

Burlap Figures

This lesson plan is intended to introduce students to the art of Magdalena Abakanowicz, an internationally-renowned contemporary sculptor from Poland. Online, www.abakanowicz.art.pl contains an extensive gallery and information about this artist. Visitors to Chicago can view her latest installation — 106 figures, each about 9-ft tall, encompassing three acres in Grant Park along Michigan Avenue.

Many of Abakanowicz's sculptures are human forms and incorporate fibers, including burlap. As a medium for classroom figure study, burlap is inexpensive and can produce some very dramatic results. The heavy jute fibers create deep folds and shadows, providing a very primitive, vulnerable skin. Blick Multi-Purpose Glue stiffens and binds the burlap to a wire armature.

Grade Levels 7-12

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

Objectives

- Students will discuss how artists make media choices to communicate meaning. For example, burlap is a heavy fabric that may describe a figure carrying a physical or emotional burden. Silk would, on the other hand, describe a feeling of lightness and freedom.
- Students will study the works, ideas, influences and purposes of a contemporary artist.
- Students will use the principles of shape, form and texture to describe a sculptural human figure

Preparation

1. With scissors, cut six feet of wire for each 14" to 16" sculpture.
2. With packing knife, cut foamboard to 6" x 8" pieces for bases.
3. With scissors, cut burlap into strips of varying lengths and widths
4. Art Paste may be mixed with water in advance and stored in containers with tight-fitting lids.

Materials

Burlap, Brown (63202-8036)

36" x 1 yard per student, cut into 1-1/2" to 2" wide strips of multiple lengths

Sculpture Wire (33400-1435) 350-ft, 6 foot per student

Elmer's® Art Paste (24003-1003), mix one box per 20 sculptures. Mix in an air-tight plastic container to keep paste for up to a week

Fiskars® Student Scissors (57016-1065) one per student

Blick All-Purpose Newsprint (10311-2013), need one sheet per student

Sanford Design® Ebony Layout Pencil (20411-2009) one per student

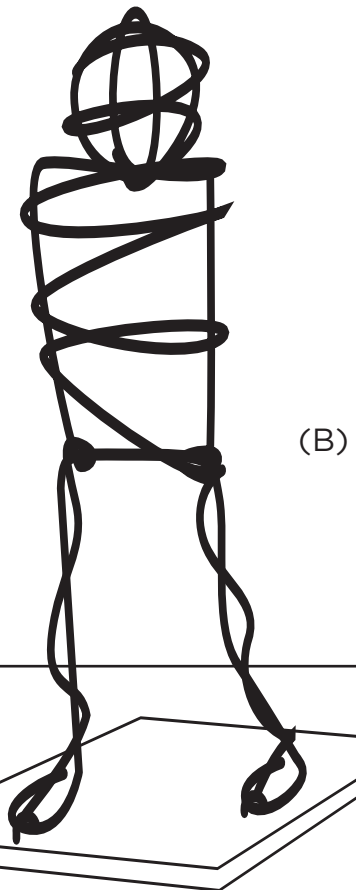
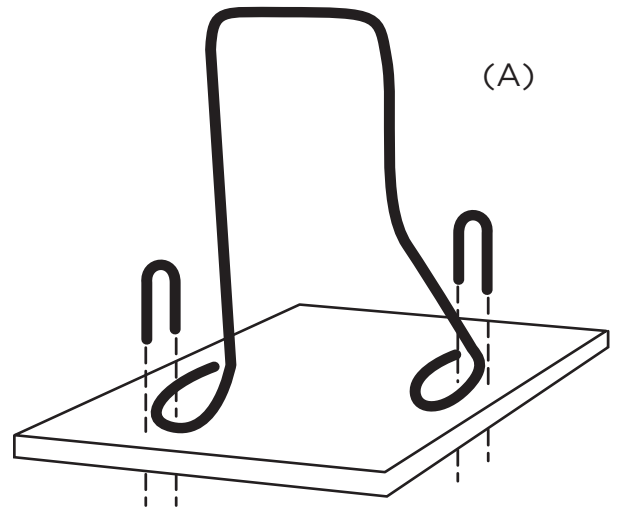
Blick Foamboard (13209-1023), package of ten 20" x 30" sheets, cut to 8" x 10" pieces need one piece per student

Plastic bowl for mixing glue



Process

1. Create preliminary sketches of figures on newsprint. Focus on structure, using continuous line to build mass. This will demonstrate the building of the figure over the armature.
2. Build the armature with sculpture wire. Begin with a 12" piece bent to form hips, legs and feet. Attach this section to the bases with a 2" piece of wire bent into a "U". Pierce the foamboard through each foot and bend the wire flat against the base, see (A).
3. Continue building the armature with the remaining wire. Create a torso and attach by wrapping to the legs. Form a spherical shape for the head and attach it to the shoulder area. Arms will be created with the burlap, see (B)
4. Once the armature is built, begin applying the burlap. Dip each piece in the paste and use fingers to coat and to squeegee all excess back into the bowl. Form around the armature by wrapping, twisting, bunching and draping, creating textures that suggest clothing and features. Loose strands of burlap can be smoothed down or left as frayed edges. A textured surface is more desirable than a smooth one for this project. Allow 8-10 hours to dry.
5. Paint the base using Burnt Umber, Venetian Red and Metallic Gold Blickrylic. Cover thickly and allow the brush strokes to remain. Add touches of Gold and Venetian Red to the figure in random areas for unity and contrast. Use a light application of paint to avoid masking the texture of the burlap.



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National Standards

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

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 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

5-8 Students select and use the qualities of structures and functions of art to improve communication of their ideas

9-12 Students demonstrate the ability to form and defend judgments 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

5-8 Students analyze contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry

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