



Figures in Motion: Art Activity

Created by Sondra Hines

Grade Level: 7–12

Essential Understandings: Artworks can communicate movement in many different ways.

Activity Description: Students will explore movement in artworks using Charlie Russell's paintings and sculptures as inspiration and create their own three-dimensional sculptures, translating movement from line drawings to wire armatures to simulated bronze works.

Time: 5 class periods or extended over a longer period

Objectives: Students will

- Analyze the images, focusing on the feeling of movement.
- Explore anatomy and anatomic proportions in animals and humans.
- Apply line and form (elements of art) to create drawings and wire armatures that show figures in motion.
- Create “bronze” sculptures using a wire sculpture as armature for the final piece.

Standards

Art Content Standards

- 1—Students create, perform/exhibit, and respond in the Arts.
- 2—Students apply and describe the concepts, structures, and processes in the Arts.
- 4—Students analyze characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.

Common Core Standards

MMP. 6. Attend to precision.

Materials

Images from the *Montana's Charlie Russell* packet or the [Russell Images PowerPoint](#):

- *When the Land Belonged to God*
- *Bronc to Breakfast*
- *Honey Hunters*
- *Smoking Up*

Projector (or copies for exploring images)

Paper

Pencil

Styrofoam or wood (will need drilled holes), cut to preferred size, to use as bases for sculptures

Drill (if using wooden bases)

Wood glue (if using wooden bases)

12-gauge wire

Wire cutters

Paverpol™ (a product that can be used with a variety of materials—textiles, paper, self-hardening clay, papier mâché, 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. See Additional Resources). (optional)

Acrylic paint: matte black, metallic bronze, and metallic gold (optional)

Paper (craft paper, paper towels, or newspaper) (optional)

(continued)

Pre-Project Procedure

Explore Charlie Russell's paintings and sculptures using the *Montana's Charlie Russell* packet images and information. How does Russell show movement and action? How could he have shown more movement in the selected works? What qualities do you see in the movement (power, grace, energy, alertness, playfulness, etc.)?

Project Procedure

Once students have determined their subject, have them make sketches that show the figure in motion and define how to translate their figure three-dimensionally into a wire structure. Here they will apply concepts of anatomy and proportion to the subject they have chosen. Once they have an acceptable sketch, they will translate that sketch into a three-dimensional wire armature. Make sure students consider the position or pose of their figure.

When the armatures are complete, students should push the ends of the wire legs through their Styrofoam base or into holes drilled into a wooden base. Working from underneath, poke the ends of the wires into the base again to secure.

At this point sculptures can be left as simple wire forms expressing line and movement. Or students can extend the lesson to create a "bronze" sculpture using the steps below.

Step 1: Wrap aluminum foil around the wire form to build out the figure. Cover the top and bottom of the base as well. The aluminum foil can be smoothed as much as possible or left crinkly.

Step 2: 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 to avoid curling. Continue to apply, découpage-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.

Step 3: Once dry, coat the paper with matte black acrylic paint and allow to dry completely.

Step 4: 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.

Critique/Discussion

Have students do an informal critique of their works considering the objectives of the lesson. This can follow the class's regular critique format. Here is a link to an empathic critique technique that can be employed as an alternative: www.bartelart.com/arted/critique08.html.

Vocabulary

Armature: A skeletal framework built as a support on which other material (clay, paper, wax, etc.) is added to create a sculpture.

Proportion: The correct or desirable relationship between parts of a whole; balance or symmetry.

Additional Resources

Dick Blick Art Materials offers a great selection of supplies, good prices, and good customer service: www.dickblick.com/.