TEACHER EXHIBITION NOTES
DAVID ADJAYE: MAKING MEMORY

TEACHER NOTES
The introduction, section headers and captions are as found in David Adjaye: Meaning Making. Each exhibit has been selected to enable you to guide your students’ journey around the exhibition and point out some exhibits of interest as you go. If you would like a more in-depth look around the exhibition, then you may be offered a free preliminary visit once you have made your group booking. We do not run tours of our galleries but our visitor experience assistants who are based in the galleries are knowledgeable about much of the content.

INTRODUCTION

“I believe we’re in a period of rethinking ingrained histories” – Sir David Adjaye OBE

Since the beginning of recorded time, monuments and memorials have become society’s way of recalling our triumphs and failures. They can become complex places that host public memory, promoting a real and strong emotional response from the audience. As our history changes, so do the monuments that represent them. While we move into an ever more modern world, monuments are becoming dynamic, functional figures that contain history and meaning within.

Humans are constantly evolving and public reaction to memorials are systematically re-evaluated. Designers raise questions on how architecture is used to record human events in history and shape our perceptions on past events.

In this exhibition, renowned architect David Adjaye OBE examines the idea of the monument and presents his thoughts on how architecture, shape and form are used as storytelling devices. This exhibition focuses on 7 of Adjaye’s buildings, some complete and others in working progress. All the buildings show how Adjaye uses shape and design to reflect on history and memory, and to record human lives.

1. MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS: A VISUAL TYPOLOGY
Architecture comes in many forms. In this exhibit you can see a range of monuments – some well-known, others not so much. Each monument is grouped into an appropriate category. Seek a list displayed with the official names for each monument. Today many of these monuments are used as historic waypoints.

Here are some good questions to ask students to start them thinking about key ideas of Adjaye’s work:

- What are the different landmarks called?
- Why are they grouped together this way?
- What is the significance of these monuments?
- Why do you think they are still here today?
- Who do you think visits them and what are their purposes?

## 2. THE GWANGJU RIVER READING ROOM

![Model of the Gwangju River Reading Room](image)

May 18th 1980 was an important day for many in South Korea. Citizens in a city called Gwangju revolted against the South Korean dictatorship. The military responded by killing many protestors, most who were university students. 200 people were recorded killed, however experts believe the number is far closer to 2,000 individuals. Today, the Gwangju massacre is seen as a painful yet critical turning point in South Korea's road to democracy.

Adjaye designed a reading room in Gwangju in which members of the public would exchange books and ideas, keeping alive the thoughts of many students who died.

- What is the significance of using books?
- What do they represent?
- How are they involved in the relevant history?

Mainly constructed from concrete and timber, the building connects the local river to the land. Inside, the building contains tables, shelves, viewing platforms which facilitates people’s ability to gather books. The roof fits in to Korean tradition with a complex structure that
appears to be in transformation when you walk around inside. Visitors are encouraged to use the pavilion in different ways, ensuring the structure is constantly changing and reflecting the condition of its surroundings.

With 200 books used, Adjaye encourages Koreans to never forget the 200 students who lost their lives. The books included share a message of peace, freedom, democracy and human rights. The access to the reading books is unrestricted. The building is a monument to the power of literacy and literature and how sharing ideas is a keystone to democracy.

To encourage thinking, ask your students to think about the Gwangju massacre.

What is the significance of a roof that appears to be ever in motion?
Why have books been a focus of the architecture?
What are children’s opinions of the structure and form of the monument?

3. UK HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL AND LEARNING CENTRE

The UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre is a standing remainder to all for our responsibility to remain vigilant against intolerance and bigotry. David Adjay’s belief is that monuments and memorials are society’s way of marking triumphs and failures allowing us to never forget a sincere part of history. The UK was the last of the 22 countries involved in the second world war to build a significant monument dedicated to the holocaust. The structure will honor the six million Jewish people which were murdered during the Holocaust as well as other victims of Nazi persecution.

The UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre partakes an engaging, reflective and powerful exhibition below with the outstanding architectural memorial above. The memorial has 23 bronze fins laid out before the structure itself which results in 22 spaces which each represent the 22 countries in which Jewish communities were destroyed. The memorial is situated besides the Palace of Westminster in London’s Victoria Tower Gardens which will display the immense loss caused by the destruction of Europe’s Jewish communities during the Holocaust. The narrative of the monument will be balanced, addressing the complexities of Britain’s ambiguous responses to the Holocaust, avoiding simplistic judgements and encouraging visitors to critically reflect on whether more could have been done, both by policymakers and by society as a whole.
Some things that your students can be encouraged to think about:

- How do they feel about the memorial concept?
- What do they expect to see within the memorial (pictures/ objects/ artefacts)?
- What would they create as a memory of the Holocaust?

4. SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

This museum is dedicated towards telling a neglected story of black Americans’ lives. It covers all history from slavery to modern day. Early efforts to establish a federally owned museum featuring African-American history and culture can be traced to 1915, although the modern push for such an organization did not begin until the 1970s. After years of little success, a more serious legislative push began in 1988 that led to authorisation of the museum in 2003. A site was selected in 2006. The museum opened September 24th 2016 in a ceremony led by American president Barack Obama.

The museum’s position has been an important part of the planning process. Eventually, Smithsonian ended up being built in an area with many well-regarded American museums such as the ‘National Art Gallery’ and the ‘National Museum of American History’. This is a symbolic message of change to many ethically black people. Regarded as the right step in legitimising and including black history into wider society and American history.

A significant feature of the museum is its inclusion of ornate ironwork. Often carried out by African slaves, the industry was big in southern cities such as New Orleans. Adjaye isolated these common features and patterns and implemented them into the architectural design of the museum. Secondly, the material and colour of the panels used are influenced by plaques and sculptures found in Benin and Nigeria. These two ideas help make the Museum of African American History and Culture stand out from its peers. All surrounding buildings are coated in white brick and embody a familiar, eastern American design. However, Adjaye made sure that this design would help the Smithsonian museum inherit its African influences. As a result, the museum seems to stand out from the crowd and can be recognised by many.

It may be possible to introduce pupil thinking by providing opportunities for students to recreate the museum for the UK, all while maintaining the key features used by Adjaye to reflect African heritage.
5. SCLERA PAVILION

Inspiration can be acquired through numerous concepts and ideas. The Sclera Pavilion was received as a contribution to the London Design Festival in 2008. The Sclera Pavilion was inspired by the human eye. The pavilion is not deemed as a monument of memorial however the intention of this structure was to provide people with a space to self-reflect. The concept and intuition behind the structure is to showcase the idea of slowing down to see and understand things more clearly. Sclera Pavilion is in a small square within Southbank Centre from where the London Eye can also be seen. The pavilion was open to the public 24 hours a day. The pavilion is an oval-shaped building with a curved suspended ceiling in the main space which suggest the visual qualities of the eye itself.

Within the past few years there has been a decline in people who identify themselves as being religious especially within Christian communities. Due to this, many religious buildings and places of worship are less frequently attended although peoples need for contemplation and personal reflection remains just as much. Adjay’s intention was for the Pavilion to be used as an earthly version of the sacred spaces which were conventionally associated with places of worship.

Some things your students can be encouraged to think about:

*If they had to build a structure based on a body part, what would they choose and why?*
*What do they think about the Sclera Pavilion?*
*How would they design the Pavilion differently?*

6. NATIONAL CATHEDRAL OF GHANA

The National Cathedral of Ghana is based in Accra, the capital of Ghana. In 1957, Ghana became the first African country to achieve independence from colonial rule. Ghana is a largely religious country with over 70% population identifying themselves as Christian. The National Cathedral will be a unique 21st century landmark however the intention of this landmark is to welcome multiple faiths to gather, worship and celebrate in spiritual accord. The building is dedicated with a two-level 5000 seat auditorium alongside two podiums which is designed to accommodate up to 15,000 people standing.
The National Cathedral consists of more than just places of worship. It includes spaces for learning as well as a community hub, a music school and an art gallery. The vast designs integrated within the building interiors have been from several artists which will allow the democracy and local tradition to be seamlessly and symbolically intertwined. The purpose behind the Cathedral will be to represent the collective memories of Ghana's diverse histories. The structure of the building has a symbolic function which presents as an emblem of unity and identity for what we believe is still a fledgling nation.

Some things your students can be encouraged to think about:

*Why do you think they made the Cathedral a place for interaction as well as prayer?*
*Could you sketch the complex design of the National Cathedral of Ghana?*
*Can you describe traditional features of the Church (religious and cultural), and why?*

### 7. MASS EXTINCTION MEMORIAL OBSERVATORY

The Mass Extinction Memorial Observatory (MEMO) is a proposed design for a monument dedicated to preserving the memories of extinct species. The concept was established by stone carver and project director Sebastian Brooke. The structure of this observatory is a continuous spiral walkway which is wrapped around a large central atrium which will toll each time a species will become extinct. The building is conceived as a powerful and live memorial with species being added to the walls as they become extinct. The MEMO can also be deemed as an education centre and observation structure which thoughtfully integrates into the local landscape.

MEMO is being sited on the Isle of Portland which is a location that has been classified by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. This section of the UK's Jurassic Coast has 185 million years of geological history and contains preserved remains of creatures from the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. The interiors of the MEMO will be stoned carvings of extinct species. Scientists claim we are entering into a period of mass extinction which is
referred to as the Sixth Extinction/ Anthropocene Extinction.

8. MARTIN LUTHER KING MEMORIAL (BOSTON)

David Adjaye created a proposal memorial informed by Dr. King’s final speech, “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop.” The memorial is an overlook in black stone, projecting out from Beacon Street, Boston, to embrace and overlook the Common below. From the summit of the memorial, visitors are invited to regard America’s oldest city park and new mountainous sculptures below, which together compose a radical amphitheater. On the lawn are sloped stone sculptures engraved with the words of the Kings that act as terrain and provide seating.

Martin Luther King Jr was a Baptist minister and activist who became the most visible spokesperson and leader in the civil rights movement from 1954 until his assassination in 1968. Martin Luther King is best known for advancing civil rights through nonviolent tactics influenced by his Christian beliefs.

One way to encourage pedagogical engagement is to build questioning to gain understanding of the meaning behind shape and form. How have Adjaye incorporated the racial progression in his monument? Why would Martin Luther King need a memorial? Activities can include working as designers to create their own monument that helps to symbolise everything they have understood about Martin Luther King and racism in America.

EXHIBITION GUIDANCE

Objects in the exhibition are on open display rather than in cases. Care should be taken when moving around the exhibition and most objects should not be touched. Any objects that can be touched will be clearly signed. Please ask staff if you are unsure. We would be grateful if you could brief your students accordingly.

Depending on your group and your itinerary for the visit, we would recommend that you set aside approximately 60 minutes to explore this exhibition.