

Mondays with MoMA



chair (châr), *n.* [OF. *châiere* (F. *chaire*), < L. *cathedra*: see *cathedra*.] A seat with a back, and often arms, usually for one person; a seat of office or authority, or the office itself; the person occupying the seat or office, esp. the chairman of a meeting; a sedan-chair; a chaise; a metal block or clutch to support and secure a rail in a railroad.

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detail view

Step 1 Look closely.

Questions

1. What do you notice about this artwork?
2. What elements did the artist include?
3. How would you describe these elements to a friend or family member?

Step 2 Learn more

In One and Three Chairs, Joseph Kosuth represents one chair three ways: as a manufactured chair, as a photograph, and as a copy of a dictionary entry for the word “chair.” The artwork is composed of an object, an image, and words.

Kosuth didn’t make the chair, take the photograph, or write the definition; he selected and assembled them together. But is this art? Which representation of the chair is most “accurate”? These open-ended questions are exactly what Kosuth wanted us to think about when he said that “art is making meaning.” He wrote, “The art I call conceptual is such because it is based on an inquiry into the nature of art.”

Conceptual artists like Kosuth, used their artwork to question the notion of what art is, and to critique traditional ideas about artistic production, delivery, and display.

Watch this video about other conceptual artists like Joseph Kosuth:

<https://bit.ly/3jXgHuA>



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Step 3 Activity: Art that Makes You Think

Materials: everyday object, pencil, paper, a phone or device with a camera.

1. Choose an everyday object around you.
 - a. Take a photograph of this object
 - b. Make a drawing of it
 - c. Write a short paragraph about the object
2. How did the idea/meaning of this object change with each version?
3. *Optional:* arrange object and three representations into a display.
4. Show the object, along with your photo, drawing, and writing (or the display, if you made one) to a friend or family member. How do the three representation make them think of the object differently? Do they think that this is art?
5. Reflect on the process. What about the process did you find most interesting or surprising? Did it make *you* question your own ideas about what art is?

Step 4 Share!

Share your artistic action with a friend or share your work with us at MoMA: schoolprograms@moma.org.

Joseph Kosuth. *One of Three Chairs*. Medium. Wood folding chair, mounted photograph of a chair, and mounted photographic enlargement of the dictionary definition of “chair”. Larry Aldrich Foundation Fund. © 2021 Joseph Kosuth / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York.