



## **Wire Sculpture**

**Grade level:** 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Objective:** Marshall Fredericks made drawings of his sculptures before he sculpted them. We have many of his drawings in archives. He found inspiration for some of his images by reading books, magazines, newspapers, meeting people, animals he saw, his travels and many other influences he encountered in his life. Like him, we will begin this activity by doing a drawing first (Part I) and then create a sculpture from the drawing using thin wire (Part II).

### **Supplies:**

computer or telephone wire  
sheets of paper  
pencils

### **Optional:**

tools or objects to shape wire

### **Part I:**

Discuss artist Alexander Calder and show examples of his wire sculptures. A good source of his wire sculpture images can be found at [www.calder.org](http://www.calder.org). Calder did many wire sculptures of animals and circus imagery. You may want to find some other examples of wire sculpture to show them on the internet by doing a “wire sculpture” search.

Students should have one sheet of paper, pencil and 3 foot (6 strand) thin copper wire with color plastic covering. (telephone or computer wire)

Discuss these terms:

**Line:** a moving point

**Mass:** The illusion of weight or density

**Gesture:** a quick all-encompassing statement of form

**Relief sculpture:** Forms that project from a flat surface and viewed from a frontal viewpoint

**Freestanding sculpture:** Sculpture in-the-round; you can observe it from the front, sides, and back

Each student is given a sheet of paper. Before you begin drawing, show students examples of simple line drawings. Tell them to think about their pencil point as the piece of wire.

They can do a **non-continuous line drawing**. Explain that it is when you pick up your pencil and put it down to draw in a different area. Or they can do a **continuous line drawing**. This means

you draw one continuing line without picking up your pencil point. Show some examples of both.

Discuss how lines can describe an outside boundary or a gestural expression that indicates mass. Remember that a 2-dimensional drawing creates the illusion of mass. When sculpting 3-dimensionally, the lines can move at all angles through space and create mass. The pencil drawing should be a continuous single line if possible; it is the thumbnail sketch for the sculpture.

## **Part II**

Each student is given a 3' piece of wire. Using their drawings as a thumbnail guide, students can begin to form the wire in 3-dimensions according to their drawing. You may want to do a quick demonstration before they begin. For even more of a challenge, use two wires that parallel each other. Relate shapes in the drawing to geometric shapes such as triangles, squares, circles, etc.

How do you begin to make a wire sculpture from your drawing?

1<sup>st</sup>: Find a good starting point to begin.

2<sup>nd</sup>: Using your hands and pencil, shape the wire according to your drawing.

3<sup>rd</sup>: Follow your drawings closely and work slowly.

4<sup>th</sup> You can add mass to your sculptures by winding the wire around your original form of the sculpture.

Tip: Think about how to use the different colors.

You can begin your wire sculptures. Discuss possible themes with students of what they want to draw and sculpt. For example animals, people, abstract imagery and so forth.

### **Facts and Technical issues:**

- The wire is computer or phone wire
- It is 3' in length
- It's copper wire and has a color plastic covering (don't remove the covering)
- It's very easy to bend and form
- If you manipulate it too much at one place it may break
- Demonstrate how to use tools (if applicable) to form the wire

### **Safety tips:**

- Don't get the ends near eyes
- Try not to poke the eyes of anyone sitting near you or yourself.
- Don't wrap it around any necks, arms, or any part of your body.

**Optional:** To create a wire sculpture relief you can construct a device that students can use to mount their sculpture to a wall or flat surface.

### **Preparation:**

Precut wire pieces and portion out for students.

Prepare sheets of paper.

Prepare samples of line drawings and wire sculptures.

Portion out implements that they can use to shape their wire. (craft sticks, film canisters, pencils, etc.)

Note: You can design a powerpoint presentation with visuals for this lesson plan.

**National Common Core Standards for Visual Art**

**9th grade**

VA:Cr1.1.Ia Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.

**10th grade**

VA:Cr1.2.IIa Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

**11th and 12th grade**

VA:Cr1.2.IIIa Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices, following or breaking established conventions, to plan the making of multiple works of art and design based on a theme, idea, or concept.