

Spherical Sculpture

An unconventional modeling medium is used to reveal form on both the inside and outside of a sculpture

One of the visual tools that an artist uses to compose a work of art is “form” — a term that denotes something that has length, width, height, and volume. A form is a shape that has three dimensions; therefore, the term is most often used to talk about sculpture. In modern art, the surrounding space can be just as important in the form of a sculpture as the solid structure.

The works of contemporary Mexican artist Yvonne Domenge demonstrate expressive open spaces within a sculpture. She looks to nature for inspiration, then designs a form, often spherical, defined by shapes that describe movement. Her shapes may be representative of wind currents, waves, petals, or sea forms. Between the shapes, viewers can look inside and through the sculpture, to see the landscape or sky around it. There’s an outside to the sculpture, an inside to the sphere, and a visual pathway that leads through it.

Domenge is skilled in a wide variety of materials: metals, wood, stone, and plastic, but a beginning sculptor might find a paper modeling material an easier means of discovering form.

Architects are familiar with Modeling Pulp Board for making 3-dimensional renderings — it’s also an inexpensive sculpture material that students in middle and high school can easily cut and work with. It bends when wet and becomes rigid again when dry. Using Yvonne Domenge’s spherical sculptures as inspiration, shapes can be formed around a balloon, then glued together to create forms.

GRADES 5-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Cut Modeling Pulp Board into 10" x 10" pieces with a paper cutter or scissors.

Process

1. Cut shapes from Modeling Pulp Board. Shapes can be organic (leaves, waves, or curves) or geometric (squares, rectangles, or triangles). Aim for 6-8 shapes, so as not to over-complicate. The board can be cut with student scissors.
2. Inflate a balloon to a 4-6" diameter, or enough that a rubber band will fit snugly around it without breaking. Wide rubber bands work best for this process.



Materials (required)

Art Alternatives Modeling Pulp Board, 30" x 40" x 1/16" (57347-3040); share one sheet among 12 students

Fiskars Amplify Mixed Media Shears, 8" (58481-1008); need one to cut board down

Maped Advanced Gel Scissors, 6-3/4" (57659-1006); need one per student

Plastic Spray Bottle, 16 oz (03418-1016); share one among four students

3M Commercial Cellulose Sponges, 6" x 4.2" x 1.6" (38014-1006); share one between two students

Blickrylic Student Acrylics, assorted colors (00711-); share equivalent of two quarts across class

Creativity Street Wooden Spring Clothespins, mini, package of 250 natural (62144-1250); share one package across class

Rubber Bands, wide

Materials (optional)

Mod Podge Gloss Finish, Quart (02916-1007)

Krylon Low-Odor Clear Finish, Gloss, 11 oz (23710-1001)

Jacquard Lumiere Acrylics, assorted colors, 237 ml (02953-)

Blick Masking Tape, natural, 3/4" x 60 yds (24149-1034)



Process (continued)

- Wet shapes just enough for the board to absorb water, either by placing in a water-filled tray or by covering well on both sides with a sponge or spray bottle. Modeling Pulp Board should not be left to soak in water for extended periods or it will break down and become unusable.
- Bend shapes and hold them onto the balloon with wide rubber bands. Some hints for forming:
 - Start by just placing the first few pieces. Subsequent shapes will help hold the first ones to the spherical form and can be tucked beneath the first rubber bands (a rubber band is not needed for each piece).
 - Shapes do not need to hold to the spherical form. They can be curved and formed away from the balloon.
 - The Modeling Pulp Board will often fray at the end or form stress lines. This should not be a concern at this point because sanding, gluing, and painting can disguise these flaws.
- When all the shapes are on the balloon, allow it to dry overnight. Remove rubber bands. Shapes will hold their spherical form. Glue shapes together in key places where they touch and allow glue to dry.
- With fine-grit sandpaper, smooth stress lines and edges of cut pieces. Frayed ends may be reshaped with glue.
- Paint with acrylic colors. Do not add water or the Modeling Pulp Board may lose its shape.

Options

- Modeling Pulp Board can also be formed around other objects, such as cans or jars.
- Masking tape can also be used to hold pieces in place, but care needs to be taken when removing it, as it can damage the surface.
- If a gloss surface is desired, coat with gloss medium or gloss spray.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.



Step 1: Cut Modeling Pulp Board into 6-8 shapes.



Step 2: Wet shapes and form around a balloon. Secure with a rubber band.



Step 3: When dry, remove shapes and glue them together.



Step 4: Paint with acrylic colors.