

BACKGROUND READING FOR PRESENTERS

V. Skip Willits – Bronze Angular

Skip Willits is a professional artist who lives in Camanche, Iowa. He works in his studio in Camanche, which is next to the Mississippi River. He has been making sculptures for many years.

When he was 10 years old, Mr. Willits learned how to weld (or connect pieces of metal together with heat) from his father who worked in a factory welding motors. His father taught him how to use many kinds of metals such as steel, cast iron, and aluminum. He attended Western Illinois University where he received a degree in art education in 1978. He has had many exhibits of his work in Iowa and Illinois.

Mr. Willits creates large sculptures that can be found in public places such as Rock Island, IL, Davenport, IA, and Clinton, IA.

The artist likes to use human and animal shapes and make them into straight lines and angles. The sculpture “The Ox” shows how the artist uses wire to make the simple shape of an animal. “Bronze Angular” is a model for a large sculpture that is 10 feet tall.

Mr. Willits was one of three artists who exhibited art works at the Buchanan Center for the Arts in August, 2002. The Art Presenter Program purchased two of his sculptures from this exhibit, “The Ox” (for 1st Grade) and “Bronze Angular” (for 4th Grade.)

See the Artist’s statement - attached

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

V. Skip Willits – Bronze Angular

1. What does this sculpture look like to you?
2. Why do you think it is called “Bronze Angular?”
3. Does it look like it is in motion or stationary?
Is it balanced?
4. Could it exist without welding?
5. Does it express mood? What kind?
How would sharp angles vs dull angles change the mood?
6. What is the biggest sculpture you have seen?
What might be the biggest sculpture in the U.S.? (Mt. Rushmore)
What might be the biggest sculpture in the world?
7. Could a building be considered a sculpture?
8. Do you like this sculpture? Why or why not.
9. Mr. Willits is still living and lives close to us. Would you like to meet him some day?
What would you tell him about this sculpture?

SUGGESTED EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

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1. Abstract Sculptures

Materials: wire, foil, pipe cleaners, Styrofoam packing materials, etc. Whatever scrounge materials you can find that could be incorporated into a sculpture.

Let students explore making a sculpture using various materials. Remind them that it doesn't have to "look real." Use imaginations!

2. Paper Sculptures

Materials: paper (heavier weight such as tagboard or construction paper works best), scissors, glue

Have students cut out various shape – triangles, squares, circles, rectangles. Fold and glue together to make paper sculptures.