

Modern Figure Sculpture in the style of Alberto Giacometti

In the years following World War II, Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti became renowned for tall, gaunt figurative sculptures that were extremely expressive in their simplicity. Some viewers see the figures as isolated and alone — an interpretation of the state of modern mankind following the horrors of war and the Holocaust. Others see strength in the frailty of the figures as if they are determinedly standing against adversity. Giacometti himself once said that he was not sculpting human figures, rather, “the shadow that they cast.”

To create the gracefully haunting look of a Giacometti figure, this lesson plan introduces Paverpol™, a unique product that can be used with a variety of materials — textiles, paper, self-hardening clay and more — to make sculptures so sturdy that they can be placed outdoors. It’s non-toxic, safe for anyone to use and dries so quickly, you can make a sculpture in one day.

Grade Levels 7-12

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. To learn about the life and art of Alberto Giacometti, view the [Kultur™ Artists of the 20th Century: Giacometti DVD](#) (69612-1001).
2. Cut styrofoam to make two bases, size 6" x 6".



*This outdoor-safe sculpture was created with aluminum foil and paper towels!**



Materials

Blick® Sculpture Wire, 12-gauge (33401-1014); one 350-ft coil will make up to 40 figures

Styrofoam (60928-1009); share one 6" x 12" block between two students

Aluminum Foil

Paverpol® (61778-0500); one pint will make 4 sculptures

Blick® Scholastic White Bristle Filbert, size 12 (05952-1012); one per student

Blick® Matte Acrylic, Black (00727-2025); share two 8-oz bottles across classroom

Blickrylic® Student Acrylics, Metallic Brass (00711-9076) and Gold (00711-9086); share one pint each across classroom

Paper, recommend: **Blick® Kraft Paper** (11503-1024), **Blick® Tissue Paper** (11308-1493), paper towels, newspaper or recycled paper. ***The example at left was created with brown, commercial-grade paper towels**

OPTIONAL:

Blick® Matte Acrylic Varnish, 8-oz (00727-1035)

Preparation, continued

- For each sculpture, cut two 24" lengths, one 15" length and four 3" lengths of sculpture wire.

Process

- First, create the structure of the figure with wire. Take a 3-ft piece, locate its center and make an inverted triangle for shoulders and torso. Twist it together at the waist and leave the rest for the legs, see (A). Repeat with a 15" piece, making a loop for the head and attaching it to the shoulders. Use the 24" piece to make arms, wrapping it around the shoulders and forming small loops for hands, see (B).

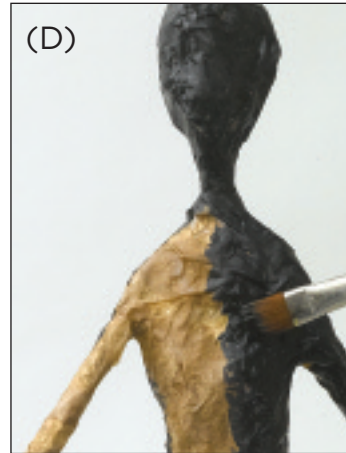


Wire figure is formed on a styrofoam base

Cover wire with aluminum foil to fill out figure shape

- Determine the pose and push ends of wire legs through styrofoam base. Working from underneath, poke the ends of the wires into the base again to secure.
- Wrap aluminum foil around the wire form to build out the figure, see (C). To make an expressive, Giacometti-style figure, exaggerate the length of the limbs and torso. Make large, solid feet. Keep the foil's "crinkle" texture — don't try to smooth it out. Cover the top and bottom of the base as well.

- Pour Paverpol into a plastic bowl. Tear pieces of paper — kraft paper, tissue paper, paper towels, newspaper or other recycled paper — and brush Paverpol onto one side of each piece of paper. Press the paper onto the foil and brush Paverpol onto the other side, taking care to cover the edges. Continue to apply, decoupage-style, until the form is completely covered, including the top and bottom of the base. Brush a final coat of Paverpol over the entire surface and allow the figure to dry overnight.



Apply paper over the foil using Paverpol — paint with matte, black acrylic

Lightly apply metallic acrylic to give the look of a cast bronze sculpture

NOTE: Paverpol may be thinned slightly with a few drops of water in order to make sure it penetrates the paper completely. The final coat should be applied full strength.

- Coat the paper with matte black acrylic paint, see (D). When dry, lightly paint metallic bronze paint over the form, allowing the black paint to remain visible in the recessed areas. Sparingly add highlights of metallic gold paint to the raised areas, see (E).

The sculpture will be hard enough to be placed outdoors within three days; however, it should be varnished for outdoor use. Allow to dry for one week, then apply a thin coat of acrylic varnish. Wait an hour and apply a second coat. For best results, apply up to six coats. Protect the sculpture from rain, snow, or freezing temperatures for one week.

Options

- Paverpol can be used to make all sorts of materials hard and durable — textiles, paper, chamois leather, fiberglass, self-hardening clay and all kinds of natural materials. It will adhere to wood, ceramics, plaster, concrete, stone, tempex (polystyrene foam) and more.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

9-12 Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques and processes they use

Content Standard #5 — Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

5-8 Students analyze contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry

9-12 Students reflect analytically on various interpretations as a means for understanding and evaluating works of visual art