

ANIMALS IN ART

ARTIST: Clark E. Bronson (1939-) Provo, Utah

TITLE: *Big Boys* 1984

MEDIA: Bronze sculpture

SIZE: 28-1/2" x 14" x**

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Clark Everice Bronson was born 10 March 1939, in the small town of Kamus, Utah. Clark began studying wildlife at a very early age. He is mostly self taught. While in high school, he did home study lessons through Art Instruction Course Minneapolis, then took a few classes and University of Utah, and studied under Arnold Friberg.

Familiarity gained through years of studious observation coupled with a love of animals and outstanding artistic skills has given his art a beautiful and intricate realism that is respected and admired by others in his profession. Arnold Friberg once said that, "Clark Bronson is the best in his field."

In 1960 Clark began illustrating for the Utah Fish and Game Department, By 1969, he was recognized as one of the leading wildlife painters in America. His magazine illustrations won national honors and with national recognition came an incredible demand for his paintings. His art was featured on the covers of leading wildlife publications. National calendar companies, Chevrolet, Browning Arms, Mercury Outboard Motors and other large corporations were reproducing his work and commissioning more. Rand McNally published five books using Clark's illustrations and collectors were buying his originals as soon as they were framed.

At age thirty, just when Clark's career as a wildlife painter was reaching its peak, he suddenly decided to switch mediums. He put away his brush and began sculpting. With his background in painting and firsthand knowledge of nature the transition was made quickly and easily. With the completion of his first sculpture, it became clear that the precision and realism so well known in his paintings was only to take on greater form and freedom through his sculptures. Collectors began buying entire series as fast as they became available. In less than five years Clark's wildlife bronze sculptures became the

most widely collected in the world. Harry Horswell of the Tryon Gallery in London once said, "Clark is the greatest wildlife sculptor since the 19th century."

In 1970 Clark and his wife Pauline, began filming animals in nature as a resource for Clark's art. Intrigued with the beauty of this world and the wonders of nature, they spent more and more time filming. He and his wife now spend their summers in Alaska shooting a lot of wildlife, with a camera.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

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QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING

(History, Aesthetics, Criticism) What kind of artwork is this? What is it made of? What are the "Big Boys" in the sculpture? How can you tell? Why do you think the artist made a sculpture instead of a painting? Which would you choose if you were making a wildlife artwork?

What aesthetic approach is this sculpture? (Mimetic) How can you tell? How many elk do you think this artist looked at so he'd know what they look like? Why do you think this artist makes wildlife art and not some other kind of art? Why do you think so many people like wildlife art that looks like the animals--is mimetic? How do you feel about this kind of artwork? Why?

How do you think the artist wants you to feel when you see this artwork? Is he expressing any ideas? (See Biographical Information) How does this sculpture compare to other wildlife art you've seen? Tell why you think it's an excellent artwork, good, or poor.

Art--Making Objective: Students will discuss and draw animals in motion, capturing the gesture of the animals

Discussion: Show the slide of the Clark Bronson sculpture, *Big Boys*. Discuss what kind of animals are depicted and what their characteristics are. Discuss what the artist has done to make the animals appear to be in motion. Discuss what kind of motion is being represented. Talk about what kind of story might be suggested by the motion in the sculpture.

Suggested questions: What does it look like the elk are doing? Why does it look that way? (gesture) What is it about the structure of the surface in addition to the position of the legs and head, etc. that are clues? (facial expression, muscles, etc.)

Activity: Using the slide of *Big Boys* or pictures of other animals in motion, demonstrate to the students how to block in major shapes. Starting with the major shapes will help the students capture the correct gesture. Then have students refine the shapes. When they are satisfied with the results of this step, have them add whatever details they wish to finish their drawings.

Conclusion: Let students discuss what they have learned from this experience. Have them comment on whether they found it harder to draw animals in motion than just standing still. Discuss whether they think a drawing of animals in motion is more interesting than one of animals just standing still. Show some of the drawings and talk about what story might be behind the drawing.

Display the art.

Art--Expressing, Making

Objective: Students will create a work of art with one or more animals and a setting. (background) The setting can be specified as appropriate habitat.

Discussion: Show the Clark Bronson slide, *Big Boys* and discuss the sculpture. Identify the animals. Discuss what it looks like they are doing. Talk about the clues in the sculpture that are hints as to what the animals are doing. Discuss where elk live, and what kinds of things are in their habitat. Discuss what kind of setting the students might draw as a background for the sculpture.

Activity: Have the students draw the elk in the sculpture, (show them how to block in the gesture--see lesson 1) and then put background (setting) around them to create a complete picture. Tell them they must use the whole sheet of paper.

Optional: Draw the elk and put a sci-fi or nonobjective background behind them.

Conclusion: Let the students talk about the success of their work and what they learned about setting. Ask why they made the specific decisions they did about what to include in the background. Discuss what kinds of things artists might think about when they put animals in a setting. Display drawings.

Variation: If you have talked about habitat in your science lessons or the students have in their science class, focus more on the idea of habitat by showing all the slides from the packet and asking students to identify which animals are in their natural habitat and which aren't. Then assign students to choose one animal, write its name down on a piece of paper, and identify two or more items that belong in that animal's habitat such as a particular kind of tree or plant. (Students don't have to be able to spell the words correctly to have made an appropriate choice, but include correct spelling if you wish.) When the

student has had his choice okayed by the teacher, he can start his drawing. You will need pictures or books for research unless you have already covered specific habitats extensively.

Ask students to use whatever art skills you have previously learned or introduce appropriate skills such as overlapping and size changes to create a feeling of depth in the drawing. When students are finished with their drawings, they can color them with crayons or colored pencils.

Science--Biology

Objective: Students will learn the relationship between the physical attributes of animals and their lives and/or habitat.

Discussion: Show the Clark Bronson slide, *Big Boys* and discuss what kind of animal is the subject of the sculpture. Talk about where elk live and what they eat and what their lives are like. Discuss whether the sculpture give any clues about these things, and whether the clues are realistic.

Have students look at the feet and legs of the elk and talk about how their shape makes it possible for them to get along in their environment. Discuss the antlers and their use and shape. Discuss the build and any other physical attributes that make the elk suited to his environment.

Activity: Choose one or two animals and have students make a chart/diagram showing the connection between their physical attributes and their environment. They should show such things as fur color, build, ability to run, eyesight, hearing, etc. Have them make connections which show how the physical attributes make it possible for the animal to be successful in its environment.

Conclusion: Students should be given an opportunity to discuss what they have learned, especially to identify what information is new to them.

Language Arts

Objective: Students will write a story about the elk depicted in the Clark Bronson sculpture, *Big Boys*.

Activity: Show the slide of the Clark Bronson sculpture. Have the students describe the sculpture and discuss such things as what the elk look like they are doing, where they live, and what their lives are like. Include in the discussion such things as what they eat and where they get their food, who their enemies are, etc.

Discuss some story ideas. Then have the students write a story about the elk in the sculpture.

Conclusion: Have the students share their stories.

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