

Stabile Sculpture

Inspired by the stationary works of Alexander Calder

Today's artist in the field of textile design creates designs and patterns for many. When one hears the name of Alexander Calder, the picture of abstract hanging mobile sculpture immediately comes to mind. Kinetic mobiles were only a portion of Calder's vast body of work — he also painted in oils and created wall sculpture and stationary pieces he called "stables". These sculptures often resembled his mobiles — with suspended shapes interacting with lines and planes — but without moving parts.

In this lesson, students will create a wall sculpture or free-standing piece inspired by Calder's choices of line, shape and color.

Taskboard is a natural wood-based medium used by architects and 3-D designers to create models. It is easily cut with scissors or a craft knife. When dampened, curves can be formed that will be retained when dry. It accepts any water-based or solvent-based paint, stain, or finish.

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

Preparation

1. View examples of Alexander Calder's sculptures and examine his color choices. He considered color to be secondary to form and used it to differentiate one part of his sculpture from another. Black and white were most important, and he believed red to be the color most opposite them.

Discuss the use of line, shape and the way forms relate to one another in Calder's sculptures. He based his art on his view of the relationship forms to one another in nature.

Process

1. Create preliminary sketches. It is recommended that students make a three-dimensional "sketch" - a maquette - from heavy scrap paper or board to plan the sculpture before making a final version.
2. Cut the pieces from Taskboard with scissors or use a craft knife for tight cuts and details. Do not attempt to bend the material while dry.
3. Using a small scrap of Taskboard, experiment with forming pieces by wetting both sides using an atomizer both sides using an atomizer bottle filled with plain water. This will familiarize the designer with the limitations of the material attempting to form large pieces,

Materials (required)

Taskboard White, 20" x 30" x 1/16" (13211-1043); share one sheet between two students

Blickrylic[®] Student Acrylics, 6-color Basic Set (00711-1049); share one set across class

Blick[®] Mega Brushes, Golden Taklon Flat, size 30 (06203-1015); share one between two students

Tonic Studios[®] Kushgrip Scissors (57150-1085); one per student

Delta[®] Sobo[®] Craft and Fabric Glue (23820-1004); share four 4-oz bottles across class

Holbein[®] Atomizer Bottle (02912-1003); share one between two students

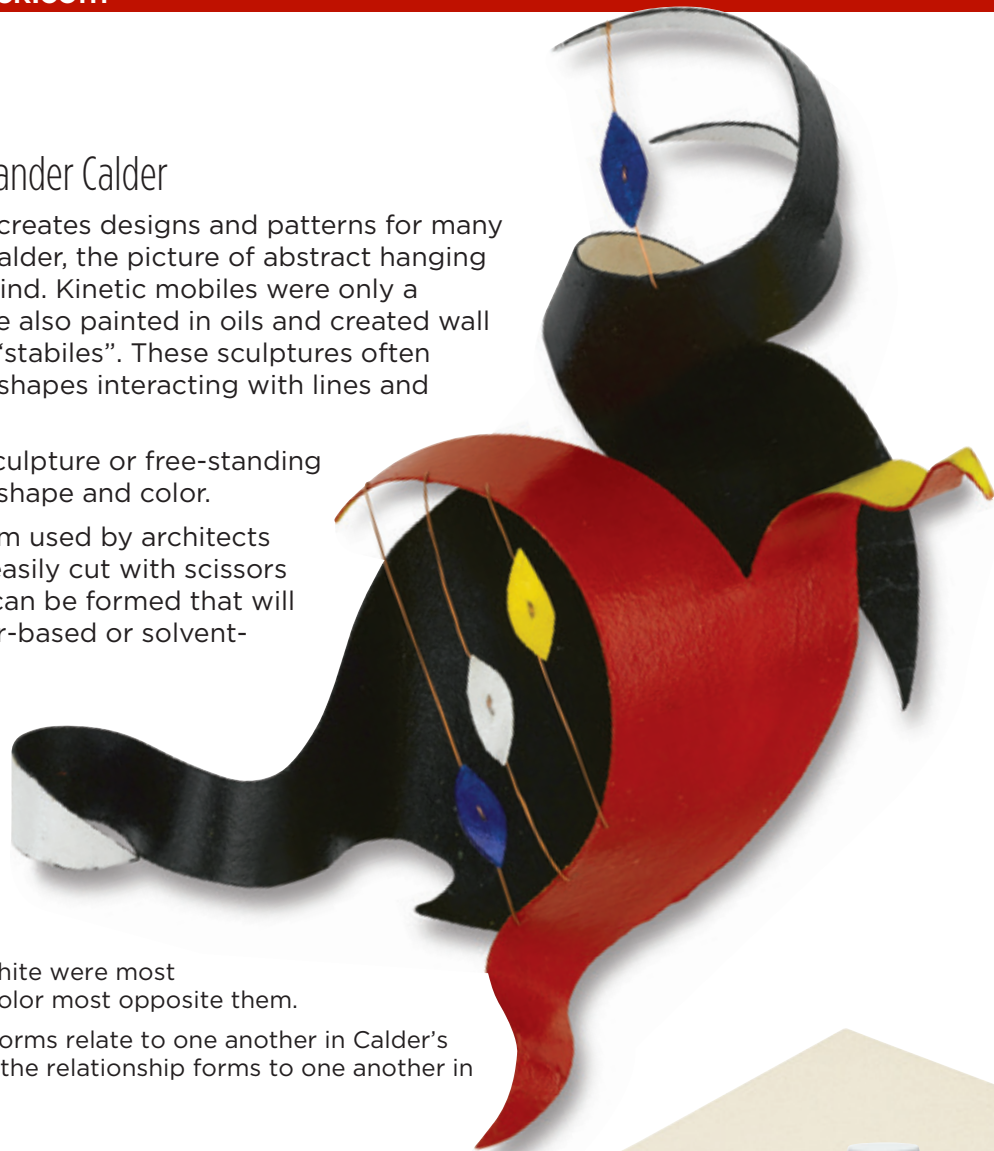
Paper clips, rubber bands

3M[®] Sandpaper, extra-fine grit (34916-1203); share one 10-sheet pkg across class

Optional Materials

Liquitex[®] Acrylic Polymer Varnish, flexible surface (00618-3026); share one pint across class

Blick[®] Copper Wire, 24-gauge (33415-1024); share one 100-ft coil across class



Hints for working Taskboard:

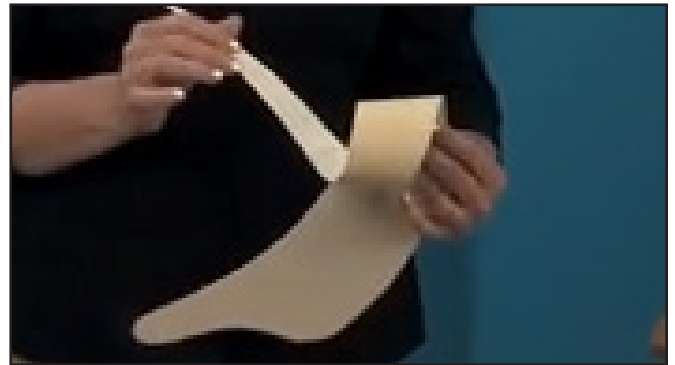
- Form in slow, small increments rather than forcing the material to bend.
 - Bind the material with rubber bands or paper clips in order to hold a shape as it dries.
 - If stress lines form (and they most likely will at first), wait until the Taskboard is completely dry then use a fine-grit sandpaper to smooth. Sandpaper can also be used on rough edges or to give corners a softly rounded look.
 - Once the pieces are completely dry, use glue to help seal over stress lines and repair frayed edges. If a piece breaks completely while being formed, simply glue back together once it's dry.
 - Dry time can be decreased by placing the pieces in front of a fan or by using a hairdryer.
4. Glue pieces together according to the maquette. Hold pieces together, prop against another object or use paper clips or masking tape to secure until a full bond forms.
 5. Once the glue is dry, paint the sculpture with acrylic colors. Remember to paint the edges of the board, too.

Options

1. Many of Calder's Stables were, in part, mobiles or resembled mobiles by incorporating smaller pieces and wire. Use copper wire and smaller pieces of Taskboard to add interest and movement to the sculpture (as shown in example piece, below). Taskboard can be pierced with a nail or tack in order to insert the wire.
2. Once paint is completely dry, use an acrylic varnish to give it the high-gloss look of enameled steel that Calder used in his sculpture



Step 1: Cut shapes from Taskboard and wet with a sponge or spray bottle



Step 2: Gently form to desired shape



Step 3: Glue pieces together



Step 4: Paint sculpture with acrylic colors.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

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

Presenting

Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

Responding

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.