

Soft Sculpture

Claes Oldenburg popularized soft sculpture in the 1960's with flaccid everyday objects such as a fan, light switch and drum set. "Soft sculpture" is usually created by manipulating fabric into a 3-dimensional shape with any number of binding and filling processes.

This lesson plan is an introduction to textile painting and fabric assemblage, as well as sculpture.

Each piece will be two-sided — the design could be repeated on either side or different on each. For example, the face of a person could be on the front, but the back side could be an animal or bird.

Grade Levels 9-12

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



Materials

Quality Unbleached Muslin (63104-1338), 38" wide, need 1/2 yard length per student

Jacquard® Textile Colors (01208-), assorted colors, share eight 8-oz bottles across the classroom

Alvin® Plastic Floral Palette (03046-1049), share one between two students

Blick Scholastic Red Sable Rounds, size 1 (05863-1001) and size 12 (05863-1012), one each size per student

Polyester Flufferfill 16-oz bag (66902-1006), share 10 bags across classroom

Thread, Needles, straight pins

Tracing Paper Roll (10505-1118) share one 18" wide x 20-yard long roll per class

Sharpie® Chisel-Tip Black Markers (21383-2020), share one between two students

Snippy Scissors (57040-2009), package of 12, need one per student

Blick Economy Graphite Pencils (20302-2009), box of 12, need one per student

Creativity Street® Embroidery Floss (63100-1009) share one package of 24 skeins across classroom

Embroidery Needles, one per student

Blick All-Use Masking Tape (23006-1000), 3/4", share four rolls across classroom

Straight Pins, share 3 boxes across classroom

Water cups, one per student

Iron

Kwik-Cover® Tablecloths (04500-)

Optional Materials for Embellishment:

Assorted Plastic Beads (60716-1005)

Raffia (60908-1005), mixed colors

Craft Buttons (61495-1001), 1-lb tub

Pony Beads (60772-1010)

Ribbon Rainbow (61498-1009)



Objectives

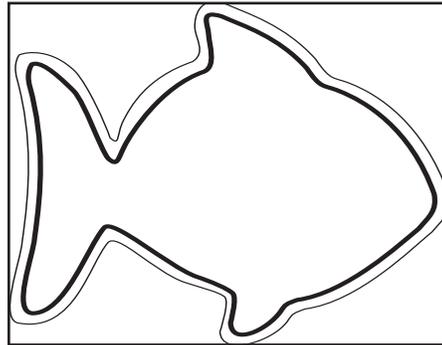
- Students will learn beginning fabric assembling techniques using needle and thread
- Students will apply design elements including form, texture, shape and color while considering their relationship to a 3-dimensional surface.
- Students will convert a 2-dimensional painting into a 3-dimensional sculpture by filling and closing.

Preparation

1. Cut muslin into 18" x 19" pieces. Each student will need two pieces.
2. Cover tables with plastic to protect.
3. Create preliminary drawings of animals, people or objects that will be the subject of the soft sculpture.

Process

1. Place the two pieces of fabric together, one on top the other. Pin together with a single straight pin towards the outer edge of each side. Use the pencil to lightly draw the outline shape of the sculpture onto the top piece of muslin. Try to fill the space as much as possible, but mark about 1/2" of white space around the edge for sewing with the pencil.
2. Trace all the pencil marks EXCEPT the white space outline around the edge with a permanent black marker. Allow the marker to bleed down onto the second piece of fabric. DO NOT cut it out yet.
3. If both sides of the sculpture are the same, they can be painted at the same time. Keep them pinned together and



Fill the area as much as possible, leaving about 1/2" of white space around the design for sewing

proceed to step 4. If the two sides are to be different, unpin them, turn one piece over and place them side by side.

4. Stretch and tape the muslin down tightly to the plastic-covered tabletop. Paint the sculpture with textile colors. HINTS:
 - Both sides can be painted at once. Allow the paint to soak through the first piece of muslin onto the second one below it.
 - Distribute colors in palettes to avoid waste.
 - Apply paint with a soft round or flat brush.
 - Pre-mix the colors on the palette or allow to blend on the fabric.
 - Paint may be thinned with water for transparent washes.
5. Textile colors must be heat set in order to be lightfast and permanent. Allow to dry completely, remove any remaining pins, then follow instructions for ironing on product label.
6. Place painted sides inward, against each other. Make sure they are facing the same way. Secure straight pins in the white space border around the edge. Cut the shape out of the muslin square. Cut along the pencil outline, not the inside line marked with permanent marker.
7. Thread a needle with two strand of embroidery thread and hand stitch along the edges marked with permanent marker. Leave a 3" space open for stuffing. Turn fabric right side out so that painting is now on the outside.
8. Pull the Flufferfill apart and stuff the sculpture. Push the filling into all corners to make sure that it is firmly stuffed. Carefully sew the remaining 3" hole closed.
9. Decorate with yarn, beads, buttons, feathers, ribbon, etc. Use the cut-off pieces of scrap fabric to design fins, tails, ears, etc.

Options

- Define a subject matter: Sun faces, animals, cars, buildings - things that would not necessarily be "soft"
- Design only front, use plain fabric on back

National Standards

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

- **9-12** Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques and processes they use

Content Standard #2 — Using knowledge of structures and functions

- **9-12** Students demonstrate the ability to form and defend judgements about the characteristics and structures to accomplish commercial, personal, communal or other purposes of art

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

- **9-12** Students identify intentions of those creating artworks, explore the implications of various purposes, and justify their analyses of purposes in particular works