

Lighted Wire Sculptures

INTERMEDIATE LESSON PLAN

(suitable for Grade 10 as well)

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Big Ideas

- The visual arts use a unique sensory language for creating and communicating (Grade 9)
- An artist's intention transforms materials into art.(Grade 10)

Competencies

- Demonstrate active engagement and discipline in creating works of art and resolving creative challenges (Grade 9)
- Demonstrate respect for themselves, others, and the audience (Grade 9)
- Reflect on their art-making process and development as artists (Grade 9)
- Explore materials, technologies, processes, and environments... (Grade 9)
- Explore artistic possibilities and take creative risks (Grade 10)
- Demonstrate safe and responsible use of materials, tools, and work space (Grade 10)
- Recognize and evaluate design choices in artistic creations (Grade 10)
- Communicate ideas through art making (Grade 10)

Inspired by Alexander Calder

The idea for this project came from a workshop presented by Finn Modder at School District #73's Young Artists Conference on May 1st, 2024. It is a one day event for selected students from Grades 4-7 throughout our district. I attended the conference as a committee member, and was struck by how reminiscent of Calder's work some of the sculptures were, even though that wasn't the intent of the workshop. I took the concept behind the workshop, adapted it for my Grade 9 and 10 students, and connected it to Alexander Calder's work with kinetic sculptures, mobiles, and stables.

Process

1. Introduce students to Alexander Calder with a slideshow or other resources. Show them how Piet Mondrian and Joan Miro influenced his work. Include some contemporary sculptors who were influenced by Calder.
2. Explain the materials, tools, and processes of this project to your students. 16-24 gauge wire will be formed into free-standing sculptures with pieces of reused theatre lighting gels attached to give them some colour, and then they will be lit with battery-operated fairy lights. *Attaching the coloured acetate pieces is what reminded me of Calder's work, although the goal isn't to make the sculptures look really Calder-esque. Encourage "Choice" and "Voice". Using the gels and the fairy lights will also shift the students away from copying the many examples of wire sculptures that students most likely will find online. By the time they finish adding the colour and weaving the lights through, their projects will be more original.*
3. Give students time to develop a concept for their sculptures. Will it be inspired by an object, figure, or concept? What colour and shape of lighting gels will be best for their idea? Where will the lights be used?
4. Have your students plan out their sculptures in their sketchbooks, visual journals, or on paper. They will need to consider structure and stability, and think about balance, weighting, and attaching. They will need to think about the best sequencing of materials that will work for their design. For example, when will be the best time to

Content

- elements, principles, and image design strategies to create mood and convey ideas (Grade 9)
- contributions of innovative artists from a variety of styles, genres, contexts, and movements (Gr. 9)
- elements, principles, & image design strategies (colours, techniques like elongation or distortion, etc.) (Grade 9)
- materials, techniques, and technologies (wire, gels, pliers, etc.) (Grade 10)
- contributions of traditional, innovative, and inter-cultural artists (Grade 10)

Materials & Tools

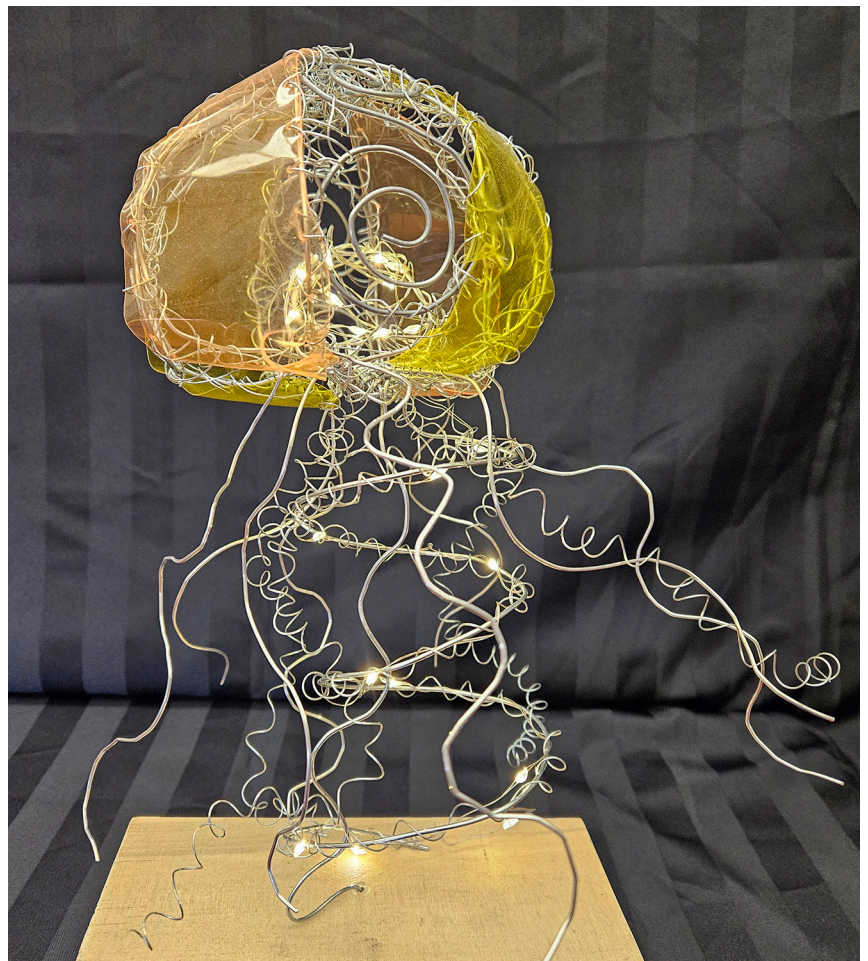
- wire (16-24 gauge)
- fairy lights - available on Amazon for under \$1 each. (I got ones that had 3 lighting settings and included LR44 batteries)
- theatre lighting gels (inexpensive ones are available on Amazon, but a better option is to reuse old ones from your school theatre program if available)
- wood or plexiglass base (optional)
- wire cutters and pliers
- needles or push pins

Preparation

- prepare a slideshow of Calder's kinetic sculptures, mobiles, and stabiles
- include contemporary artists who have taken inspiration from his work, such as Olafur Eliasson, Simone Leigh, Sarah Sze, Žilvinas Kempinas, Ernesto Neto, Carsten Nicolai, Roman Signer, Aki Sasamoto, Monika Sosnowska, and Rirkrit Tiravanija.

attach the lighting gels? Should they poke holes with a needle or pushpin and feed it onto the wire as they bend and shape it, or should they stitch it on with wire after it has been formed? Should the fairy lights be added at the end? Does the sculpture need a base? If so, how will it be attached? Is the design balanced? How will it stay up by itself?

5. Once they have a clear design and a plan of action, distribute the wire and other materials. Have them show you their design plan so you can better determine what gauge of wire they need. Some students will need a sturdy 16-gauge wire for their basic structure, while others might need a finer gauge - it depends on how simple or intricate their design is. Hand out the wire as students are ready for it so you don't end up with a tangled mess of wire or wastage.
6. The students will need to problem-solve and revise their plans as they are working with the wire to ensure that their forms are sturdy, balanced, and free-standing.
7. When they have finished constructing their sculpture, have them complete their Artist Statement to reflect on their process and learning (see last page).



Jellyfish by Makenna B., Grade 10, Westsyde Secondary School

Assessment

Have the students reflect on their learning by writing an Artist Statement.

Using the Proficiency Scale, assess how well they demonstrated the competencies and content:

- engagement/problem-solving
- use of materials, technologies and processes
- how their design choices reflect their concept (“Choice” & “Voice”)
- self-reflection (Artist Statements)

Resources

<https://calder.org/introduction/>
<https://calder.org/archive/all/works/>
<https://www.moma.org/artists/922>



Butterfly by Marisa B., Grade 10, Westsyde Secondary School

Writing an Artist Statement

Use the following flow chart to write about your piece.

