



## Utrecht Art Supplies The Maquette: Sketching for Sculptors



**Ask the Expert: “Painters conceptualize larger works in sketches and smaller paintings, but what about sculptors? “**

A: When developing larger works, sculptors often make little 3-dimensional models called maquettes. A maquette can be a free-form “doodle” or a more developed scale model of a planned full-size work of art.

A maquette can be made of malleable media like clay, wax or plastilina, carved from soft stone or wood, or directly molded

in plaster. Soapstone and alabaster are good for working up concepts for large stone sculptures because both can be carved with a small knife and a rasp, involving a subtractive process like the eventual, large-scale work. The polished stone maquette will also give a good idea of the appearance of the finished work.

Plastilina and wax never dry out, and can be used again and again. Both are great for representational sculptures like figures and portraits. Ceramic clay is a good choice when the artist wants the maquette to dry hard for surface finishing.

When it’s time to proceed to the finished piece, proportional calipers can be used to scale up the measurements. When creating a maquette that will be scaled up, it’s important to create the model in correct proportion, especially if the medium will be stone or wood which don’t allow for the addition of material later.

(Image: “Maquette for the Melvin Memorial in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, by Daniel Chester French, 1906-1907, plaster)

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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