

Gabriel Chaile

Centro Cultural Ambulante (Mobile Cultural Center), 2026,
adobe, bricks, metal structure

Courtesy of the artist, Studio Chaile, Marianne Boesky Gallery and ChertLüdde, Berlin.
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Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney and the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain

Education Resource (7-12)



Migrantes são bem-vindos (installation view), 2022
Kunststhalie Lissbon, Lisbon.
Photography: Bruno Lopes



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Overview

In familial economies, a bread oven isn't just for cooking. It's a means of livelihood that operates outside formal market systems, a centre for communal labour, and a vessel for intergenerational knowledge about survival and care. Argentine artist Gabriel Chaile transforms everyday kitchen architecture - the clay ovens that have fed families across north-western Argentina for generations - into towering public sculptures that gather communities around fire, food, and voice.

When Chaile scales these humble structures and sets them on wheels with drums and megaphones, he asks: what happens when we monumentalise the tools that sustained communities through colonial erasure? Here on Gadigal/Wangal Country, his ovens become platforms for new gatherings while honouring the lineages they carry from his ancestors.

The surfaces are earthy brown, textured from hand-built adobe (mud mixed with straw) that dries hard without industrial firing. Chaile's use of adobe echoes long-standing ceramic building practices across north-western Argentina, borrowing distinctly from the Condorhuasi-Alamito peoples (c. 400 BCE-CE 700).

The work makes specific Indigenous and working-class forms visible and treats them as living heritage rather than background craft. They also point toward food sovereignty, where communities organise sustenance locally rather than depending on extractive supply chains.



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Los Jóvenes Recordaron sus Canciones (detail view) 2025

Fundación Cervieri Monsuárez, Uruguay

Courtesy the Artist and Fundación Cervieri Monsuárez, Departamento de Maldonado

Photography: Francisca Vivo

Discussion Questions

Gabriel Chaile's functional oven-sculptures turn communal cooking into public art. What kind of **community moment** do you think this is built for — a meal, a meeting, a celebration, a protest? Why?

Why build with humble, **repairable materials** instead of polished ones like **metal** and **steel**?

These sculptures ask who and what gets remembered when everyday community tools, like bread ovens, become the monuments people gather around.

What **elements** (such as material, design, scale, and function) **connect** this to **family economies** and **survival knowledge** rather than luxury design?

What **value** or **practice** from the **source culture** (north-western Argentina) is being highlighted?

Practical Activities

Activity 1

On a piece of paper, draw four small boxes and label them Look, Feel, Community, Today.

Under Look, sketch one formal element (oven mouth, chimney, texture) and write its function in one line.

Under Feel, write one feeling the work produces in you and circle the exact visual cue that triggered it.

Under Community, write one value you can see in the work (welcome, sharing, care, teamwork) and how.

Under Today, in one sentence explain how this turns a normal art object into a place for people to gather and do things together.

Choose the viewpoint that most unlocks the work here for you and defend it in ten words to a partner.

Activity 2



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Identify a shared space in your school or community where people gather, perhaps incidentally, such as a lunch area, a bus shelter, or a waiting room. Create a detailed annotated sketch of this site in your visual arts diary.

Next, reimagine this space as a centre for *communal exchange*. This is a place where people can share resources, skills, or care without money changing hands. In a new drawing, modify the existing structure to support this function. For example, could the bus shelter become a community pantry for surplus food? Could the school gate become a seed-swap station or a take-one-leave-one library?

Add features that encourage interaction, such as communal seating, surfaces for sharing food, or storage for shared tools, similar to how Chaile adapts the oven to support community gathering.

Annotate your design to explain how these changes would alter the way people interact in that space.



Contemplating is How We Have Been Changing (installation view), 2024
Courtesy of the Artist; ChertLüdde, Berlin; Tabakalera, San Sebastián
Photography: Tabakalera

