

Mondays with MoMA



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Step 1 Look closely

Questions

1. What is the first word that comes to mind when you look at this artwork? What specific parts made you think of that word?
2. How do you think the artist made the marks?

Step 2 Learn more

This drawing by Cai Guo-Qiang, *Drawing for Transient Rainbow*, was made with gunpowder. He often uses gunpowder and fireworks as materials for his artwork, which stems from his childhood in China, where fireworks often mark celebratory events.

To create this work, he sandwiched small piles of gunpowder between two sheets of paper. He then weighed the paper down and lit fuses to ignite the gunpowder. The result was a textured surface that looked and felt like an explosion, blackened and charred.

This drawing is connected to his work [Transient Rainbow](#), where the fireworks created a rainbow that spanned the East River connecting Manhattan and Queens. Watch the video of *Transient Rainbow* [here](#). While the real fireworks happened in the moment and could only be recorded by video or remembered, in the drawing the artist captured their traces on paper, allowing the image to outlive the event.

Step 3 Activity: Charcoal and pastel memory drawings

Materials: pencil, 3 pieces of paper, scissors, charcoal, or oil/chalk pastels

1. Cut an assortment of shapes from one sheet of paper.
2. Think of an exciting moment/event that sticks out in your memory. What happened and how did it make you feel?
3. Choose a color that helps convey the emotion of the moment. Place one cut shape on top of your protective sheet of paper and color the edges with a thick layer of charcoal or pastel (these materials work better than pencils or crayons, but you can use these too).
4. Hold down the colored shape on top of a clean sheet of paper, and, using your fingers, cotton swab, or a rolled tissue, rub the color from the edge of the shape onto the paper. Experiment with different effects you can get. Watch [this short video](#) for reference.
5. Repeat several times with different shapes and colors until you create a composition that you feel captures the emotion of your exciting moment or event.

Step 4 Share!

Share your artwork with a classmate and tell them about the moment you memorialized. Or you can email it to us at MoMA: schoolprograms@moma.org.



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Cai Guo-Qiang. *Drawing for Transient Rainbow*. August 2003. Gunpowder on two sheets of paper. Gift of Clarissa Alcock. © 2021 Cai Guo-Qiang