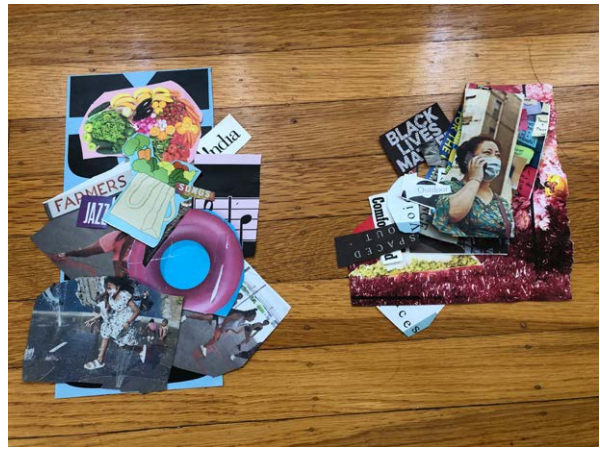
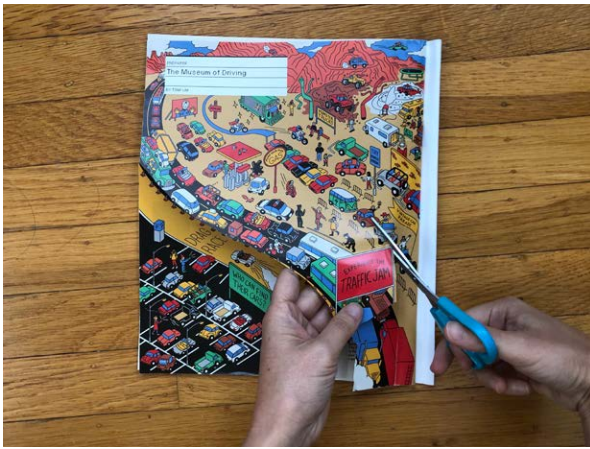
Directions: Pick one place that holds special meaning in your life, and brainstorm how that place has changed over time. Consider words and phrases associated with the sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and textures of that place, and categorize them into Then and Now. Your Then and Now could be years, months, days, or even hours apart. Use these guiding questions in your brainstorming:

- Does your special place still look and feel the same? What is different about it?
- Looking at your words for Then and Now, does this change seem positive or negative? Why?

Name of Place: Lakeshore Neighborhood, Oakland

	Then 2016	Now 2021
Sights	- Crowds at the Farmers Market - so many cars - no parking spaces - kids in the water fountain	- Bad lines, Motor signs - Long lines, people spaced out, masked - For Lease signs - Fun displays in backstreets - bugs
Smells	- Donuts from Colonial Donuts - breads from Arizemendi - Top Dog hot dogs	- Hand sanitizer - Boba's by the lake - Boba's Coffee - Smoke in the air
Sounds	- Thumping music from Hipline Dance Studio - Jazz singer at the main crosswalk.	- Clatter from outdoor restaurant stalls/tables - Drumming from the lake - Motorcycles coming by
Tastes	- Ice Cream from Yogurt Deluxe - Curry from Platters of India	- Boba Tea from Quickly - Burritos from Pico
Textures	- Sticky algae from donuts - smooth/bumpy fruit at the farmers market	- Cold gloop of hand sanitizer - chewy Boba pearls

Wider windows



② Collect from magazines, newspapers, photographs, and even the outdoors any pictures, words, colors, and textures that remind you of your special place. Think about how your gathered images, objects, and words connect to the details you brainstormed on your worksheet.

③ Divide your collected items into “Then” and “Now” categories.



④ On one sheet of tracing paper, create a collage using the “Then” materials. Then, on another sheet of tracing paper, create the “Now” collage. Experiment with the placement of your items before you glue them down.



⑤ Glue the “Now” collage on top of the “Then” collage to create your own layered “personal space.” Hold your finished artwork in front of a lamp or tape it to a window. What parts of your “Then” collage can you see through the tracing paper?

Questions for Reflection

- ① How did it feel thinking about how your special place has changed over time? Was it challenging to think about or notice change? Why or why not?
- ② Did you like the first or second layer of your collage better? What is it like looking at the complete artwork and seeing the “Then” layer behind the “Now” layer?
- ③ What new discoveries did you make about your special place from doing this art activity?

Your Special Place, Then and Now

Directions: Pick one place that holds special meaning in your life and brainstorm how that place has changed over time. Consider words and phrases associated with the sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and textures of that place, and categorize them into Then and Now. Your Then and Now could be years, months, days, or even hours apart.

Use these guiding questions in your brainstorming:

- Does your special place still look and feel the same? What is different about it?
- Looking at your words for Then and Now, does this change seem positive or negative? Why?

Name of Place: _____

	Then	Now
Sights		
Smells		
Sounds		
Tastes		
Textures		