



SEPTEMBER 2009

## A Most Unusual Chair

Jeremy Alden | *50 Dozen*



**VISIT THE BMA**  
and find *50 Dozen* in  
the American Wing.  
How does this chair  
compare to other  
chairs in the gallery?

Jeremy Alden (American, born 1975). Detail of back (reverse), *50 Dozen*. 2008. Pencils, adhesive. 31 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches high. The Baltimore Museum of Art, BMA 2008.85. Purchased in Memory of Robert M. Thomas, President, Board of Trustees, 1982-1984; and Lilian Sarah Greif Bequest Fund ©Jeremy Alden

Chances are, you use a pencil every day to write a note. But have you ever thought of using a pencil to build a chair? This full-size chair is made of 600 yellow Dixon Ticonderoga pencils plus glue. Nothing more.

A brand new Dixon Ticonderoga pencil has a six-sided shaft, a blunt end, three shiny green metal bands, green lettering, and a pink eraser. Alden built his chair to show that each part of a pencil could be used to delight our eyes with bright color and pattern and at the same time bring back memories of “elementary school, test taking, and the smell of erasers.” He also wanted his chair to support his own weight, although he didn’t dare sit on it for very long.

It took a lot of planning to make this chair. Alden carefully measured and cut each pencil in pre-determined lengths, removing some of the pink erasers. He constructed long rods by gluing several pieces together, end-to-end. To make the back of the chair, he layered 21 rods so that their green bands line up in vertical stripes. For each chair leg, he glued seven long rods together to form a strong column, arranging the green bands in spirals. At the very top of the chair, he made decorative ornaments out of clusters of pink erasers.

At the outset, Alden didn’t know how many pencils he would need to build his chair. By the time he finished, he counted 50 empty boxes all over his studio. So he decided to name his chair *50 Dozen*. To see how the chair looks on the back side, visit [www.jaldendesign.com](http://www.jaldendesign.com)

### CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

Alden’s greatest challenge was making all the parts of his chair hold together. Why do you think he used 6-sided pencils instead of round pencils? Why didn’t he sharpen the lead? Select a common object or material that you can get cheaply in multiples. Use the identical parts to build a structure that holds together under pressure.

**PRINT THE IMAGE ON PAGE 2 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.**



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Jeremy Alden. *50 Dozen*.

2008. Pencils, adhesive. 31 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches high. The Baltimore Museum of Art, BMA 2008.85. Purchased in Memory of Robert M. Thomas, President, Board of Trustees, 1982-1984; and Lilian Sarah Greif Bequest Fund ©Jeremy Alden