

TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES

Teachers' Notes

Sculpture Workshop for Key stage 2 at the
Wallace Collection



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Sculpture Workshop for Key Stage 2 at the Wallace Collection.
For Art and Design, Design Technology, Science (materials)

Pupils will look at sculpture, relief sculpture and ceramics made in the Renaissance and the 18th Century. They will discover how these works of art were made, then practice the techniques they studied in the galleries themselves.

The aim of the session is for pupils to learn about sculpture of the 16th-18th centuries and develop an understanding and knowledge of sculptural production through observation and making. Pupils will also develop technical skills themselves.

This workshop involves messy materials and accompanying adults are expected to help pupils with the hands-on activity.

This is a two and a half hour workshop, which takes place partly in the gallery and partly in the Mary Weston Education Studio. All of the materials are provided. As each child will take home a small (8 x 8 x 2 centimeters) piece of sculpture, all classes should bring a large carrier bag or box for transport.

Introduction

Sculpture comes in all sizes, made from a section of a mountain to a tiny jewel. It can be fully three-dimensional ("in the round") or "relief" sculpture, such as a coin.

Due to the nature of the Wallace Collection, and the fact that all of the objects were made before the 20th century, the materials and methods studied during this workshop are traditional.

We will talk about carving stone, wood, and bone, and modelling, in clay and wax. Pupils will look at and hold pieces cast in bronze, and talk about all of the processes involved in making them.

The children will make their own sculpture, cast in plaster, to take home. They will also take away an understanding of the ways in which different materials are used to make sculpture, as well as the relevant vocabulary: "high and low relief", sculpture "in the round"; bronze, terra cotta, plaster of Paris; carving, modelling, casting.

Moderno, Hercules and the Nemean Lion, Italy, 15th century, Bronze

In the studio

The workshop begins in the studio, where the children will be introduced to the Wallace Collection, and told the schedule of the day (including when lunch will be!)

There will be a discussion about sculpture, how it differs from painting, and the various traditional materials and methods used in making sculptures.

Children will have an opportunity to look at and hold a selection of sculptures, including copies of pieces in the Collection.

Before going in to the gallery, the pupils will be shown examples of the plaster sculpture they will be making, and the process will be described.

Gallery

The class will be taken to "The Smoking Room" where the focus will be on objects in relief, and on casting.

(Probably) Henri Perlan, *The Borghese Dancers*, France, 1642, Bronze

This relief, modelled (probably) by the French sculptor Henri Perlan, is an excellent example of high, mid and low relief. The original *Borghese Dancers* (Louvre, Paris) is a celebrated Roman marble relief, the name of which derives from the Villa Borghese in Rome, where it was displayed from the early seventeenth century. It features five female figures in clinging draperies dancing to a gentle but measured step. A plaster cast was made of this marble and other antique sculpture for Louis XIII of France in 1640. This bronze version, probably intended for the Grande Galerie of the Louvre, is a reworking by François Anguier of the plaster cast which is said to have arrived in Paris as a 'rather formless sketch'. The casting, in bronze, of this sculpture was done by Henri Perlan.



Students had the opportunity of looking at cast copies of this piece back in the studio, and now they can observe the original.

Plaquettes were an invention of the Italian Renaissance – small reliefs which were generally cast in several copies. They were developed in Italy in the mid-fifteenth century, reflecting the classical learning of the period, and they were used by artists as a way to copy antique relief compositions.

On this plaquette, Hercules has gripped the Nemean lion, a dangerous and seemingly invulnerable beast, which he has to kill as the first of his twelve labours. This piece is a good example of Mid-Relief.



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Pisanello, Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, 1444, Mantua, Italy, Bronze

Pisanello was not only famous as a painter but also because he virtually invented the art of the portrait medal. Cast in lead or bronze; these fine objects commemorating individuals or events, suitable as gifts or mementoes and inspired by the ancient Roman medallion, clearly had a strong appeal for patrons already under the influence of humanist learning and values. This particular medal commemorates Gianfrancesco's role as a military captain as well as his political status as Marquis of Mantua, conferred by the Emperor Sigismund in 1433.



Follower of Bernard Palissy (1510-1590), Dish, Possibly France, Earthenware

Bernard Palissy, a highly innovative self-taught potter, pioneered the production of objects incorporating life-cast reptiles, water creatures and plants. His interest in the imitation of nature through art was shared by many artists of the period. This basin is an excellent example of the rustic-style pottery, for which Palissy is best known. He became a favourite of the Queen of France, Marie de Medicis, who created the title "the king's inventor of rustic figurines" for him. This basin has been transformed into a pond or stream with an abundance of animal and plant life, including a snake, fish and crayfish. Perhaps it accompanied a ewer for hand washing during meals or simply served as a table ornament.



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Guillaume Dupré, Henry IV of France and Marie de Médicis with the Dauphin, 1603, France, Gold and Bronze

Guillaume Dupré was a sculptor whose reputation rests mainly on his work as a medallist. He made many portrait medals of Henri IV (1553-1610), the first Bourbon King of France, and his wife Marie de Médicis (1573-1642). On the reverse of the medal the king and queen are shown as Mars and Minerva, standing with hands joined and the infant dauphin (the future Louis XIII) as Cupid between them, an eagle descends from the skies with a crown in its beak. It was Henri IV who finally brought peace to France after decades of bitter civil war. Countless images celebrating his qualities and achievements were produced in many media. This piece is a good example of mid and low-Relief.

Moulding and casting

Back in the studio, the students will be provided with clay to make their plaster plaque.

1. Each child is given a ball of terracotta.
2. They roll it out to make a disk approximately 8cms across and 2 cms deep.
3. Shells, plastic animals, fish and snakes are provided, which they press into the clay disk, and remove, forming indentations.



4. Pupils are given more clay, which they form into a wall 3 cms high, around the disk, to make the mould.
5. The children are then shown how to use plaster of Paris, sprinkling the powder into the water until it rises above the surface.
6. The plaster is poured into the moulds and left to harden.



Three dimensional sculptures

After the lunch break, the class will be taken to the 16th Century Gallery to look at sculpture "in the round", or fully three dimensional, and think about the materials and methods involved in making them.

Each pupil will choose a modelled sculpture (ceramic or wax) and a carved piece, (bone, wood or stone.). They will make a drawing of each, and, if possible, make a note of what they are made out of, and how they were made.

The workshop ends with the excitement of opening the moulds, admiring the results, and packing them for transport.

