

Mondays with MoMA



MoMA



Detail of *Un Village sans frontières*

Step 1 Look closely

Questions

1. What materials did the artist use?
2. Looking at the detail view on page 2, how did the artist assemble the various materials?

Step 2 Learn more

This artwork is part of Chen Zhen's project, *Un Village sans frontières*. The artist assembled miniature houses made of candles and positioned them on children's chairs sourced from around the world. The artist drew from his experiences in Brazil teaching impoverished children about social and cultural status through their city's architecture, then helped them build models of their dream houses using candles.

The title, *Un Village sans frontières*, means "a village without boundaries" in French. The children's wooden chairs piled with multi-colored candles symbolize houses where diverse cultures co-exist, forming a village without borders.

The meltability of candles suggest how concepts of home and community are subject to perpetual change. Born and raised in China, Chen moved to France as an adult and traveled often. The work speaks directly to his lifelong interest in 'transexperience,' a term he coined to describe his own experience as a migrant between cultures.

Step 3 Activity: Construct a paper house

Materials: paper, scissors, tape or glue
Optional: pen or pencil to help with rolling

1. Cut your paper into rectangles (mostly of equal sizes) approximately three inches wide and four inches long. You'll need a lot of these— between 20-30.
2. Roll the cut rectangles around a pen or pencil to maintain equal diameters to create a cylinder, and tape or glue it to hold the shape. Repeat with all your rectangles.
3. Start by arranging the rolls to create a structure by stacking them on top of or next to each other, and taping or gluing them as you go. Experiment with different ways to build your frame.
4. Think about elements such as windows, doors, roofs, and chimneys as you complete your house.
5. Don't worry about planning too much. Be open to how your design might evolve as you build your structure.

Step 4 Share!

Share your house with a classmate or family member. Or, you can email it to us at MoMA: schoolprograms@moma.org

To see more works from this project, visit moma.org/artists/47887#works



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Image: Chen Zhen. *Un Village sans frontières*. 2000. Wood chair and candles. Gift of Marlene Hess and James D. Zirin. © 2021 Chen Zhen/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York