

# Tate Liverpool

## DLA Piper Series This is Sculpture

### Educators' Pack

#### The Display

*DLA Piper Series: This is Sculpture* explores the story of modern and contemporary sculpture, featuring masterpieces from the Tate Collection by artists such as Sir Jacob Epstein, Henry Moore, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Joseph Beuys, Gilbert & George, Cornelia Parker and Sarah Lucas. The display constantly questions the notion of sculpture: this seemingly familiar art form is investigated as one of the most multifaceted forms of contemporary art. Sculpture in as object, installation, assemblage and ready-made is displayed alongside more surprising media, such as painting, video, photography, language and performance. The main body of this display consists of four sections that explore concepts of material, space, human body, and the ready-made, respectively. After twelve months, the latter two sections will change, focusing on the social and linguistic nature of sculpture - to complete this journey of sculptural re-discovery.

This educators' pack is designed to support educators in the planning, execution and following up of a visit to Tate Liverpool. It is intended as an introduction to *DLA Piper Series: This is Sculpture* with a collection of ideas, workshops and points for discussion across the four sections of the exhibition. The activities are suitable for all ages and can be adapted to your groups' needs.

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### 1. Introduction: Sculpture – what is it?

Every civilisation has a history of carving or modelling. Even the earliest known communities would use the basic materials around them to create figurines, idols or ritual objects. Sometimes

the makers of these three-dimensional objects would chose to represent everyday activities or to relate important events from their life.

- Cave dwelling communities would carve figures and motifs into the surrounding rocks
- Other communities would use clay to form figures, moulded in their hands and baked by the sun or in a fire.
- More developed civilisations began to capture human likeness in portrait busts and statues. They became more adept at carving and modelling different materials (for example stone, marble, clay, etc.)
- Sculpture was often used to adorn architecture and masons were employed to carve embellishments on buildings that could be figurative, symbolic or merely decorative (for example gargoyles, caryatids, acanthus leaves, etc.)
- The choice of materials became increasingly important and materials were selected for their durability, monetary worth, or easiness of carving. (for example marble, bronze).
- Patronage played an important part in the history of sculpture. For example, the established church might commission sculpture that was iconic and didactic whereas a private collector might demand a work that reflected personal taste.

### **Exercise**

Compare two sculptures by the Italian sculptor Donatello: St George, 1417 and David, c 1425.

Talk about materials, scale and representation of the subject matter.

How do they differ?

Who were they made for?

Where are they exhibited?

### **Discuss**

Why is the choice of material important in public sculpture?

What materials do you think are suitable? Why?

What materials would not be suitable? Give reasons.

### **Exercise**

Find examples of architectural sculpture in your local area.

Draw or photograph them.

Discuss how they relate to the building.

Do they represent anything or are they purely decorative?

Find different types of architectural sculpture from periods in history – e.g., classical, gothic, baroque.

## **Modern Sculpture**

Sculpture changed dramatically in the modern era when sculptors began to make art for themselves rather than as a commission for someone else. It became more than a means of representing a dignitary, decorating a building or commemorating an event. Although it could

still do these things, sculptors began to push the boundaries at the beginning of the Twentieth Century and began to redefine sculpture itself.

Sculptors began to experiment with new media, to explore the properties of different materials – often allowing material to dictate the form of the object produced.

Sculpture could be a vehicle for expressing an emotion or feelings about a subject rather than merely representing it visually.

Sculpture could be more than a carved or modelled object: –

- it could be constructed
- it could consist of many parts
- it could represent an idea
- it could be made from found objects
- it could be a performance, an action event...
- it could use words, sounds, smells...
- it could use rooms, buildings, landscape...
- it could be the artist
- it could be people
- it could be you!

## THIS IS SCULPTURE!

## 2. Materials

Historically, the materials of choice for sculptors were largely bronze, stone and wood. In the Twentieth Century, however, artists began to explore new resources in a quest to discover what sculpture could be and what it could be made from.

Artists may be influenced by a particular material and its properties in determining the form that a sculpture takes. The versatility of polyurethane made it ideal for casting the intricate plumbing of Sarah Lucas's *The Old In Out* 1998, but, according to the artist, the resin also brings specific aesthetic qualities to the work.

In contrast, Minimalist sculptors such as Donald Judd and Carl Andre chose their materials precisely for their 'non-art' associations, using prefabricated industrial units such as bricks and tiles. Commercially available fluorescent light tubes allowed Dan Flavin to use light as a non-physical material for his works.

The form and context of the artwork may also dictate the material to be used. Sculptures exhibited outdoors need to be sturdy and weather-resistant, for example, and stone, bronze or other durable materials may be preferred for purely practical reasons.

Often, materials are selected for their evocative or sensual power. Barbara Hepworth linked the scent of the woods she worked with to memories of particular places. She also valued materials such as wood and stone for their aesthetic beauty, tactile qualities and natural form, all of which which she exploited in her work.

As the parameters of sculpture continue to expand, so too does the seemingly limitless range of materials available to artists for their work.

### Other materials featured in This is Sculpture:

**Bronze** – Jean Arp, *Pagoda Fruit*, 1949; Henry Moore, *Moon Head* 1964

**Silver** – Cornelia Parker, *Measuring Niagara with a Teaspoon*, 1997

**Steel** – Cesar, *Three Compressions*, 1968; Naum Gabo, *Head No. 2* 1916, enlarged version 1964; David Smith, *Forging IX*, 1955

**Stone** - Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, *Sepulchral Figure* 1913; Eric Gill, *St Sebastian* 1920

**Glass** – Terence Koh, *Untitled (A New World Order Lies in this Golden Age)* 2006

**Paint** - Frank Auerbach, *Small Head of E.O.W.* 1957-8; Salvador Dalí, *Autumnal Cannibalism* 1936; Jasper Johns, *0 through 9*, 1961

**Rubber** - Peter Fischli and David Weiss, *Untitled (Small Root)* 2005

**Wood** - Constantin Brancusi, *Head*, circa 1919-23; Tony Cragg, *Axehead*, 1982

**Slate** - Richard Long, *South Bank Circle*, 1991

**Plaster** - René Magritte, *The Future of Statues*, 1937; **Leather** - Eva Rothschild, *Knock Knock*, 2005

**Clay** - Rebecca Warren, *Versailles*, 2006, Thomas Schütte, *United Enemies*, 1993

**Aluminium** - Rachel Whiteread, *Untitled (Twenty-Four Switches)* 1998;

## Work in Focus

### Dame Barbara Hepworth: *Corinthos*, 1954-5

To view this work please go to

<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=6029&searchid=10477&tabview=work>

Dame Barbara Hepworth based many of her sculptures on forms found in nature. She was often inspired by pebbles, shells, erosion of cliffs by the wind or sea and sometimes the material itself suggested the form that her art should take. She was interested, not only in how a sculpture should look, but how it feels and even how it smells.

Hepworth carved this work from a single piece of scented guarea, a tropical hardwood also called pink mahogany. The wood was sent to her by a friend from a Nigerian plantation, ‘the very largest tree trunk that I have ever been able to procure from anywhere, really monumental in size’. She produced at least 13 sculptures from the trunk and enthused about the ‘most beautiful, hard, lovely warm timber... I was never happier’.

The work was named after the ancient Greek city, Corinthos, though in this case the artist avoided materials associated with Classicism, such as marble, in favour of this more sensuous, aromatic wood, which she felt summarised her experience of visiting Greece more evocatively.

Hepworth tunnelled through the wood in a double spiralling shape. The exterior was then finished with a white silica polish. The wood is a lighter colour towards the top where it has been bleached by the light. Hepworth originally painted the contrasting interior with an ordinary household paint. Tropical wood is prone to cracking when moved to a different climate and there is some evidence of this in *Corinthos*.

**Discuss** your associations with certain materials.

What do they remind you of?

What are they used for?

How do they feel, look, smell or sound.

Do you associate any particular materials with places that you have been to?

**List** as many different materials as you can – man-made and natural.

Collect samples of as many of these materials as you can.

**Make** a sculpture using some of the materials on your list.

You could set a challenge to your group to find the most unusual materials for creating art!

**Discover** how your material was formed or made.

What are its properties?

Does it have any associations (e.g. chemical, mythological, historical, social etc).

What is it used for?

Why have you chosen it for your work?

**Explore** the “Materials” Sculpture Trail in the *DLA Piper Series: This is Sculpture* display at Tate Liverpool.

This looks at ten different materials in the gallery – how many more can you find?

### 3. Space

Space defines sculpture and sculpture can define space. Whereas painters traditionally attempt to create an illusion of three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface, sculptors make work that exists in REAL space, differently than a planar work of art (a two-dimensional painting or drawing). Sculpture shares our space differently than planar works of art on walls. We can walk around sculpture. We can view it in relation to our surroundings and other objects.

In the Twentieth Century, artists began to consider space as an integral part of sculpture.

- By opening up a form, Dame Barbara Hepworth’s *Corinthos* allows space to penetrate the object and we become aware of the object’s interior and exterior.
- Carl Andre’s *144 Magnesium Square* 1969 is laid out on the floor and the visitor is invited to walk over it in order to experience the material and how the tiles define the space above the work.
- By using transparent material in *Construction in Space with Crystalline Centre* 1938–40, Naum Gabo enables you to look through the sculpture
- Gormley’s *Three Ways: Mould, Hole and Passage*, 1981 invites you to think about how a human occupies space.
- By placing his sculpture on the edge of a table, Caro allows it to reach out and occupy space above, around and below it.

### Work in Focus

#### Anthony Caro: Table Piece CCLXVI, 1975

To view this work, please go to:

<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=26935&searchid=10515>

Anthony Caro favoured metal for his abstract sculptures because it liberated him from the figurative associations of traditional materials such as plaster and clay. In his determination to break away from 'encrusted art-like objects', he created works that were free of any dependency on picture plane or plinth, positioning them directly on the gallery floor or – as in this piece – reaching out into the viewer's space from the edge of a table.

*Table Piece CCLXVI* 1975 consists of steel strips that have been drawn into ribbon-like folds, curves and lines. A tension is created between the intractable nature of the metal and the freedom with which it inscribes the surrounding space. This linearity, particularly given the scale of the work, can be connected with the notion of painterly gesture which implies the trace of the artist's own physical movements. By applying a uniform coat of paint, Caro directs attention to the visual configurations of the sculpture rather than to the utilitarian origins of the welded steel.

**Discuss** the differences between space in painting or drawing and space in sculpture.

How do you create an illusion of space?

How can a sculptor make you aware of space?

Can sculpture exist without its surrounding space?

**Make** a sculpture that incorporates space.

You might be inspired by Hepworth, Moore, Gabo, Giacometti or Caro.

**Create** a performance piece which describes space.

How can you define space?

**Mime** a sculpture of your choice and let your class guess which one you are imitating.

Try to think about how you occupy space.

**Write** a poem about what it feels like to be a sculpture.

What is around you?

How big/small are you?

What are you made from?

**Draw** sculptures from different angles.

How do the parts relate to each other?

How does it change as you move around it?

Can you draw the inside?

Can you see what it looks like from above and below?

Have your drawings help you to understand the sculpture and to get to know it?

Can you imagine how the sculptor made it?

Would this sculpture look different if it was placed somewhere else?

## 4. The Figure

Capturing the human form has always been a concern of sculptors and continues to be important to artists in the twenty-first century. This section examines the presentation of the body in sculpture, exploring artists' different approaches to this subject over the last two centuries.

Some of the figures, such as the nudes of Maillol and Thornycroft, were classically inspired, although these artists demonstrated a desire to invest their work with an increased naturalism as

they copied their forms from real-life models. Degas gave his *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* 1880–1, cast c1922, a touch of realism by originally modelling her in wax, with real hair and clothes. Over a hundred years later, Ron Mueck used the modern material of fibreglass to create another life-like adolescent in *Ghost* 1998.

Artists of the past century have turned to different techniques and materials in a quest to discover new means and methods appropriate for describing their experience of the modern age. Baselitz, for example, applied a primitive carving technique with a chainsaw in his monumental *Untitled* 1982–3, using a violated surface to evoke pain and suffering. Many artists use the human figure to express emotion or a psychological state. Koenig's lumpish *The Machine Minders* 1956 conveys the physical and mental effects of social conditioning.

## Work in Focus

### Ron Mueck: *Ghost*, 1998

Australian-born Ron Mueck first came to public attention during the Royal Academy's 1997 *Sensation* exhibition. He has been living in Britain for sixteen years and began his career as a puppet-maker. Following a period making models for films and advertisements, he began to produce figurative sculpture in a hyper-realist style, encouraged by his mother-in-law, artist Paula Rego.

Mueck bases his figures on friends and relatives but does not cast directly from his subjects. He makes models in clay and then translates these into fibreglass and silicone, materials which allow him a high degree of realism. Although his works reproduce every minute detail of the human body, he distorts the scale to produce unexpected, sometimes disconcerting images that often tell us something about the subject's emotional or psychological disposition.

The uncomfortable posture of *Ghost*, an early work, gives an indication of the subject's emotional state. Her enlarged scale and uneasy demeanour as she leans against the gallery wall magnify her adolescent anxiety and painful self-consciousness. At seven feet tall, her exaggerated size reflects the way that many teenagers feel about their changing bodies. Her awkward, almost asexual figure is long and skinny, her feet large and clumsy, her costume unflattering. The pallor of her skin suggests stress, worry or extreme shyness as she avoids eye contact with the viewer. Every feature, from the hairs on her arms to her toenails, is created with life-like detail which puts her almost literally 'under the microscope'.

**Discuss** – the differences between traditional sculptures of the human body and those of the twentieth century (e.g. Michelangelo, Thornycroft, Rodin, Brancusi, Mueck etc) Look at form, material, process and how the figure is portrayed. Discuss performance and body art – don't forget that some artists use real figures for their art!

**Make** – a figurative sculpture using non-traditional materials. You might be inspired by Schütte or Lucas.

**Visit** – Wayne Hemmingsway's display of figures in the DLA Piper Series: This is Sculpture display at Tate Liverpool. How does this room differ to traditional gallery displays? Think up your own ways of exhibiting figurative art – be inventive!

**Imagine** – a meeting between two or more of the sculptures at Tate Liverpool. What would they talk about? Write a short script and act out this strange encounter!

**Explore** – the "Figure" Sculpture Trail at Tate Liverpool. This looks at ten different approaches to representing the human body in sculpture – how many more can you find?

## 5. Everyday Object

This section traces artists' use of the ready-made object and the world of 'things', from the urinal that Marcel Duchamp re-designated as *Fountain* in 1917 to Sarah Lucas's homage to this iconic work, *The Old In Out* 1998. The display explores the artists' elevation of ordinary objects to the status of fine art, along with their reasons for choosing to make sculpture with the resources of everyday life.

With their radical incorporation of everyday materials into their increasingly three-dimensional collages, Picasso and Braque opened the way for Duchamp to dispense with the frame and display the common object itself as art. His intention was to subvert 'the art object' and the relationship between the artist and the museum, though subsequent artists have used everyday materials for many different reasons.

Everyday, 'real-life' objects have a history, whether personal, political or social, which can be appropriated to imbue an artwork with specific meaning, place it in a certain context or evoke particular associations. The viewer's personal connection with objects can be physical, psychological, emotional or sensual, and this further expands the sculptor's parameters of expression and interpretation.

### Work in Focus

#### Man Ray: *Emak Bakia*, 1926

To view this work, please visit

<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=71347&searchid=11996>

*Emak Bakia* originally consisted of the neck of an old cello which Man Ray found in a Paris flea market. Arturo Schwarz, his dealer, recalled, 'The 'cello-neck looked worn and weathered, and Man Ray felt the urge to point humorously to its age: since it has grown old, he gave it a long white beard'. The locks which animate this piece of wood were made from the horsehair of the instrument's bow. Man Ray was attracted to the form of the cello's head; he once said, 'Nature, from the sea-shell to the galaxy, is full of spirals: when I was a young man I was already obsessed by this form; when working as a draughtsman I was fascinated by curves, spirals, parabolas, hyperbolas.'

The title, which means 'leave me alone' in Basque, is the name of a house near Biarritz where Man Ray stayed and made a 'cinipoem' of the same name in 1925. The original version of the object appeared briefly in the film but was subsequently lost. An edition of ten was made in silver in 1970, which Man Ray disliked as he felt that the material made the object appear too precious. The same year he made this second original using wood. Despite Man Ray's status as one of the pioneering figures of interwar art, his objects are not particularly widely known. More famous as a photographer, he sometimes made sculptures in order to take pictures of them, and then discarded or reused the objects in other ways.

**Discuss** your feelings about displaying ordinary objects as art.  
What makes a urinal or a steel bucket art?

**Make** a sculpture using a household item – find something in your home.

Think about how you will display the object.

Will you alter its form at all?

What will you call it?

Write a brief caption to explain how and why you have transformed this object into a work of art.

**Write an** imaginary history for one of the objects on display at Tate Liverpool.

What was it used for?

Where did it live?

Who did it belong to?

How did it come to be a work of art?

**Explore** the “Everyday Object” Sculpture Trail in the *DLA Piper Series: This is Sculpture* display.

This trail looks at ten different items from everyday life that have been used to make sculpture – how many more can you find?

## 6. Processes

In the Twentieth Century, sculptors introduced techniques and methods that had traditionally been associated with craftsmanship rather than with fine art. Eric Gill was one of the pioneers of direct carving in Britain, reintroducing a practice that had previously been employed by stonemasons rather than artists. Thomas Demand resorted to the architectural activity of model-making in order to create *Zeichensaal (Drafting Room)* 1998.

As new materials were introduced to sculpture, artists devised methods for incorporating them into their work. For example, César crushed steel in order to create his *Three Compressions* of 1968. Other artists developed innovative approaches to traditional materials. In his *Spatial Concept* 1949–50, Lucio Fontana punched holes through canvas rather than painting on it, while Christo used the same material for wrapping tin cans in his *Inventaires* 1959–60.

With the introduction of real-life objects as materials (‘the readymade’), the process of creating art became more conceptual than physical. Assembling, stacking or simply displaying materials could be the artist’s only input into the finished artwork.

### Work in Focus

#### Henri Matisse: *Back II*, c.1913-14, cast 1955-6

To view this work please visit

<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=9392&searchid=18044>

Matisse’s *Back* reliefs I–IV were progressively remodelled and refined over a period of twenty years. The original pose, based on a woman leaning on a fence, was reduced in stages until he achieved the massive simplicity of *Back IV*. After completing each version, he had a plaster cast made and used clay to alter parts of the figure and background before casting the new sculpture in bronze.

Casting is a process which involves pouring liquid material, such as plaster or molten metal (in this instance bronze), into a mould. The mould itself is cast from the original work, so as to hold an impression of its form in negative. The mould is then carefully removed and its hollow interior filled to make the positive cast.

Bronze casts are stronger, as well as lighter and more cost-effective, if they are hollow. The lost-wax casting technique is a traditional method of producing metal sculptures. It requires a positive, a core made of a heat-proof material such as plaster, and an outer layer of wax. The wax positive is invested with a mould made of plaster and heated to melt the wax, leaving a narrow cavity between the core and the 'investment'. Molten metal is poured into this cavity. When the metal has solidified, the investment and core are broken away, leaving the bronze sculpture, which is then 'chased' – that is, all signs of the casting process are filed down – and polished.

**Discuss before** reading the information in the gallery, how you think the works were made. Choose a sculpture and write down what materials have been used and how you think the artist has transformed them into a sculpture. How many of these could you make?

**List** as many verbs you can!

Try to think of ways of making art using these words...e.g., throwing, building, cutting, stretching etc.

Collect as many different materials as you can and pick out a verb from your list to use as a process for making that material into a sculpture. (e.g. squashing clay, cutting paper, building straws etc)

**Discover** how objects can be cast into other materials.

You might be able to do this in an art class using plaster, clay, sand trays, baking tins...jelly!

**Explore the** "Processes" Sculpture Trail in the *DLA Piper Series: This is Sculpture* display at Tate Liverpool.

This looks at ten different processes used in making sculpture – how many more can you find?

## Sculpture Glossary

**Armature:** rigid framework made as a support during the construction of a sculpture.

**Bronze:** an alloy of copper and tin used for centuries for casting sculptures due to its hard durable properties.

**Bust:** a sculpture comprising just the head, neck and shoulders of a person

**Carve:** a process of cutting away at a hard material such as stone or wood.

**Cast:** a form created using a mould, into which liquid, eg, molten metal or plaster can be poured to produce the finished work.

**Classical:** a term is loosely applied to all the art of ancient Greece and Rome.

**Contraposto:** Italian term to describe the twist of the body, often used in classical sculpture where the line of the shoulders is opposed to that of the hips, with the weight placed on one foot.

**Directional Movement:** method used by artists to direct the eye of the viewer around or through a sculpture

**Edition:** number of artworks cast or copied from one original.

**Figurative:** representing the body or real life objects.

**Freestanding:** totally self-supportive and not as part of a background plane, the opposite of relief.

**Maquette:** small preparatory model for a finished work.

**Medium:** material used by an artist, i.e. clay, plaster etc.

**Mixed Media:** produced using more than one medium.

**Mould:** casing made around an original form from which a cast can be taken.

**Neo-classic:** revival of classical Greek and Roman art during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

**Patina:** the surface finish or colour of sculpture.

**Plinth:** a base on which a sculpture is displayed.

**Relief:** sculpture carved or constructed from a 2-d background. The degree of projection from the plane is termed, bas, mezzo and alto (low/medium/high).

**Vitrine:** glass case used for displaying objects in a museum or gallery.

## Further Information

<http://www.tate.org.uk/learning/schools/sculptureconstruction2306.shtm>

<http://www.tate.org.uk/schoolsteachers/tatetools/modules/>

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