

Butterfield Horse

Construct a high-relief horse using quick mâché and found objects

Deborah Butterfield, a noted American sculptor, first gained wide recognition in the late 1970s. Horses have been the single, sustained focus of Butterfield's work for more than 30 years. Her early work consisted of fragile creations of mud, sticks, straw, and found metal that portrayed horses either standing or at rest on the ground.

Butterfield's horses are presented in a variety of ways. They stand, graze, sniff the breeze, or occasionally rest on the ground, as if they were at home in their pastures. Butterfield has said that the horse image and poses are a "metaphorical" approach to a self-portrait and her pieces are not as much about movement as about a state of mind conveyed through internalized gestures.

When she first began working, Butterfield sculpted her horses in a realistic style using plaster. But her goal was not realism, so she began painting the surface in arbitrary colors such as pink, yellow, and blue. Finally abandoning plaster altogether, Butterfield sculpted her horses from a mix of mud, sticks, and straw — materials from their natural environment.

GRADES 3-12 Note: instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Review the various horse sculptures of Deborah Butterfield.
2. Gather sticks, leaves, torn paper, pine needles, and other natural materials.

Process

1. Draw a sketch of a horse to be used for the high-relief sculpture.
2. Place the sketch on the Hardboard Panel, and cover it with waxed paper.
3. In a plastic zipper bag, mix Fast Mache with water to make a workable paste. Add one cup of small found objects such as leaves, pine needles, grass, or small sticks. Add burlap fibers or torn paper pieces.
4. Using the sketch below the waxed paper as a guide, start forming the horse.



Materials

Activa® Fast Mache, 4-lb (33116-1004); share two bags across class
Hardboard Panels, 9" x 12" (14945-1023); need one per student
Natural Burlap, 1 yard (63202-1436); share one across class
Blick® Studio Acrylics, assorted 4-oz or 8-oz (01637-); share at least six tubes across class
Delta® Sobo Glue, 8-oz (23820-1008); share two across class
Plaid® Mod Podge®, matte finish, pint (02916-1016); share one across class
Blick® Studio Disposable Palette, 9" x 12", 50-sheet pads, (03063-2023); need one sheet per student

Optional Materials

Plox™ Shredded Collage Paper (61749-1005)
Blick® Economy Canvas Panel (07015-)
Black Ink™ Amate Papers (12498-)



Process, continued

Add additional sticks, pine needles, shredded paper, and leaves as desired. Anchor the natural objects with small pieces of the Fast Mache mix. When the horse is complete, allow it to dry. It may be necessary to turn the horse over to allow air to reach the underside. Move the sculpture off the panel for it to dry, or the panel will warp.

5. While the sculpture is drying, create a collaged background for the horse using acrylic paints and various papers.
6. Finally, glue the dry horse sculpture to the collaged board.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.

K-4 Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

9-12 Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks

Content Standard #3 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

K-4 Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning

5-8 Students integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks

9-12 Students describe the origins of specific images and ideas and explain why they are of value in their artwork and in the work of others



Step 1: Form a horse on waxed paper from Fast Mache mix using a sketched guide below. Add additional found objects.



Step 2: Create a collaged background using paint and papers.



Step 3: Glue high-relief horse sculpture to background board.