

# Minimalist Sculpture

“Minimal Art” or “Minimalism”, as it became known in the 1960’s, is an art and design style in which a work is created with a minimal amount of color, value, shape, line or texture. Minimalist works are abstract, without symbolic representation, often incorporating basic geometric shapes.

Some prominent painters (Ellsworth Kelly, Frank Stella) are associated with this art movement, but Minimalism is most greatly represented in installation and sculpture. Viewing works by Donald Judd, Carl Andre and especially Richard Serra and Ronald Bladen would be a good way to introduce this lesson.

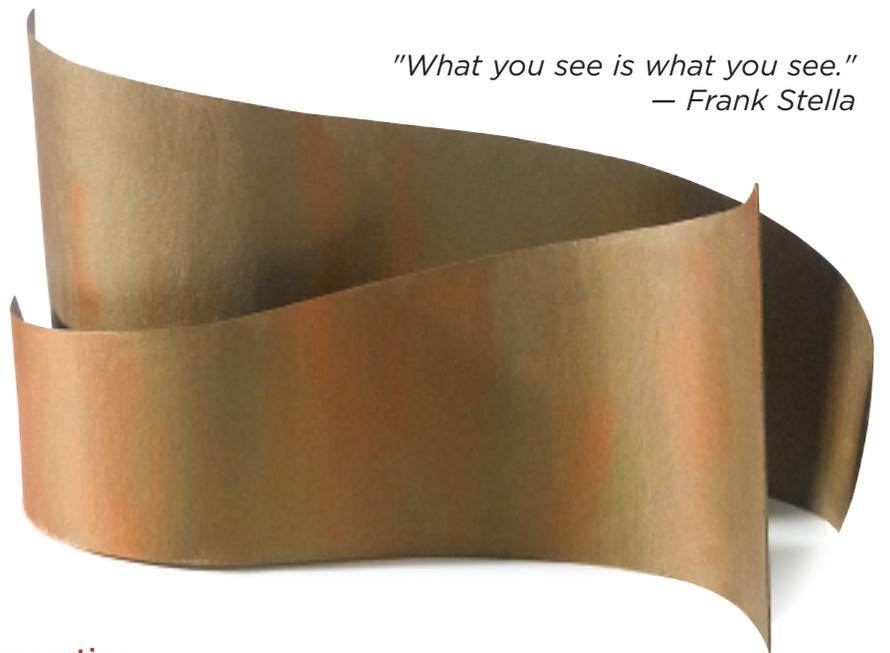
In order for students to understand Minimal Art, they need to recognize what is absent. This project will help students focus on the basic elements of art as they strive to produce a piece that is simply that — elemental sculpture.

*Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.*

**Grade Levels** 5-12



*“What you see is what you see.”  
— Frank Stella*



## Preparation

1. View examples of minimalist and post-minimalist sculpture. Suggested resource: Taschen Basic Art Series: Minimal Art (70033-1039)

## Process

1. Plan sculpture by creating preliminary sketches. Cut chipboard using good quality scissors, a heavy-duty paper trimmer or a small utility knife.
2. The shape of the sculpture can be developed by forming:

**Curves** - form by spritzing the surface of the chipboard with water so it is damp (not wet). Hold the curve until it dries in place, or secure around a form, such as a bucket, jar or shipping tube using masking tape or rubber bands. Allow to dry

## Materials

**All-Purpose Chipboard**, single-thick, 22" x 28" sheet (13115-2222), need one sheet per student

**Holbein Atomizer Bottle** (02912-1003), fill with water, need one per student

**Precision Teacher's Shears**, 3-1/2" cut (57037-1005), one per student

**Blick All-Purpose Masking Tape**, 1/2" (23006-1560), share one roll between four students

**Aleene's "Tacky" Glue**, 8-oz (23826-1005), share one bottle between four students

**Blickrylic™ Economy Acrylics**, quarts  
Metallic Brass (00711-9077)  
Metallic Copper (00711-9517)  
Metallic Silver (00711-9327)  
Share across class

**White Nylon Utility Brush**, set of 3 (05690-1039), one per student

### OPTIONAL:

**Alvin® Break-Off Blade Knife** (57514-1100)

**Objects to use as support** for creating curves in chipboard: large shipping tube, plastic bucket, oatmeal container, etc.

**Large Paper Clips**

**Large Rubber Bands**

## Process, continued:

**Angles** - make by:

1) Scoring: hold a ruler where the back of the angle will form, then cut along the ruler using a utility knife. Make the depth of the cut about halfway through the board, then stop. Bend along the score line.

2) Gluing: apply a very small amount of high-tack glue on the edge of the joining piece. Allow to dry while holding in place. Paper clips or masking tape are helpful to secure as the glue dries.

**Slicing and Joining** - Use a knife or scissors to cut a slit in each of the pieces to be joined. Fit together with a small amount of glue.

3. Once the shape is determined, paint a finish on the sculpture. Metal is a common theme in minimal art, although wood, plastic, cloth and other materials are used as well. Metallic acrylic colors can give the sculpture a look of bronze, aluminum or steel.

It may be necessary to rebend curves that sag under the moisture of the paint. Apply color to one area at a time and hold in place or secure with paper clips or masking tape until the paint starts to dry.

## Options

- Glue the sculpture onto a painted chipboard base for extra support and rigidity. Use Double-Thick Chipboard (13115-2232)

## National Standards

Content Standard #2 – Using knowledge of structures and functions

### 9-12

Proficient: Students create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems

Advanced: Students create multiple solutions to specific visual arts problems that demonstrate competence in producing effective relationships between structural choices and artistic functions

Content Standard #5 – Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

### 9-12

Proficient: Students identify intentions of those creating artworks, explore the implications of various purposes, and justify their analyses of purposes in particular works

Advanced: Students correlate responses to works of visual art with various techniques for communicating meanings, ideas, attitudes, views, and intentions