

## Art and Architecture

Architecture is all around us—it makes up most of our built environment—but we do not always take the time to examine it closely and consider how, when, and why the buildings we live, work, gather, and play in came to exist, and what they can tell us about our culture and ourselves.

Architecture offers important insights into the history of a place and the ideas and aspirations of the people who shaped it. For example, LACMA has physically reshaped its campus over time to become more like a town square that functions as a hub for social gathering and indoor-outdoor activities. These changes reflect more recent ideas about museums as social places where many different kinds of activities can take place, and demonstrate an embrace of Los Angeles’s mild climate.

Not all of the artworks we discuss in this resource packet are full-scale architectural works, but they use the materials and language of architecture to communicate different ideas about how our built environments influence us, and vice versa. The artworks also encourage us to think about symbolism: what larger ideas or concepts do buildings represent?

Contemporary Japanese artist Yoshitomo Nara (b. 1959) typically creates paintings, drawings, and sculptures of cartoonish children in all kinds of moods. The life-size painted wooden structure *My Drawing Room* (2008) is a recreation of Nara’s studio that invites viewers to witness his artistic process and many of his personal inspirations. The artwork, with a painting on the exterior that reads “PLACE LIKE HOME,” raises questions about what home means. Is home where your things are? Is it where you feel most comfortable and creative? How can you recreate a sense of home if you’ve lost or left yours?

*Mezcala Architectural Model* (500 BCE–1000 CE) was created in the Balsas River region of the western

Mexican state of Guerrero by unnamed Mezcala artists known for their small-scale, carved stone figures, animals, and models of houses. The architectural model discussed here has four prominent columns, which likely represent the four corners of a house and may also symbolize the four-cornered organization of the universe, a concept that was widespread in Mesoamerica. Stone house models may have been created to accompany people in their burials, suggesting that the home played an important role in Mezcala identity.

*Double Portable Temple (bure kalou)*, made by unnamed Fijian artists in the early nineteenth century, shows how a miniature version of a building can help extend the power of the immovable, full-size version to new places. Made out of the same, sacred materials as a full-size *bure kalou* (temple), portable temples could be used—like the *bure kalou*—as receptacles for the spirits of divine ancestors. It’s possible that priests took the small temples on canoe voyages, which allowed them to invoke the ancestors’ power from a distance.

Contemporary American artist Julie Mehretu (b. 1970) creates paintings, murals, and works on paper that incorporate architectural plans, diagrams, and maps of urban environments. In *Stadia II* (2004), Mehretu uses the outline of a stadium as a focal point that asks viewers to reflect on the long history of this architectural form and the innumerable public gatherings that have taken place in stadia. Mehretu is interested in how architecture can symbolize the historical and societal forces that shape and reshape our globalized, capitalist world.

The four artworks that we share in this packet can be discussed on their own, in pairs, or as a group. When engaging with them, we encourage you to ask students to look closely, make sketches and models, and share their observations with each other. Students can also consider the following questions:

1. How does architecture shape their lives?
2. How does architecture communicate the values of other cultures?
3. How did architecture reflect the ideas and beliefs of people in the past?
4. How do artists use architecture to communicate their visions and ideas? How does their artwork change or influence how we think about architecture?

We look forward to hearing about how you utilize this resource packet in your classrooms. If you would like to share student work with us or request additional resources, please contact us at [educate@lacma.org](mailto:educate@lacma.org).

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## ***My Drawing Room, 2008*** **Yoshitomo Nara**

### **About the Artist**

Yoshitomo Nara (b. 1959, Hirosaki) is one of the best-known contemporary artists from Japan. He first gained widespread attention during Japan's Neo Pop art movement in the 1990s with his images of children, both sweet and ominous, set against empty backgrounds. Nara's characters might seem simple or naive at first, but on a second look they evoke complex feelings like anger, hope, joy, fear, vulnerability, rebellion, and alienation.

Nara draws inspiration for his artwork from many different sources, including manga, anime, punk music, and street culture. Some critics argue that Nara's work, which combines innocence with evil, is a reaction to Japan's rigid social conventions. Nara offers a very personal explanation of his artwork: "I have two contradictory desires: to appear as someone good in front of people, but at the same time, I want to be myself, so I think that my work expresses what I'd really like to be."<sup>1</sup>

### **Taking a Closer Look**

*My Drawing Room* is a small white house (10' x 12' x 12') composed of reclaimed wood and a corrugated metal roof that sits in the middle of the gallery space like a large sculpture. A painting hanging on one of the exterior walls reads, "PLACE LIKE HOME" and shows a young girl, painted in Nara's signature style, standing on a grassy hill with a bandaid on her forehead and her eyes shut. There is a pop out window on the other side of the house with a display of cute animal figurines in it.

The interior is set up as an artist's studio, complete with a large desk in front of the windows that invites viewers to imagine the artist sitting there and looking up from his work from time to time. The desk is cluttered with partially finished drawings, coffee mugs, candles, more

figurines, and old-fashioned postcards with images of children on them. Even more cluttered than the desk is the floor, which is covered in drawings. Four CDs hang on the wall, each one labeled "emotional drawing mix."

### **Making Meaning**

*My Drawing Room* reveals a more personal side of Nara and lets us glimpse some of his visual and musical inspirations, as well as evidence of his artistic process. Context is important to Nara: "Various factors such as the music playing in the room, the colors on the wall and surrounding objects all affect my painting."<sup>2</sup> In fact, context is so important to Nara that he has transformed his personal art-making environment into an artwork!

As a piece of architecture, *My Drawing Room* asks us to think about how we relate to the spaces we inhabit or create and the objects with which we surround ourselves. The artwork might also make us think about the different ways people recreate safe, familiar environments when they are far from home. In Nara's words, "I've set up a studio in Germany, Japan and various other places, but wherever it might be, the contents are the same."<sup>3</sup>

1 Nina Starr, "In Conversation with Japanese Artist Yoshitomo Nara," *Design Anthology*, accessed February 3, 2020, <https://designanthologymag.com/story/yoshitomo-nara>.

2 Yukie Kamiya, "Yoshitomo Nara and Graf: Happy Together," *ArtAsiaPacific* 52, (March 2007): 80–83, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505231757&site=ehost-live>.

3 "LIMITED TIME ONLY! 'My Drawing Room' Christmas version," *ART iT*, March 12, 2010, [https://www.art-it.asia/en/u/HaraMuseum\\_e/z5ru8ty3fhmlmltra4dj](https://www.art-it.asia/en/u/HaraMuseum_e/z5ru8ty3fhmlmltra4dj).

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Nara's drawings are all over the floor? What might this say about him?
2. Why do you think Nara hung a painting that says, "PLACE LIKE HOME" on the exterior of *My Drawing Room*? How might you interpret the painting differently if it were hanging on a white wall instead?
3. Design a special room where you can be your most creative self. What will you put in it? What does the room say about you?
4. Create a small sculpture out of modeling clay or other materials and then design two different environments for it to exist in. How does each environment change the way you see the sculpture?



Yoshitomo Nara, *My Drawing Room*, 2008, mixed media, 118 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 147 $\frac{5}{8}$  × 149 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (301.5 × 375 × 380 cm), collection of the artist, © Yoshitomo Nara 2008, photo by Mie Morimoto, courtesy of the artist



Yoshitomo Nara, *My Drawing Room*, 2008, mixed media, 118 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 147 $\frac{5}{8}$  × 149 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (301.5 × 375 × 380 cm), collection of the artist, © Yoshitomo Nara 2008, photo by Mie Morimoto, courtesy of the artist





Yoshitomo Nara, *My Drawing Room*, 2008, mixed media, 118% × 147% × 149% in. (301.5 × 375 × 380 cm), collection of the artist, © Yoshitomo Nara 2008, photo by Mie Morimoto, courtesy of the artist



Yoshitomo Nara, *My Drawing Room*, 2008, mixed media, 118% x 147% x 149% in. (301.5 x 375 x 380 cm), collection of the artist, © Yoshitomo Nara 2008, photo by Mie Morimoto, courtesy of the artist



## ***Architectural Model, 500 BCE–1000 CE*** **Indigenous artist (unknown)**

### **About the Artist**

As with many objects from the ancient Americas, we unfortunately do not know the name(s) of the Indigenous artist(s) who created this beautiful architectural model. However, we do know that the model is exemplary of the Mezcala artistic tradition, known for its carved stone human figures, animals, and models of houses with clean geometric lines. Mezcala refers to both the artistic tradition and the Indigenous community that thrived in the Balsas River region of the western Mexican state of Guerrero between 500 BCE and 350 CE.<sup>1</sup>

Mezcala-style objects are associated with some of the earliest people in western Mexico. Only a handful of these objects have been recovered from archaeological excavations, where their location and relationship to other materials were minutely recorded. Most ancient objects from this region were illicitly looted from burials, which makes it difficult to know exactly when and where they were produced. From the information at hand, though, these house models present an early, well-developed specialization in stone sculpture, a unique artistic tradition that continues to attract and inspire viewers today.

### **Taking a Closer Look**

The architectural model pictured here is made of stone, possibly calcite or andesite. The model's clean lines and smooth surfaces denote the care taken by the artist(s) in drilling, sawing, and polishing the stone to create a flattened representation of a three-dimensional structure. The abstracted house stands on a rectangular platform, with five narrow steps extending from the bottom to the top.

Atop the platform, the artist(s) carved three vertical, oval-shaped openings in the stone, which create four columns of similar dimensions. These columns represent

the posts that would have stood in each of the four corners of a typical Mezcala house, providing both a structural and a symbolic foundation. The roof may depict two levels of cross-beams or lintels.

### **Making Meaning**

Researchers believe that Mezcala models are flattened renderings of thatched-roof houses. Houses with elevated stone platforms and four-cornered posts were common across ancient Mesoamerica and many contemporary Indigenous communities continue to build similar structures, using traditional methods and tools.

For many Indigenous societies in Mesoamerica, houses are the center of mundane everyday activities, as well as sacred spaces. In K'iche' Maya communities, for example, houses both mirrored and embodied the four-cornered organization of the universe. This understanding of space was likely shared among other Indigenous communities in Mesoamerica.<sup>2</sup>

Researchers think Mezcala models, along with other offerings, were specially made to accompany people in their burials, which were commonly located underneath houses. Just as a house shelters and protects people during life, these models may have served to protect people in the afterlife.

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1 Carlo Gay, "Mezcala Architecture in Miniature," vol. 15 (Belgium: Académie royale de Belgique, 1987).

2 Alyce de Carteret "From the Collection: Mezcala Houses in Miniature," *LACMA Unframed*, 2018. <https://unframed.lacma.org/2018/10/10/collection-mezcala-houses-miniature>.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Where do you think the entrance to the house is?  
What makes you think that?
2. Look up images of traditional pole and thatched-roof houses from the region of Guerrero. How does the model compare to these?
3. As grave goods, Mezcala house models held important ritual significance for the communities that produced and used them. What kinds of things were/are buried with people from other cultures and why?



*Architectural Model*, Guerrero, Mexico, ca. 500 BCE–1000 CE, stone,  $3\frac{5}{16} \times 2\frac{7}{8} \times 1\frac{5}{8}$  in., Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, gift of Constance McCormick Fearing M.2001.212.40, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

***Double Portable Temple (bure kalou), early 19th century***  
**Artist Unknown**

**About the Artist**

We do not know the name(s) of the artist(s) who made this portable temple. However, we do know a good deal about how Fijians—both in the nineteenth century (when this portable temple was made) and today—view art and art making.

Fijians do not have a word for art; the closest approximation is *iyau*, which might be translated as “valuable.” *Iyau*, or valuables, can be almost anything that is brought and presented as a gift. *Iyau* is closely connected to wealth, but for most Fijians, wealth is created by the transfer of things, not necessarily by holding onto them.

Fijian artists make art with great care for aesthetics and technical excellence for a number of different reasons. Art objects have the capacity to embody people, powers, and relationships; any object being offered stands in for, or embodies, the value of the person who made it or is presenting it, so it makes sense to present oneself in the best light possible. Objects are also intended to demonstrate honor and respect for both the maker’s and the recipient’s ancestors. In Fiji, art has the power to forge and maintain personal relationships.

**Taking a Closer Look**

Standing nearly four feet tall, this portable temple was made by one or more highly skilled artists who had expert knowledge of basketry. The temple primarily consists of long ropes of handmade, braided *magimagi* (cords made of coconut fiber) that are woven into a zigzag pattern and supported by a wooden frame. Typically, only older men were allowed to make *magimagi*, which might tell us something about the temples’ creators. *Magimagi* production was a form of skilled sacred work intended to honor the ancestral gods and win their favor.

The small, white disc shells decorating the doorframe and the ridge-poles on the two rooftops imitate the large white egg cowrie shells, called *buli dina*, that adorn *bure kalou*, which are full-scale temples, also translated as “spirit houses.” These large cowries symbolize godly presence and chiefly authority. The square base on which the portable temple stands likely represents the earthen mounds on which the larger *bure kalou* (temples) were built.

**Making Meaning**

*Bure kalou* were important fixtures in pre-Christianized Fijian villages where priests communicated directly with ancestors. Unlike many other cultures, which dedicate religious buildings to creator gods, Fijians dedicated *bure kalou* to divine ancestors. The higher the *bure kalou*’s roof, or the higher it stood on an earthen mound, the closer it brought the priests and their prayers to the ancestors.

Small, portable temples like this one were kept in the *bure kalou* and probably used as receptacles for receiving the ancestors, who had the power to bring about good things. It is also possible that priests took the portable temples on canoe voyages, which allowed priests to continue consulting the ancestor gods and utilizing their power, even when they were far away from the immovable *bure kalou*.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think it was important to the portable temple's makers that it be well-made and aesthetically pleasing?
2. Compare the portable temple and/or images of full-size *bure kalou* to religious buildings in other parts of the world. What is similar about them and what is different?
3. Do you own any objects that are miniature versions of other things? What is the object's purpose? Why is it special or meaningful to you?
4. If you were to create a structure similar to this portable temple, how would you begin? What materials would you use? Develop an architectural plan and carry it out using inexpensive or recycled materials.





*Double Portable Temple (bure kalou)*, Fiji, early 19th century, coir, wood, reed, and shells, 44 × 25 × 21 in., Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, gift of Joseph Winn Jr., 1835, photo © Peabody Essex Museum, by Jeffrey Dykes

## ***Stadia II, 2004*** **Julie Mehretu**

### **About the Artist**

Julie Mehretu (b. 1970) was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and moved to Michigan with her family at age seven. Since 1999, she has lived and worked in New York, creating monumental paintings, murals, and works on paper that overlay architectural plans, diagrams, and maps of urban environments with abstract shapes, lines, and hand-drawn marks. Her dynamic, at times overwhelming, compositions suggest both order and chaos, embodying the energy, uncertainty, and disruption of our globalized world.

Mehretu's works reference art history, from major movements in the history of abstract painting like Futurism, Constructivism, and Abstract Expressionism, to comics, graffiti, and Chinese and Japanese calligraphy. Her subject matter is just as broad, and includes migration, revolution, climate change, colonialism, global capitalism, war, and racial injustice.

### **Taking a Closer Look**

Pay attention to where your eyes go when you look at *Stadia II*. What do you notice first? Does the painting make your eyes dart around quickly or can you move them slowly across its surface?

Thick, curving lines, most visible near the center of the artwork, swirl around like a tornado. Looking deeper into the painting, there are large, curvilinear patches of yellow that might form rows of seats in a sports arena or amphitheater. Layer upon layer of shapes and symbols resembling national flags and pennants hangs above, creating a festive atmosphere. Can you imagine thousands of fans at a game, wearing their team's colors as they chant and wave banners in the air?

Returning to the center of the composition, colorful dots float in the air like confetti. Behind them,

thousands of painterly (loose, gestural) black lines and marks seem to form groupings of people and sporadic plumes of smoke. Underneath this layer are fine black lines that further define the stadium structure like an architectural wireframe.

### **Making Meaning**

*Stadia II* belongs to a triptych of paintings created in 2004 that addresses themes such as nationalism and revolution as they occur in art, sports, and contemporary politics.<sup>1</sup> There is a feeling of tension in the painting, as if the movement toward mass celebration and unity (seen in the rows of seats, confetti, and the flag-like shapes and colors) is constantly on the brink of degenerating into chaos (evidenced by the painterly black marks and the strong sense of an overwhelming, centrifugal force). Perhaps the seemingly jubilant layers of the painting merely distract from, or mask, a more sinister political reality underneath.

Mehretu's labor-intensive process of building up marks, shapes, and lines over time mirrors her investigation of history's layers, similarly characterized by both creation and erasure, positive social change and oppression. The *Stadia* paintings incorporate elements of hundreds of sports stadiums around the world spanning 2,500 years of history, including Adolf Hitler's Olympiastadion in Berlin and the Chilean National Stadium, which dictator Augusto Pinochet used as a prison camp. Mehretu reveals stadiums to be a "metaphoric structure of our collective history for spectacle, propaganda, and crime," at once implicating advertisers, sports teams, and politicians.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Allison Young, "Julie Mehretu, *Stadia II*," *Khan Academy*, accessed February 3, 2020, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/global-contemporary/a/julie-mehretu-stadia-ii>.

2 Alina Cohen, "Julie Mehretu Paints to Make Sense of a Violent, Chaotic World," *Artsy*, August 31, 2018, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-julie-mehretu-paints-sense-violent-chaotic>.

## Discussion Questions

1. Can you identify the different parts of the stadium in *Stadia II*? Work with a partner to redraw them. Then, make a drawing of a special event on top of the architecture using lines, shapes, and other marks.
2. Come up with similes and metaphors that describe the different parts of *Stadia II*. Example: Colorful dots float in the air like confetti. Share your favorites with the class and write a poem together about the artwork.
3. Mehretu suggests that stadiums might be used for conflicting purposes: some forms of assembly in stadiums might demonstrate democratic freedom, while others uphold or perpetuate negative systems, like totalitarianism. Find historical examples of both and analyze how the stadium's architecture helped each group accomplish their goals.





Julie Mehretu, *Stadia II*, 2004, ink and acrylic on canvas, 108 x 144 in., Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, gift of Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn and Nicolas Rohatyn and A. W. Mellon Acquisition Endowment Fund 2004.50, © Julie Mehretu, photograph courtesy of the Carnegie Museum of Art



## Resources

### Books for Students and Teachers

#### ***Architecture According to Pigeons***

Speck Lee Tailfeather

Introduction for children to some of the world's most famous buildings. Grades 3–6

#### ***Fiji: Art and Life in the Pacific***

Steven Hooper

Catalog accompanying the LACMA exhibition by the same name. Includes more information about Fijian portable temples.

#### ***Julie Mehretu***

Julie Mehretu, Christine Y. Kim, Rujeko Hockley

Catalog accompanying Mehretu's mid-career retrospective at LACMA. Includes more information about *Stadia II* (2004).

#### ***Roberto, the Insect Architect***

Nina Laden

Endearing story about a young termite who aspires to be an architect. Grades K–3

#### ***Yoshitomo Nara***

Yeewan Koon

The first monograph on Nara in more than a decade, which includes his most recent work in painting, drawing, sculpture, and ceramics.

### Online Resources

#### **ArchKIDecture**

Encourages visual literacy and explains math, science, and visual arts concepts to kids through the medium of architecture.

<http://archkitecture.org/>

#### **Julie Mehretu, Stadia II**

Khan Academy

An in-depth look at Mehretu's 2004 painting.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/global-contemporary/a/julie-mehretu-stadia-ii>



# Classroom Activity

## Building as Honoring

**Essential Question** How can we honor ancestors with architecture?

**Grades** K–3

**Time** One class period

**Art Concepts** Shape, weaving pattern, architecture, tradition, craftsmanship

**Materials** Pencils, rulers, yarn in different colors, colored construction paper, scissors, white glue or glue sticks. Small, disposable cups and brushes can be used to brush white glue onto the paper.

**Talking About Art** View and discuss the *Double Portable Temple (bure kalou)*. What do you see? What materials do you think the temple is made of? What features stand out to you? How is this building different from anything you have seen before? How is it similar to other buildings you have seen? What would you like to ask the artists who made it? Why might it be helpful to make a small temple; what could it be used for?

Standing nearly four feet tall, this portable temple was made by one or more highly skilled artists who had expert knowledge of basketry. The temple primarily consists of long ropes of handmade, braided *magimagi* (cords made of coconut fiber) that are woven into a zigzag pattern and supported by a wooden frame. *Magimagi* production was a form of skilled sacred work intended to honor the ancestral gods and win their favor.

*Double Portable Temple (bure kalou)* is a miniature version of a *bure kalou*, or temple. Fijians dedicated *bure kalou* to divine ancestors. The higher the *bure kalou*'s roof, or the higher it stood on an earthen mound, the closer it brought the priests and their prayers to the ancestors. Made out of the same, sacred materials as a full-size *bure kalou*, portable temples could be used—like the *bure kalou*—as receptacles for the spirits of divine ancestors. It's possible that priests took the small temples on canoe voyages, which allowed them to invoke the ancestors' power from a distance.

**Making Art** What is an ancestor? Who is an ancestor that you value or hold dear? It can be someone in your family or someone we admire as a society and have a holiday for, like Martin Luther King Jr. Think of this ancestor while you imagine a building you would like to create for them.

Teachers, demo the following steps as students follow along:

1. Ask students to call out basic geometric shapes and draw them on the board.
2. Then, ask students to think about the kinds of shapes they might use for the foundation of their building as well as for the roof. What kinds of shapes provide a good foundation for other shapes? What kinds of shapes can make their building tall?
3. Next, ask students to draw a building that fills their paper and is made up of 3–4 geometric shapes. Second grade students can use rulers to measure each shape.

4. Students should cut out colorful paper shapes that are approximately the same size as the shapes they drew. The shapes can then be pasted over the drawing of the building.
5. Next, students will add the weaving component. Ask them what unique material holds the *bure kalou* together (cords made of coconut fiber, woven together) and whether they can point out specific patterns in the weaving. Students will select yarn in different colors to create patterns that decorate the whole building. Third grade students can use the yarn to partition their buildings and practice finding the area.
6. When they are ready, students can glue down the yarn, trimming the overhanging ends when they are finished.

### **Reflection**

After clean-up, have a gallery walk. Then, ask students to share their artwork with the class by responding to the following:

- Who did you create your building for? Why?
- What part of your building do you think your ancestor would like most?
- Tell us about the pattern you created with the yarn. How did you come up with it? How did you choose the colors?

### **Curriculum Connections**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.

K-4.1 Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.

Common Core State Standards for Mathematical Practice

K.G.A.1 Describe objects in the environment using names of shapes, and describe the relative positions of these objects using terms such as above, below, beside, in front of, behind, and next to.

K.G.A.2 Correctly name shapes regardless of their orientations or overall size.

K.G.B.5 Model shapes in the world by building shapes from components (e.g., sticks and clay balls) and drawing shapes.

2.MD.A.1 Measure the length of an object by selecting and using appropriate tools such as rulers, yardsticks, meter sticks, and measuring tapes.

3.G.A.2 Partition shapes into parts with equal areas. Express the area of each part as a unit fraction of the whole.

California Arts Standards for Visual Arts

K.VA.Cn11 Identify a purpose of an artwork.

1. VA:Cn11 Understand that people from different places and times have made art for a variety of reasons

1. VA:Cr2.1 Explore uses of materials and tools to create works of art or design.

2.VA:Cr1.1 Brainstorm to generate multiple approaches to an art or design problem.

Samples



## Classroom Activity

### Creative Space Design

**Essential Question** What things do you absolutely need in a creative space? How can you create a safe, creative space in different environments?

**Grades** K–8

**Time** 1–2 class periods

**Art Concepts** Design, model, paper sculpture, environment, 3D, art studio, sketch

**Materials** Tag board (or any other cardboard for base), construction paper, decorative paper, glue sticks, masking tape, scissors. Optional: yarn, magazines, colored markers or crayons

**Talking About Art** Begin by taking a careful look at the exterior views of Yoshitomo Nara’s *Drawing Room*, 2008. What do you notice? Does it remind you of any familiar object or place? Now look at the interior views. What are some things you see inside? What do you think this space is used for? How can you tell? Why do you think the artist chose to put a painting on the exterior that says “Place Like Home”?

Nara created this **sculpture**, or three-dimensional work of art, to resemble his **art studio**, a place where an artist makes their art. He filled it with pictures and figurines that inspire his playful drawings and paintings. He even has CDs on the wall that he enjoys listening to while making art. Nara has studios in different parts of the world, but he sets them up the same way in each place. Why do you think that is?

Do you have a space where you feel most creative? Imagine having the perfect space to express yourself (through art, music, writing, cooking, etc.). Does it have a desk or table to work on or a comfy rug on the floor where you can spread out your things? What kind of supplies do you need? Do you need a lot of space or just a little? If you could make this space portable, what would that be like? Could this space be recreated anywhere you go? How would you do it?

**Making Art** Now you will use paper to create a model of your ideal creative space. A **model** is a small three-dimensional representation of a proposed structure. Before you begin, answer the questions above and make a **sketch**, or quick drawing, on paper. You can make several sketches before deciding which one you like best.

Next, you will use construction paper strips to build your model. Before you begin, think about whether you want to show your creative space’s exterior, interior, or both. There are many ways to fold paper into different shapes. Use the guides provided to help you experiment with different techniques. Cut paper to whatever thickness is needed for your designs.

When you are ready, you will glue your model to the tag board or cardboard base. In the end, you should be able to look at your artwork from different sides, which is what makes it a **three-dimensional model**.

Try to include as many details as you can, such as the art-making supplies you need or the different things that inspire you.

## Modifications for Early Elementary

For students in grades K–2, pre-cut paper strips in various colors and sizes. Demonstrate simpler folding techniques, such as making loops or spirals by curling paper around one’s finger. Students can practice cutting simple shapes and gluing them to the model. Students can also add features and details with markers and/or crayons, such as furniture or art-making supplies.

## Reflection

What did you discover in the process of making your model? What helps you be your most creative self? Do you think you can be creative in any environment or only one that you have set up in a particular way?

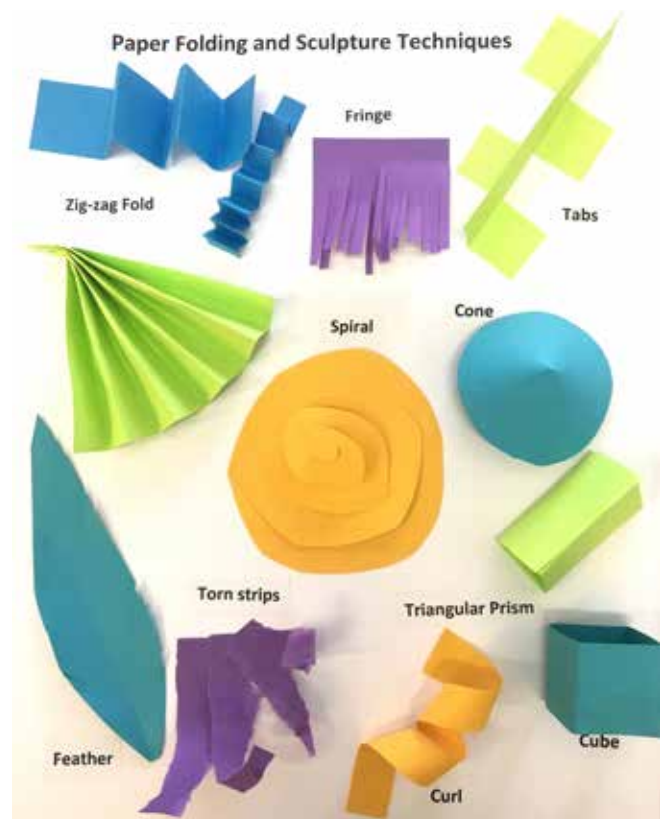
## Curriculum Connections

California Arts Standards for Visual Arts  
K.VA:Cr2.1 Through experimentation, build skills in various media and approaches to artmaking.  
1.VA:Cr1.2 Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art.  
2.VA:Cr1.2 Make art or design with various art materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity.  
3.VA:Cr2.1 Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.  
4.VA:Cr2.1 Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches.  
5.VA:Cr2.1 Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.

## Resources for teachers

Paper sculpture techniques videos:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPmcz-vkkfg>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpqjB\\_ocFIE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpqjB_ocFIE)

## Samples





## Classroom Activity

### Abstracting Architecture

**Essential Question** How can abstraction expand our perspectives of 3D art and architecture?

**Grades** 6–12

**Time** One class period

**Art Concepts** 2D and 3D, abstraction, shape, line, color, layering, architecture, sculpture, composition

**Materials** Printed images of well-known architectural sites in Los Angeles and the United States, 8.5" x 11" white cardstock, colored transparencies (cello sheets), clear transparencies, black and/or colored Sharpies, colored masking tape, washi tape, scissors, Scotch tape

**Talking About Art** View and discuss Julie Mehretu's *Stadia II* from 2004. Look closely at the artwork from side to side and top to bottom. Do the shapes and lines remind you of anything?

Mehretu's map-like, overlapping compositions combine elements of line, space, shape, and texture to invoke the layering of time, place, and history. In *Stadia II*, Mehretu abstracts a specific public gathering space, the stadium or coliseum. Her gestural lines and flat, geometric shapes give a sense of movement and depth. *Stadia II* addresses themes such as nationalism and revolution as they occur in art, sports, and contemporary politics. There is a feeling of tension in the painting, as if the movement toward mass celebration and unity (seen in the rows of seats, confetti, and the flag-like shapes and colors) is constantly on the brink of degenerating into chaos (evidenced by the painterly black marks and the strong sense of an overwhelming, centrifugal force).

What are some historic buildings or public spaces you know where significant events take place? View a picture of a well-known stadium. Compare the image to Mehretu's painting. What is similar and what is different about them?

Mehretu often calls her paintings 'political landscapes'. She illustrates how a landscape can be perceived as an accumulation of experiences over time that transform and evolve in response to current events. For Mehretu, buildings are not just functional structures where people gather; they create a framework in which history takes place and larger societal forces reveal themselves.

**For older students:** How do interior and exterior spaces influence how we behave? Think about spaces familiar to you such as your home, school, or a stadium or park.

**Making Art** Choose images of well-known architectural sites and look closely at the shapes and lines that make up the built structures. Then, place a clear transparency over the image and trace the lines and forms that interest you with Sharpies. Feel free to move the transparency around and trace multiple shapes from multiple images. Experiment with overlapping and creating a compelling composition.

Mehretu often creates two-dimensional artworks to represent three-dimensional spaces. We are going to transform our two-dimensional drawings into three-dimensional sculptures. Cut, fold, and tape parts of your drawing to create sculptural forms.

Add cut or folded pieces of white cardstock to further abstract and build upon your architectural artwork, securing each piece with Scotch tape. Incorporate colored masking tape and colored transparencies (cello sheets) to add layers, structural lines, color, and depth to your sculpture. Tape the sculpture to a sheet of cardstock so that it has a base: you can do this at the beginning so that your sculpture is anchored as you work on it, or you can add it at the end.

### Reflection

Observe your artwork as a reimagined architectural site. Compare and contrast it to the original printed image that inspired it. How did the process of abstracting a public space change your understanding of architecture? What other ideas and associations came up as you were creating your sculpture?

### Curriculum Connections

California Arts Standards for Visual Arts 6-12

6.VA:Cn11 Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses.

Prof.VA:Re7.2 Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual imagery.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy. Speaking and Listening. Language.

RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

### Samples

