

Studio Objectives

The students will:

- begin to think in three-dimensional terms by using modeling clay as a vehicle.
- recognize abstraction and practice it by using nature as a starting point.
- explore the elements of shape and form to create an abstract sculpture.

Materials

- at least a pound of modeling clay per student for modeling; the clay should be warm or at least at room temperature for ease of use
- modeling tools; ceramic clay tools can work if they are cleaned between uses
- table knives and other small knives if they are allowable
- disposable newsprint paper to avoid the oily residue modeling clay will leave on the tabletop.

Setup

This is an excellent time to take a field trip outdoors to heighten the students' sense of perception. Go only a short distance and stop and notice things around you: the grass, seeds, twigs, rocks, shells, leaves. Talk about the objects and what kinds of shapes and forms are found in nature. Talk about symmetry, colors, and shapes that exemplify the elements and principles of design.

Create It

Tell students that an abstract design is based on an identifiable subject, but with few or no details, and with simplified visual elements. Encourage students to imagine how the object they selected would look if it collapsed or melted. From time to time, stop and have them bring all of the models together for group discussion.

Studio Experience

Abstract Natural Objects

Forms found in nature serve as an excellent starting point for abstraction. This studio experience will help you to become more perceptive. You will use a natural object as inspiration to create a completely new form—a bold sculpture abstraction. Modeling clay is best for this exercise because it can be instantly manipulated without tools.

Before You Begin

- Choose a subject as your source for inspiration. Avoid simplistic objects such as rocks or potatoes, and complex subjects such as a bouquet of flowers.
- Study your object. Look at its overall form, investigate its tiniest details, touch it and note its texture. Can you see any elements of design? Can you recognize some principles of design?



Fig. 1–38. A shell can be a good subject to start an abstraction.

You will need:

- oil-based modeling clay (alternative: polymer or ceramic clay)
- dry towels
- table knives or other simple modeling tools (optional)

Create It

1 Manipulate a small handful of clay; begin modeling. The clay will soften as you work it. Make several smaller forms—about the size of a golf ball—rather than concentrating on one large

copy of the object. Avoid detail; just play with the overall form. This is an opportunity to actually “feel” the third dimension as you modify the form. As you change one side, you can quickly see the effect on the other side, top, and bottom.



Fig. 1–39. Several small models are created from the shell. Notice the progression of form.

- 2** If you find it difficult to steer away from an exact likeness, then create a likeness but be prepared to make adjustments. Cut it up into smaller forms. Exaggerate its characteristics; bend it; stretch it.
- 3** Select a model that you like, set it aside, and create variations of that model.
- 4** From the variations, select one, set it aside, and make a larger model that will be your final sculpture. Be aware that although the basic form of your model is to be retained, the sculpture can, and often does, change for the better as you spend time working. Always seek to improve. If things appear worse, then go back to the original model.
- 5** Finish your abstract sculpture in any way you choose. Photograph it for your portfolio.



Fig. 1–40. In the final seashell abstraction, which element of the shell has been emphasized—shape, color, and/or line?

Check It Revisit the original object. Have you created an abstract sculpture based on this object?

Sketchbook Connection

Your abstraction of a natural object may lead to ideas for future sculptures. You do not need to try out all of your ideas right now—you can save some ideas in a sketchbook. Include ideas in three-dimensional terms by sketching multiple views. For example, show the top of a form as well as its side. Accompany your sketches with notes about possible materials, tools, and dimensions.

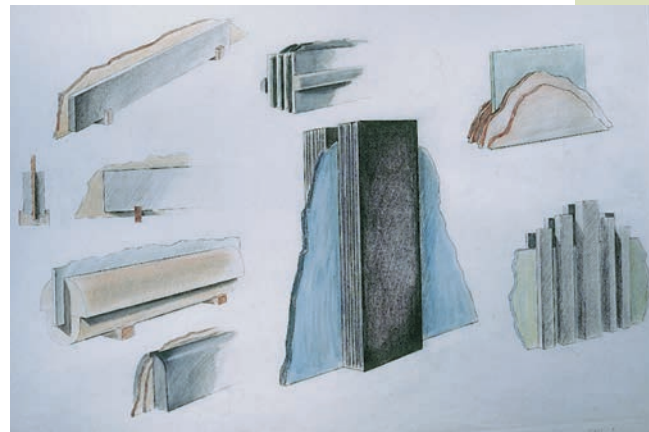


Fig. 1-41. Enrico Pinardi's drawing demonstrates several ideas and views for potential sculpture. This is a good illustration of drawing three dimensionally.

Enrico Pinardi, *Sculpture Drawings*, 2002.
26" x 36" (66 x 91.5 cm).

Sketchbook Connection

Help students to understand that a sketchbook is a place to document thoughts and ideas. Have them make one section for writing thoughts about dreams, experiences, interests, and feelings. Make another section to document the different stages in their creative process.

Have them explain the techniques they experimented with, noting the results and why they consider them successful or not. Finally, encourage them to keep a section for notes, pictures, or articles about historical images and various sculpture artists whose work appeals to them.

Rubric: Studio Assessment

4	3	2	1
Evolving Abstraction • Nonrepresentational • Investigates design aspect of natural form • Takes risks			
Sculpture completely abstract; lively bold quality; features natural object-inspired elements/principles; lots of growth and experimentation evident. Fully realized, original, experimental	Sculpture abstract; elements/principles from natural object used in a pleasing, interesting way; experimentation evident in most stages of process. Satisfying, competent, experimental	Sculpture somewhat abstract <i>or</i> very abstract but minimally related to elements/principles found in natural object; some experimentation evident. Moderate risk or arguable connection	Sculpture resembles original object too closely <i>or</i> no longer related to elements/principles found in natural object; little experimentation evident. Task misunderstood
3-D Composition • In the round • Movement • Interaction with space • Use of value • Balance			
Sculpture interesting from all views; movement in form leads the eye around whole sculpture; totally involves surrounding space; shadow/value add interest and drama; visually balanced. Unified, strongly 3-D, effective	Sculpture interesting from most views; movement in form leads the eye around sculpture; interacts with surrounding space; some use of shadow/value; visually balanced. Unified, effective	Sculpture resolved from some views; interaction with surrounding space, movement, value, or balance may need more development to create a finished feeling. Needs refinement, more time on-task	Sculpture resolved from only 1 or 2 views; interaction with surrounding space, movement, value, and/or balance need much more exploration and development. Unresolved, disjointed
Media Use • Physical balance • Craftsmanship • Texture			
Sculpture physically balanced—stands on its own—well constructed; surface texture handled well, thoroughly integrated into sculptural idea. Skillful, controlled, appropriate	Sculpture physically balanced but may need a little help to stand on its own; well constructed; surface texture helps express sculptural idea. Competent, appropriate	Sculpture unable to stand on its own or has other construction problems <i>or</i> surface texture may need more refinement—detracts somewhat from idea. More practice or thought indicated	Sculpture very unbalanced or poorly constructed; surface texture needs much more refinement; detracts from sculptural idea. Rudimentary difficulties
Work Process • Observation/Exploration • Sketches • Iteration of idea • Refinement of idea • Reflection			
All products and time on-task; exhibits strong personal interest and independent drive. Exceeds expectations, independent	Most products and time on-task meet assignment expectations; some independence exhibited. Meets expectations, satisfactory	Uneven effort in products and/or time on-task—lacks some steps of the process. Needs prompting, hit and miss	Products and/or time on-task minimal; lacks many steps of the process. Disengaged, inattentive