

LESSON PLAN: American Indian Sculpture

By Amy Wunsch, January 2009

Key idea:

The new JCCC permanent collection focus area includes works by living American Indian artists in a variety of media: stone sculpture, wooden masks, woven textiles, blown glass, and clay vessels; the collection also includes jewelry, photography, painting, and works on paper - not all are currently on view.

American Indian artists might use traditional designs in combination with their own ideas or contemporary symbols. The sculptural works might combine natural and human made materials, and they might be functional or decorative. Traditions to explore include buffalo horn cups, calumet peace pipes, and leather possible bags from cultures in the Northern Plains (Oglala/Lakota in South Dakota to Montana, Ojibwe in Minnesota); Canadian Plateau baskets; Zuni/Navajo fetish figures, and 19th century tourist circus figures from Cochiti Pueblo (southwest US, Arizona and New Mexico).



Objectives:

1. Students will view and discuss several pieces of American Indian sculptural work on an instructor-led tour. Works will include sculpture-in-the-round and relief sculpture.
2. Using handouts at each work, students will engage in a compare and contrast exercise between older, traditional American Indian objects and contemporary sculpture. They will see how butterflies, graduation caps, and car logos can be used as symbols and patterns in contemporary American Indian sculpture, and also how artists can stylize anything from parking lots to animals in their designs.
3. Students will then create their own sculptural jewelry pin. Students will cut pieces of Friendly Plastic which can be layered and manipulated. They may incorporate personal symbols, designate a focal point for their composition, and use a variety of materials to embellish their artwork.

Vocabulary:

Focal point: central or principle area of interest in a composition, area that draws our attention

Relief: the projection of figures or forms from a flat background, shallow sculpture

Stylized: representing something abstracted and simplified

Stamping: an impression or shape formed by using a device to impress, cut out, or shape something to which it is applied.

Materials:

Handouts with images of traditional American Indian sculptural artifacts

Friendly Plastic (variety of colors and finishes)

Electric griddle (creates a low heat for Friendly Plastic to fuse together) instructor will implement the fusing process after the students have created their compositions; no student will be allowed near the hot surface at any time. Keep the temperature at a constant setting between 200 and 250 degrees, and the plastic can be softened, fused together, inlaid, swirled and marbled.

Aluminum foil (to cover griddle, and 5" x 5" squares for each student as a surface for arranging compositions prior to fusing)

1 tbs solid shortening (smear on aluminum foil so melted plastic does not stick)

Spatula



Scissors for each student

Toothpicks

Plastic flat back rhinestones, small beads

Jewelry findings: Jump rings, pin backs, etc.

Assessment:

- What did you do to create emphasis in your own artwork?
- How did your artwork use relief sculpture?
- What symbols did you include?
- Which personal traditions or artworks in the collection influenced your artwork?

Tour artwork images:



Virgil Ortiz (American Indian, Cochiti Pueblo, b. 1969)

Horny Toad, 2003

Cochiti red clay, white clay slip, red clay slip and black wild spinach paint

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2014.14



Kevin Pourier (American, Oglala/Lakota, b. 1958)

Swallowtail Horn Cup, c. 2007

Buffalo horn, gold mother of pearl, lapis

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007.59



Kevin Pourier (American, Oglala/Lakota, b. 1958)
Warrior Shades – Buffalo Horn Rim Glasses, 2008
Sandstone, catlinite, white mother of pearl and buffalo horn
Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2012.08



Molly Murphy (American Indian, Oglala/Lakota, b. 1977)

New Possibilities Bags: Women Stepping Forward, 2008

Mixed media, horsehair, beads on wool

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007.100



Thomas "Red Owl" Haukaas (American Indian, Lakota, b. 1950)

Dreamer Doll, 2009

Brain-tanned deerskin, moose, cotton, wool, feathers, human hair, porcupine quill, antique pony beads, buffalo hide, antique Chinese coin, metal

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2009.67



Thomas "Red Owl" Haukaas (American Indian, Lakota, b. 1950)

Economic Conundrum, 2010

Brain tanned Elk hide, antique and contemporary glass beads, Nymo thread, cotton cloth and Hawk bells

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2010.10

Gift of Barton P. and Mary D. Cohen Charitable Trust



Kenneth Williams (American Indian, Seneca/Arapaho, b.1983)

Strength to Overcome, 2009

Czech cute beads, vintage steel cut beads, ermine skins, dyed horse hair, metal bells, smoked brain-tanned deerskin, vintage wool broadcloth, brass beads, vintage glass beads, satin ribbon, human hair, and cotton calico
Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2009.68



Jackie Larson Bread (American Indian, Blackfeet, b. 1960)

The Cover of the Rolling Stone, 2011

Buckskin, beads, paint and laptop sleeve

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2013.41



Terrence Campbell (American Indian, Tahltan, b. 1956)

Eagle Bracelet, 2008

Sterling silver, lone mountain turquoise, coral

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008.36



Ken Humpherville (American Indian, Métis Cree, b. 1947)

Paddle, 2013

Yellow cedar and paint

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2013.40