Family Activity: Shadowbox Bedroom
Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Introduction
Van Gogh created many paintings to decorate his yellow house in southern France, including this view of his bedroom called, simply, *The Bedroom*. He also painted still lifes of flowers and landscapes of the countryside. Although he lived alone at the time he painted the bedroom, van Gogh wanted to invite other artists to visit him and live in Arles. He hoped to form a community of artists in the south of France, but this plan never came about.

Discussion Questions
Look at the painting carefully.

- What objects has van Gogh painted in his bedroom? What would you add?
- How do the colors make you feel?
- Does the room look inviting? Why or why not?

Activity
Design your own bedroom.

Materials Needed:
- Shoebox
- Paper
- Watercolors
- Paintbrush
- Cup of water

Steps:
1. Cut one or more "windows" out of the sides of a shoebox, leaving the left side of each window uncut so that it can be opened and closed. Imagine what is outside the window and draw it on the moveable flap.
2. Decorate the "floor" and "walls" of the shoebox as if it was a bedroom. Consider using fabric for a rug and patterns from magazines and gift wrap for wallpaper. Add curtains to the windows if you’d like.
3. Cut out pictures of furniture from magazines and paste them inside the room. You may also want to construct your own furniture out of small boxes and other household objects.

4. On small pieces of paper, draw pictures for the walls of your "bedroom" and paste them into the shoebox.

5. Use paper or other household objects to create other items for the room (extra pillows, books, toys, a bathrobe).

More Fun:
Paint or draw a picture of your own bedroom.

Glossary

landscape (n)
an image representing a portion of the natural scenery, usually from a distant viewpoint

still life (n)
a depiction of a group of inanimate objects, such as flowers or fruit, usually arranged by an artist