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## Five things to do at "Tom Sachs: Space Program: Mars"

Families learn what it's like to plan a trip to Mars at the Park Avenue Armory's new space exhibit.



Tom Sachs Space Program: Mars

Photograph: Caroline Voagen Nelson

By Marisa Cohen

Picture an overgrown, hyperintellectual kid who's obsessed with space travel—you know, the type who can recite the dates and details of every NASA mission. Then imagine what would happen if you gave that kid unlimited access to an old hardware shop, encouraged him to scavenge bits of wood, old toilets and discarded refrigerators from the street, and then let his imagination run wild in the 55,000-square-foot interior of the Park Avenue Armory. You would wind up with artist Tom Sachs's monumental installation, *Space Program: Mars*, up through Sunday, June 17. Here are five ways for families to get the most of this mission.

Join the crew to board the LEM

Kids 10 and over should head straight to the indoctrination center, where they will be given a brief exam and assigned a task (anything from sorting screws and sweeping to mending uniforms with an old-fashioned sewing machine); once they've proven they're launch-ready, they're given access to the life-size replica of a Lunar Excursion Model.

### Catch a video

In a small room off the main hall, several of Sachs's short videos run in a continual loop. "How to Sweep" and "Love Letter to Plywood" are quick, cheeky and give a dash of insight into Sachs's craft.

### Watch the artists at work

Sachs stresses that this is a living, working mission; you'll see him and his 13 crew members (they're the hipsters in matching khakis, sneakers and skinny striped ties) performing important jobs such as cooking red beans and rice, taping up peeling parts of the art, and riding skateboards and bikes from one end of the vast hall to the other. Corner one and encourage your child to ask about space, art or where they got those cool sneakers.

### Spot the pop culture

Along with old tools, a Winnebago and tons of plywood, the 50 sculptures on display incorporate several items you might find at a garage sale: a Darth Vader costume, stacked beer bottles, old typewriters. Parental warning: A stack of "NASA Manuals" actually consists of Playboy magazines with the covers painted silver.

### Sign up for a family day program

At Life on Mars: Imagining the Incredible, junior astronauts ages five to 12 and their parents imagine what it would be like to liftoff from Earth and land on Mars (June 2, 3, 9 at 10am; \$5 per person). Arts-and-crafts tables will be stationed throughout the installation so families can create souvenirs of their journey through space.

Tom Sachs: Space Program Mars *is on view at the Park Avenue Armory through June 17. \$12, children under 10 free.*