

PORTFOLIO COPY

BACKGROUND READING FOR ART PRESENTERS

V. Skip Willits (1956-)

Skip Willits is a professional artist who lives in Camanche, Iowa. He works in his studio which is next to the Mississippi River.

When Skip was ten years old, he learned how to weld (connect pieces of metal together with heat) from his father who was a shop welder for forty years. His father taught him how to use many kinds of metals such as steel, cast iron, and aluminum. He attended Western Illinois University in Macomb where he received a degree in art education. He has had many exhibits of his work in Iowa and Illinois.

Willits creates large sculptures that can be found in public places such as Arts Alley in Rock Island, IL, the Davenport Medical Center , and the Clinton YMCA.

The artist likes to use human and animal shapes and make them into straight lines and angles. The sculpture "The Ox" shows us how the artist uses wire to make the simple shape of an animal. "Bronze Angular" is a model for a large sculpture that will be ten feet tall.

From an exhibit that was held at our own Buchanan Center for the Arts in 2002, the Art Presenter Program purchased "The Ox" for first grade and "Bronze Angular" for fourth grade.

******TOP OF DISPLAY CASE SHOULD BE REMOVED DURING THE PRESENTATION. PLEASE REPLACE IT AT THE END OF THE PRESENTATION, MAKING SURE THAT THE VELCRO STRIPS ARE ALIGNED. USE ONLY WARM WATER AND SOAP AND A SOFT CLOTH TO CLEAN THE COVER--NO CHEMICAL CLEANERS.**

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

ART PRESENTER PROGRAM

First Grade

The Ox
V. Skip Willits

1. What is this object?
2. What shapes do you see?
3. How did the artist create these shapes?
4. What parts of the animal are here?
5. What parts of the animal are missing?
6. If you could add a part of the animal to this sculpture, what would it be?

****Slowly turn the sculpture completely around on the turntable so that students can see it from all angles.

7. What kind of lines do you see, curved or straight, or both? What are they made of? Why would the artist want to just show an animal using lines?
8. What color is the sculpture? What is its texture (how does it feel)?
9. Raise your hand if you have ever seen an ox? (Show a picture of one) If you have seen one, where was it? Show how big it was?
10. Do you think this sculpture is the mom, dad, baby, big brother, big sister?
11. What mood do you think the animal is in? What makes you think that?
12. If you were going to sculpt an animal, what one would you choose? What materials do you think you might use?

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EXTENDED ACTIVITIES TO ACCOMPANY

The Ox

V. Skip Willits First Grade

1. Try to find some soft, bendable wire (check with the BCA supply closet). Have students shape the wire into three-dimensional animals. Long pipe cleaners would also work. If possible, students should try to get at least one part of their creation to move.
2. Have students create line drawings of animals, using the fewest possible lines. Try to show their animal in motion.
3. Using yarn scraps or string, have students draw a simple animal shape on white paper. Trace the outline with Elmer's glue. After waiting a few moments to allow the glue to get "tacky", press the yarn into the outline. This project will have to dry and be sent home the next day. If the teacher is willing to follow up on this activity, the children may want to color in the animals, providing stripes, spots, or other details--this would have to be done the following day after the glue is dry.