

Art, a Capital Idea

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: Frank Riggs

Sculpture

Objectives

Perceiving: Students will learn appropriate terminology and use that terminology to discuss sculptures.

Contextualizing: Students will understand the Formalist approach to art and be able to identify Formalist sculptures.

Making: Students will demonstrate their understanding of sculptural design by creating a group or individual sculpture using geometric forms.

Expressing: Students will identify the similarities between their sculptures and those by a professional artist. They will critique their sculptures using appropriate terminology.

Time: three class periods

materials:

- Slides and/or reproductions of *Tohatchi*, *Sentinel*, and *Star Catcher*
- For lower elementary grades, a small sculpture or 3-d object of some kind
- Enough cardboard shapes to have at least one per child:
 - Cardboard tubes of different sizes. Material stores and sewing plants are the best sources because the tubes are sturdy; you can also use the tubes from wrapping paper
 - Cardboard boxes of different sizes. Check with some local variety or hardware stores to find out when they may have a lot of small boxes, or ask students to bring boxes.
- Hot glue gun and glue and an assistant to man the gun, if possible
- Tempera, acrylic, or spray paint
- Paint brushes

Preparation: cut the tubes into various lengths (a band saw is easiest but a hacksaw also works. Glue boxes shut.

Perceiving: Show the class the slides or reproductions of *Tohatchi*, *Sentinel*, and *Star Catcher*. Ask students if they know what kind of artwork this is: a sculpture. Then ask what makes a sculpture different from a painting (you can walk around a sculpture, it has more than two sides. Show the class the example, if you have one. Ask them how an

artist would have to work on a sculpture so it looks interesting from all sides. You may want to show a few other sculptures to the students such as *Abstract Configuration* by Raymond Jonas (available at www.sma.shs.nebo.edu/museum.html, in past packets, or as an SMA Middle School Poster)

Effron by Neil Hadlock (available www.sma.shs.nebo.edu/museum.html, in past packet)

Cyrus Dallin sculptures (SMA Elementary Poster, web site, packet)

Resurrection by Franz Johanson (available www.sma.shs.nebo.edu/museum.html web site shows two views)

Discuss the Frank Riggs sculptures with the students: have them describe what kind of shapes/forms the sculptures have and teach them the term *geometric*, if they don't already know it. Also have them look at the *positive space* and the *negative space* and learn those terms. (*positive space* is the space actually occupied by the sculpture and *negative space* is the space around and between parts of the sculpture) You may need to demonstrate negative space. One easy way is to have several students make shapes with their bodies. Arms can suggest a circle or oval shape, legs may leave a triangular space in between.

Vocabulary

sculpture

geometric

positive space

negative space

shape

form

Contextualizing: Frank Riggs' sculptures are Formalist—he's interested in the shapes and the lines those shapes make and how the relationships change as viewers walk around his sculptures. Make your discussion of formalism appropriate for the class, but do teach students that some artists don't want their artworks to look like something—a person, a tree, a building—they are just interested in the shapes and how they go together. (Other formalist works from SMA include Raymond Jonas' *Abstract Configuration* and Brent Hadlock's *Effron*) After the explanation of Formalism, show the students a variety of sculptures, and have students identify those that are formalist.

Assessment: Indicate with a check mark next to their names, students who can correctly identify Formalist sculptures. Provide more help for those students who do not yet understand.

Making: Explain to the students they are going to make group sculptures. Divide the students into groups of 4-5 students. Allow each student to choose either a tube or a box. Then have groups decide on the color of their sculpture and paint the forms. Allow the painted forms to dry overnight.

Have the student groups arrange their forms in some way in which each form has at least one side touching another. The group should try at least three different ways. You may need to show young students some ways to put the forms together such as with only half of one box directly on top of another. You may want to have each group choose someone who makes a sketch of the three arrangements. Remind students to walk all the way around their sculptures so they check how the sculpture looks from all sides. When students are satisfied with their sculptures, use the glue gun to attach the forms together. Students should choose a title for their sculpture and make a card that gives the title of the work and the student artists who worked on the sculpture.

Expressing: Have students, as groups, examine their own sculptures and those of Frank Riggs. Students should identify ways in which their sculptures are similar to Riggs' works. Have the groups briefly share their ideas with the whole class. Students should also evaluate their sculptures, identifying at least one thing they feel was successful and one thing they would try differently another time.

Have a display of the sculptures somewhere the rest of the school can see them, such as in the media center. Display the cards with the artworks.

Assessment:

Young students can be assessed both during and after the activity using the chart from the appendix.

Older students can be assessed on their participation in the discussion:

- make check marks next to student names as they participate on their participation in the group artwork and critique
- use symbols next to names:
 - + means student performed at or above expected level
 - ok means student participated
 - means student made little or no contribution
- provide a simple test that requires students to match terms to their definitions. Or, have students self-assess using a similar system.

For More Advanced Students

Criticism: Compare Formalist sculptures with Non-formalist works such as *The Guest*, by Sylvia Davis and *Da Winnah!* By Mahonri Young (both SMA High School Posters), or Cyrus Dallin's sculptures (SMA Elementary Poster, *Who is Cyrus E. Dallin?* Evening for Educator packet, Nov. 1996)

Have students identify ways the various artists' intentions may have been different. Students can choose one sculptor and read biographical information, trying to find information which agrees or disagrees with their assumptions and predictions. Students can find biographical information on the SMA web site at www.sma.shs.nebo.edu/museum.html

Aesthetics: Students should write a short essay defending the Formalist approach to art (even if they do not like formalist art).

Production: Have students make individual sculptures and evaluate their use of line, shape, form, color, balance, and contrast. Allow students who are interested to make larger versions of their sculptures.

Exhibition: If your school has a digital camera, have students take several views of their sculptures and include these in their online portfolios or exhibit them on the school's web page. If you do not have access to a digital camera, take photos and scan them in, using Photoshop.

Mini Paper Shape Sculptures

Introduction: Talk about sculpture as an art form throughout history and show examples such as Greek sculptures, works by Michelangelo, Rodin, Giacometti, Picasso, Alexander Calder, Raymond Jonas, and Frank Riggs. Have students identify the differences and similarities between traditional bronze sculpture such as Cyrus Dallin's and modern work such as Riggs'.

Have students identify the different uses of Balance, Form, Repetition, Contrast, and Shape.

Procedure: After introducing sculpture as an art form, bring out the cardstock with shapes printed on them. (See appendix for pattern. Each pattern makes two<cut it lengthwise down the middle.)

Materials:

cardstock pattern

black 4 x 4 square of construction paper

scissors

markers

white glue in small containers and toothpicks

1. Have students cut out all 16 pieces, and only use those 16 pieces for now.
2. Students can work individually or with a partner.
3. Students assemble sculptures by cutting slits in some pieces and sliding other shapes into the slits.
4. Students may color 5 pieces or surfaces only, using just one color.

The limit on colored pieces is so the students can see how important repetition of the color is as the sculpture is viewed from all sides<so viewers see a repetition of black, white, and a color as they walk around the sculpture.

5. Students should make some plans about how they want their sculpture to look.

When they have decided, they can start putting the pieces together, using a toothpick to put a little glue on the slit before sliding the piece into the slit. Give a few suggestions for placement: the sculpture needs a good base that is sturdy, symmetrical or asymmetrical balance can be used, pieces should be close together and not scattered. Then let the students go. They can curl pieces, cut them to make fringed edges, spiral cut pieces for pop-up effects, but not cut the individual pieces so much that they create more pieces.

Assessment:

1. First, ask the students individually or in their group how they feel about their work and what challenges they had. Look at the work together, holding it up in one hand, carefully turning it all the way around to check for balance and repetition.

2. Check also for craftsmanship. Was too much glue used? The sculptures really don't require much.

Many variations are possible, such as:

Using fewer pieces

Using only black and white

Having to use precarious balance

Using additives that go with the shapes

Trying to make the sculpture look like something real

Making the pieces larger so a group of 3 or 4 can work on one piece

Making a mobile