

THE DAY OF SCULPTURE

Introduction

Sculpture is an artistic form in which hard or plastic materials are worked into three-dimensional art objects.

A great deal of sculpture is designed to be placed in public squares, gardens, parks, and similar open places or in interior positions where it is isolated in space and can be viewed from all directions. Other sculpture is carved in relief and is viewed only from the front and sides.

Types of sculpture:

Sculpture may be either in the round or in relief. A sculpture in the round is a separate, detached object in its own right, leading to the same kind of independent existence in space as a human body or a chair. A relief does not have this kind of independence. It projects from and is attached to or is an integral part of something else that serves either as a background against which it is set or a matrix from which it emerges.

Another basic distinction of sculptures is between subtractive carving techniques, which remove material from an existing block or lump, for example of stone or wood, and modelling techniques which shape or build up the work from the material.

Materials used:

Any material that can be shaped in three dimensions can be used sculpturally. The classic materials, with outstanding durability, are metal, especially bronze, stone and pottery, with wood, bone and antler being less durable but cheaper options. Precious materials such as gold, silver, jade, and ivory are often used for small luxury works. More common and less expensive materials were used for sculpture for wider consumption, including hardwoods; terracotta and other ceramics, and cast metals such as pewter and zinc (spelter).

There are also a number of materials that have only recently come into use. A variety of stones, such as crushed marble, granite chips, and gravel, can be used, each giving a different effect of colour and texture.

Thematics: Forms, subject matter, imagery, and symbolism of sculpture

Representational: Before the 20th century, sculpture was considered a representational art, one that imitated *forms in life*, most often *human figures* but also *inanimate objects*, such as game, utensils, and books. Since the turn of the 20th century, however, sculpture has also included nonrepresentational forms. It has long been accepted that the forms of such functional three-dimensional objects as *furniture, pots, and buildings* may be expressive and beautiful without being in any way representational; but it was only in the 20th century that nonfunctional, nonrepresentational, three-dimensional works of art began to be produced.

The principal subject of sculpture has always been the *human figure*. Next in importance in historical work are *animals and fantastic creatures* based on human and animal forms, such as the Minotaur, and animal-headed gods of the ancient world. Other subjects—for example, *landscape, plants, still life, and architecture*—have served primarily as accessories to figure sculpture, not as subjects in their own right, except as decorative elements



within architecture. The production of *devotional images* has been one of the sculptor's main tasks, and many of the world's greatest sculptures are of this kind, such as the statues of Buddha and the Hindu gods; of Christ, the Virgin, and the Christian saints; of Athena, Aphrodite, Zeus, etc.

Closely connected with devotional images are all of the commemorative narrative sculptures in which *legends, heroic deeds*, and religious stories are depicted for the delight and instruction of people who lived when books and literacy were rare.

Scenes of everyday life have been represented in sculpture mainly on a small scale in minor works.

Nonrepresentational sculpture: There are two main kinds of nonrepresentational sculpture. One kind uses nature not as subject matter to be represented but as a source of formal ideas. The other main kind, often known as nonobjective sculpture, is a more completely nonrepresentational form that does not even have a starting point in nature. It arises from a constructive manipulation of the sculptor's generalized, abstract ideas of spatial relations, volume, line, colour, texture, and so on.

Materials necessary

Clay or plaster or plasticine, papers and pencils, colours

Step-by-step instructions

At first, we introduce students to the concept of Sculpture, as it is described above. We explain to them that they are going to be presented with different sculptures from different countries (in photos). We guide them to observe carefully the details of each one and try to create a story that the sculptor may need to represent with his/her work (this can be done either in small groups of 2-3 persons – for more ideas- or with all students in one team). After the students have shared their ideas and stories, we give them some basic information about each of the sculptures we presented to them.

Then, we go on setting the following questions to the students:

- Which one do they like more? Why?
- What characteristics of the sculptures are appealing to them?
- What are the similarities among them?
- What are the differences between them?
- Do they know any other sculpture from their country or another country they would like to present to the team?

After that, we give them a piece of clay or plaster or plasticine and invite them to create their work inspired by the presented works.

They could draw a sculpture if they prefer.

Examples from European and other countries

Greece

Caryatid



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A **caryatid** is a sculpted female figure serving as an architectural support taking the place of a column or a pillar supporting an entablature on her head. The Greek term *karyatides* literally means "maidens of Karyai", an ancient town on the Peloponnese. Karyai had a temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis in her aspect of Artemis Karyatis: "As Karyatis she rejoiced in the dances of the nut-tree village of Karyai, those Karyatides, who in their ecstatic round-dance carried on their heads baskets of live reeds, as if they were dancing plants".

An atlas or telamon is a male version of a caryatid, i.e. a sculpted male statue serving as an architectural support.

Dromeas- The runner



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Dromeas, also called *The Runner*, is made of individual pieces of glass stacked atop each other to take the blurred shape of a runner in motion. Thousands of sharp, jagged pieces of glass form the sculpture.

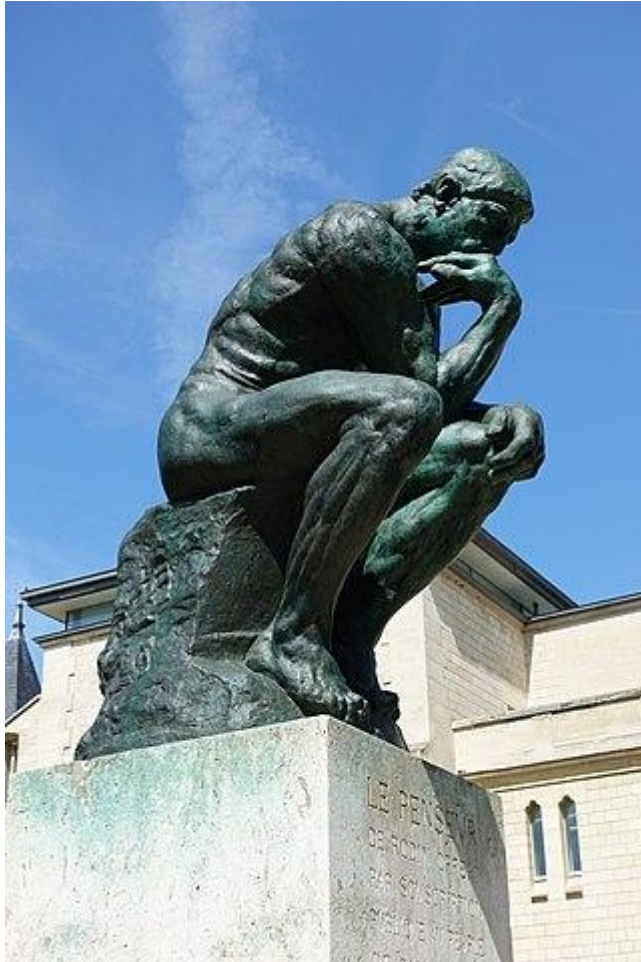
The running figure is the work of Costas Varotsos, who began working on it in 1988 and didn't finish until 1994. It was originally erected at Omonia Square, but it was later moved because people grew concerned that construction and the vibrations from the underground metro would cause it to shatter or topple.

It's a fitting sculpture within a city with so much running history—Athens was, after all, the final destination of Pheidippides's famous run from the Battle of Marathon.



France

Le Penseur/ The Thinker



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The Thinker is one of the most famous sculptures by the artist Auguste Rodin. It represents a man meditating, seemingly facing a profound dilemma. Rodin's Thinker is a naked man, symbolising the universality of thought, and muscular, linking the exercise of the mind to that of the body.

This bronze statue was designed in 1903. It is nowadays in the museum dedicated to the artist Rodin.

<https://www.musee-rodin.fr/musee/collections/oeuvres/penseur>

Voltaire Nu/ Naked Voltaire



By Coyau / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3990539>

Jean-Baptiste Pigalle (1714-1785) created the Naked Voltaire sculpture following a request from an assembly of 17 philosophers in 1770. This statue is a tribute to the famous philosopher Voltaire, a gift from his peers.

It is a statue of Carrara marble. Jean-Baptiste Pigalle chose to represent the philosopher naked, in the manner of an ancient hero, without however idealising him. The aged and emaciated body of the man of letters is observed. Voltaire is sitting on a rock, naked, with a coat thrown over his back. He is holding the tools of his trade: in one hand a quill, in the other a scroll. His gaze is raised to the sky.

Naked Voltaire is now one of the greatest masterpieces of sculpture on display in the Louvre (Paris).

Latvia

Riga Tower Counter

The urban sculpture "Riga Tower Counter", 2007: <https://www.olgasilova.lv/darbi-vide-2/7-portfolio-041/>

Bronze. Height 3.7m. The sculpture is located in the green area in front of the Swedbank central building in Kipsala, Riga, Latvia.

"Riga Tower Counter" (2006/2007) from Swedbank's contemporary art collection is Olga Šilova's most recognisable sculpture in Riga's urban space. Olga Shilova chose the human figure as the sculptural and substantive form of her work, which, from the Stoics to Dostoyevsky and Bergayev, has been perceived as a symbol of personality and freedom, simultaneously uniting spirit and matter, freedom and needs, culture and economy. Thanks to donations from Swedbank's (formerly Hansabanka) customers and the bank's financial contributions, the four-metre high sculpture "Riga Tower Counter" was placed in the square in front of the Swedbank Central Building in Riga, Balasta dambis 1a, at the end of 2007. This area, with its riverbank, is open to the public and is a favourite place among the citizens of Riga, especially among those who observe the Riga skyline.



Poland

In the case of Polish sculpture, it is worth referring to some themes from the world of sculpture that can be an inspiration in intercultural workshops: these will be Wawel heads, Polish folk sculpture and Polish avant-garde sculpture.

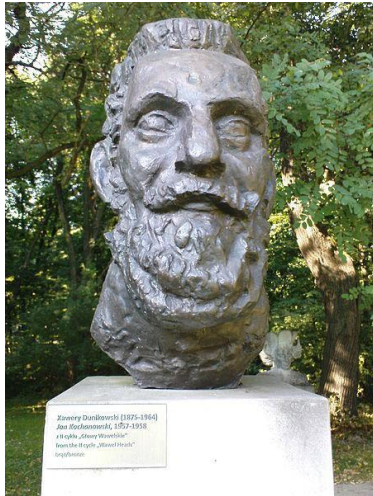
Wawel heads

Wawel Heads is a Renaissance series of heads decorating the coffered ceiling of the Wawel Hall. The heads made of wood in the years 1531-1535 had allegorical significance - they depicted people from various states that constituted the Kingdom of Poland. As a result of the theft and destruction, only 30 of 194 sculptures have survived.



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Franciszek Xawery Dunikowski (born November 24, 1875 in Krakow, died January 26, 1964 in Warsaw) - Polish sculptor, painter and teacher. Dunikowski was one of the most important sculptors of Polish art, a symbolist. He completed the cycle of Wawel Heads by making bronze sculptures of heads of famous Poles. However, they were never placed in a coffer ceiling. puszka.waw.pl



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Polish folk sculpture

Polish folk sculpture is historically the oldest field of folk art that developed in Poland among the lower classes of society from the end of the Middle Ages to the middle of the 20th century. The basic material of Polish folk sculpture was and is wood.

In the past and today, the dominant religious themes were: Christ, Mother of God (local Marian representations), saints (e.g. St. Florian, St. J. Nepomucen). In addition, figural hives and toys were carved. Genre scenes, mainly from the life of the countryside, are also popular nowadays. Polish folk sculpture is undoubtedly one of the branches of domestic production that enjoys the greatest popularity among foreign recipients. (www.domsztukiludowej.pl)

Polish avant-garde sculpture

Avant-garde (from French *avant garde* "front guard") - a set of tendencies and directions in the art of the 20th century, rejecting the existing styles, creating their own world, not imitating reality, looking for a separate language of expression. Avant-garde sculpture played a large role in Poland, the most important avant-garde sculptors are Katarzyna Kobro, Alina Szapacznikow and Magdalena Abakanowicz. The workshop will be inspired by the art of Abakanowicz due to the selected sculptural material and forms.

Magdalena Abakanowicz was an extraordinary artist. She created sculptures called "abakans", i.e. human figures of superhuman size. She entered the canon of the most important and avant-garde Polish artists. Her weaving techniques were unusual - she made works of, for example, ropes. In her art, she used fabric as a sculptural material. She created a series of spatial and organic works woven from various types of fibres with intense colours, at exhibitions usually hung from the ceiling.

<https://nmwa.org/blog/artist-spotlight/5-fast-facts-magdalena-abakanowicz/>



Spain

Ecce Homo -La Roldana

Luisa Ignacia Roldán (Seville, 8 September 1652 – 10 January 1706), called La Roldana, was a Spanish female sculptor of the Baroque Era. She is the first woman sculptor documented in Spain. Luisa Ignacia learned the art of sculpture in the studio of her father, Pedro Roldán, a renowned sculptor from the Andalusian capital. Since the business received a large number of orders, most of the twelve children of the marriage, in addition to other assistants, worked in it.

Ecce Homo (1684) of the Cadiz Cathedral, is the first officially documented work of La Roldana. This figure brings together some of the peculiarities of the first stage of the sculptress, such as the dramatic realisms that reflects the face of Jesus, the attention and the care in the carving of the hair, all of them learned at her father's studio. Other works such as the Dolorosa de la Soledad (1688), Saint Joseph with the Child and Saint John the Baptist or the group of the Holy Family belong to the same period.



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Ecce Homo. Author: La Roldana*

La Roldana was the first woman appointed chamber sculptor of the Royal Court, in Madrid. During this second stage of her work, she made one of her most recognized works, the San Miguel de El Escorial, a wood carving that represents the victory of the archangel over the devil.

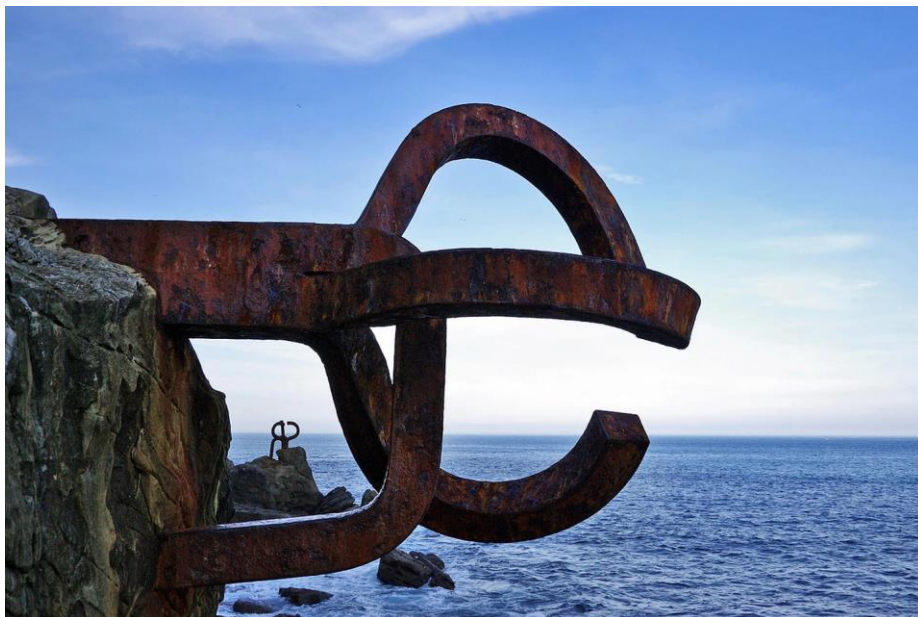
San Miguel de El Escorial. Author: La Roldana - <https://caminandopormadrid.com/san-miguel-arcangel-de-luisa-roldan>

Despite her success, La Roldana and her husband, also a sculptor, never enjoyed a good economic position and she died a few days after signing a declaration of poverty.

Eduardo Chillida. Peine del Viento (Wind Comb)

Eduardo Chillida is one of the most celebrated Spanish artists. Known for his large-scale sculptures, his work can be seen on display in museums, parks and public squares throughout the world. Born in 1924 in San Sebastián, in the Basque Country, he spent time in both Madrid and Paris, and often dedicated his pieces to public figures or commemorative events.

One of Chillida's most celebrated works, Wind Comb (1977) can be found along the seafront in San Sebastián. It was created in conjunction with the architect Luis Peña Ganchegui and comprises two iron claws or combs, reaching out into the sea. The sculpture successfully fuses together the fierceness of the waves and the strength of the iron structures to create a powerful piece.



Wind Comb by Eduardo_Chillida | © Phillip Maiwald / Wikimedia Commons

Syria

The **Euphrates Syrian Pillar Figurines** (EU_SPF's) are anthropomorphic clay figurines dating from the late Iron Age period (mid 8th-7th centuries BCE) and produced in the Middle Euphrates region. The clay figurines are completely handmade and free standing. The shape of the body is concave at the base to allow them to stand, the feet can be rendered through a central protruding piece of clay in the middle of the frontal part. They were usually held with one hand with the other one engaged in modelling details. This was the so-called “snowman” technique, which allows working figurines in a three-dimensional space. The object is shaped all around, preferring the under part of the figurine's body as the base of support. Among the modelling tools apart from fingers one should mention a pointed wooden stick for the characterization of anatomical features, especially fingers, but also particular ornaments. Other more rarely used tools were floral patterns and combs.



*EU_SPF holding a child from Karkemish. The British Museum, London (museum no. 108757).
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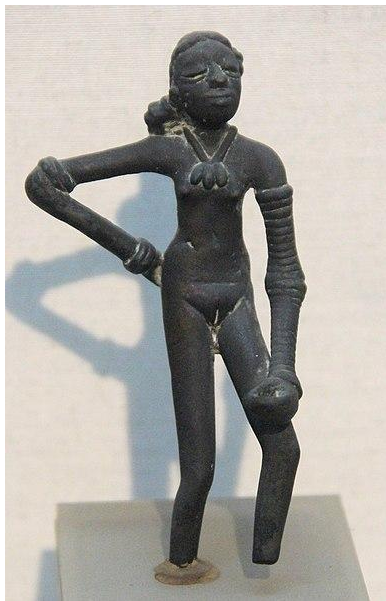
Pakistan

The Dancing Girl is a prehistoric bronze sculpture made in lost-wax casting about c. 2300–1750 BCE in the Indus Valley Civilisation city of Mohenjo-daro (in modern-day Pakistan). This is one of two bronze artworks found at Mohenjo-daro that show more flexible features when compared to other more formal poses. The statue is 10.5 cm (4.1 in) tall, and depicts a nude young woman or girl with stylized ornaments, standing in a confident, naturalistic pose. *Dancing Girl* is well-regarded as a work of art and is a cultural artefact of the Indus Valley Civilisation.

The statue was first discovered by British archaeologist Ernest Mackay in Mohenjo-daro in 1926. It is now in the National Museum, New Delhi.

The statue led to two important discoveries about the civilization: first that they knew metal blending, casting and other sophisticated methods, and secondly that entertainment, especially dance, was part of the culture. The bronze girl was made using the lost-wax casting technique and shows the expertise of the people in making bronze works during that time.

Source: Wikipedia



The Dancing Girl of Mohenjo-daro. This file is made available under the Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication

Georgia

The Freedom Monument or St. George Statue (Source: Wikipedia)

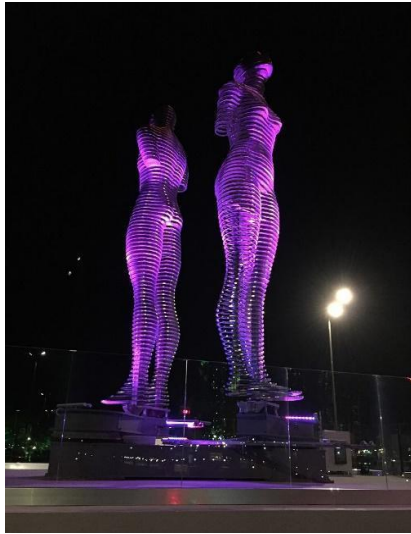
The **Freedom Monument**, commonly known as the **St. George Statue**, is a memorial located in Tbilisi, Georgia, dedicated to the freedom and independence of the Georgian nation. It is made of granite and gold, is 35 metres (115 ft) high and is easily spotted from any point of the city. The actual statue — 5.6 metres (18 ft) tall, made of bronze and covered with gold — is a gift to the city from its creator, Georgian sculptor Zurab Tsereteli.



St. George Statue or the Freedom Monument – source: Wikipedia. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 license.

Ali and Nino or Man and Woman





Ali and Nino statue. This image is originally posted to Flickr. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.



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Roberto Strauss on Flickr. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.

“Man and Woman” is an 8 metre (26 foot) tall moving steel sculpture by Georgian sculptor Tamara Kvesitadze. Located in the seaside city of Batumi, Georgia, the two figures represent a Muslim boy, Ali, and a Georgian princess, Nino, from a famous 1937 novel by Azerbaijani author Kurban Said. Ali, an Azerbaijani Muslim, falls in love with Georgian princess, Nino, but sadly, after they are finally able to get together, the war hits home and Ali is killed. It was this famous love that inspired Georgian artist Tamara Kvesitadze to create her monumental moving sculpture in 2010. The giant metal artwork, also known as the “Statue of Love,” consists of two somewhat transparent figures made of stacked segments. Both statues move, changing their position every 10 minutes, until they become one. At night the sculptures are lit with changing colours, a magnetically beautiful sight.

