

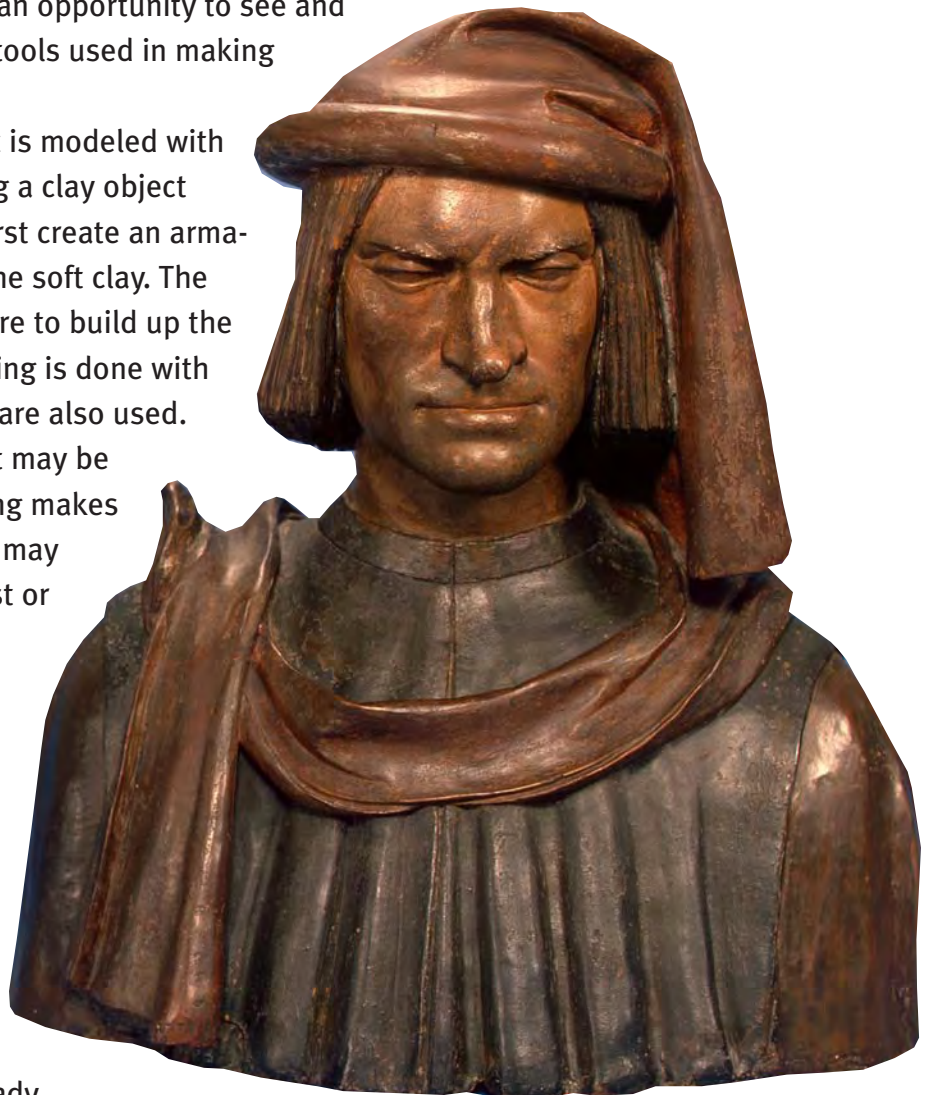
The Sculptor

SELECTED WORKS OF ART FROM THE TOUR

Sculpture Techniques Sculpture is the art of creating objects in three dimensions. The sculptor's materials are varied, but the most frequently used are clay, stone, wood, and metal. There will be a stop during your tour at the Art Cart, where students will have an opportunity to see and handle some of the materials and tools used in making statues.

Clay is a soft, moist earth that is modeled with the hands. If the sculptor is making a clay object of any appreciable size, he must first create an armature—a frame or support to hold the soft clay. The artist then adds clay to the armature to build up the form. Although much of the modeling is done with the hands, wooden and wire tools are also used. Once the sculpture is completed, it may be fired in a kiln, a very hot oven. Firing makes a clay work durable. Unbaked clay may either dry and crumble back to dust or become soggy and turn into mud. Baked clay or sculptural pottery is known by the Italian term *terra cotta* (*terra* means “earth”, *cotta* means “baked”).

Hard materials such as stone and wood are carved—a process of cutting away from the original block. Stone is chipped with a chisel that the sculptor strikes with a mallet. When the artist is ready to smooth the stone, he uses a type of file called a rasp. The final smoothing, however, is done first with pumice, a lightweight volcanic material, and then with very fine sand, which acts as a polishing powder.



The David of Casa Martelli

c. 1461-1479

by Bernardo or Antonio Rossellino
(Florentine, 1409–1464 and 1427–1479)

■ According to the Bible story, David was a young shepherd who brought food to his brothers in the Hebrew army when they were fighting the Philistines. Everyone was afraid of the enemy's giant soldier, Goliath. David put a stone in his slingshot (used to keep wolves away from his sheep), hit the giant in the forehead, and killed him. The statue depicts the end of the tale after David had cut off Goliath's head. It was made for the Martelli home in Florence ("casa" is the Italian word for house) and stood there for nearly 500 years.

This statue looks unfinished. Large areas of the hard marble have a smooth polish, while other surfaces still show the marks of the sculptors' chisels. Actually, it was first carved and finished by either Bernardo or Antonio Rossellino, brothers in a family of sculptors. Later owners of the statue seem to have decided that they wanted a slightly different design and asked another artist to recut the marble. That unknown sculptor may have tried to create the rough, unfinished look that had come to be appreciated at that time in the sculpture of Michelangelo.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Behind David's slender legs is a chunk of marble that resembles a tree trunk. Why didn't the sculptors cut away that stone?
- 2 If you were an artist, how would you feel if you heard that the owners of one of your own creations had hired another artist to revise it?
- 3 If you could portray a person of your choice in a sculpture, whom would you choose? Why?

Lorenzo de' Medici

1478/1521

(cover)

Florentine 15th or 16th Century, probably after a model by Andrea del Verrocchio and Orsino Benintendi

■ Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–1492) grew up in a powerful family of Florence, the greatest city-state in Renaissance Italy. On April 26, 1478, while attending mass, Lorenzo survived an assassination attempt, staged by the rival Pazzi clan, in which his brother was killed. By triumphing over adversity, Lorenzo's power increased and he became the unofficial ruler of the city. The Medici household overflowed with scholars, and many important literary works were produced with Lorenzo's support. He also patronized architects, sculptors, and painters. For his strong political leadership and enthusiastic patronage of the arts, he was known as Lorenzo the Magnificent.

Although the identity of the Florentine sculptor who made this portrait bust is unknown, the available evidence suggests that it was modeled after a series of life-size wax portrait effigies of Lorenzo made and placed in Florentine churches shortly after the assassination attempt. Orsino Benintendi, a wax-sculpture specialist, and Andrea del Verrocchio, a highly celebrated painter, sculptor, and goldsmith, collaborated on the wax sculptures. If this bust of Lorenzo was based on the wax portraits, the sculptor apparently departed in important ways from his model. The bust, made in terra cotta, a far more permanent medium than wax, exaggerates the size of Lorenzo's features. The scale of the bust, in combination with features such as furrowed brow and set jaw, creates an imposing, monumental presence. Lorenzo is transformed into a hero, whose legend will long outlive the man.

QUESTIONS

- 1 From what this bust tells us about his personality, how do you think Lorenzo treated the people who tried to murder him? Gently or harshly? Why?
- 2 Use your imagination. What might Lorenzo have looked like in a full-length image?
- 3 Suppose the assassination attempt had frightened Lorenzo instead of reinforcing his determination? How might this have changed his own life and that of the citizens of Florence?

Mercury

c. 1780/c. 1850

after Giovanni Bologna

(pronounced: Jo-vahn-nee Bo-lohn-ya)

■ Mythology tells us that Mercury served as a messenger for the gods on Mount Olympus. On some of his many journeys he delivered the infant Dionysus to the nymph at Nysa, he accompanied Hercules on his descent to the underworld, and he discovered Ares' prison when he had been captured by the sons of Poseidon. Mercury was also the god of travelers, his image often appearing at crossroads to guide individuals on their way.

Here the artist shows Mercury wearing wings on his ankles and helmet and carrying a special herald's staff called a caduceus (ka-dew-see-us). A great deal of planning went into the sculpture before it was finished. First it was fashioned in wax or clay; then a mold of the figure was made around a clay core and filled with molten (or melted) liquid bronze. Finally, after the statue cooled and hardened, it was polished and coated with lacquer. Mercury is perfectly balanced, with his arms in the air and his leg stretched out behind. His twisting pose invites us to circle around him and see the many views that change as we move. The only thing that seems to support him is a little puff of air blown by a baby wind god at the base of the statue.

QUESTIONS

- 1 The two snakes twisting around Mercury's staff stand for peacefulness and healing (long ago snake venom was used for medicine). Where do we see this symbol in our lives today?
- 2 When a figure like Mercury is made of a single material and not painted, what makes certain parts seem lighter and darker?
- 3 Suppose you, like Mercury, belonged to a fantasy world. What place mentioned in legends would you like to explore?

Lever No. 3

1989

by Martin Puryear

(American, born 1941)

■ Martin Puryear's sculpture *Lever No. 3* is an abstract work of art. The title associates the lyrical, sweeping form with a tool we all know well. However, this is not a realistic copy of a readily identifiable object. Instead, with its humped base and long, curving lines, the work makes us think equally of some unusual animal or form from nature. It is enticing, intriguing—and very hard not to touch! (But please, don't touch!)

Lever No. 3 is not made of bronze or marble or any of the other fine materials often employed for sculpture. It is made of wood, and if you look carefully you can see the layers of pine boards that were cut, laminated together, and planed smooth. The artist applied black paint and then rubbed it down so that the grain of the wood shows through. The slightly irregular surface, which bears the marks of its making, seems ancient, almost mysterious. We sense a contrast between the worked surface and the elegant form of the sculpture. As Puryear said, "The strongest work for me embodies contradiction, which allows for emotional tension and the ability to contain opposed ideas."

Martin Puryear grew up right here in the Washington area. After graduating from the Catholic University of America, he spent time in the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, which gave him an opportunity to see firsthand the tradition of wood carving in his own African-American heritage. Thereafter, he studied wooden construction techniques in both Sweden and Japan before starting to make his own sculpture. Those of us who live nearby have a unique opportunity to view other examples of Puryear's work around the city as well as to wait for new pieces he may design as his career progresses.

QUESTIONS

- 1 One element an artist has to consider is balance. How did Puryear achieve it in this sculpture?
- 2 What is a completely different title that would also describe this work of art?
- 3 How would *Lever No. 3* be different if it had been made

Information

TRANSPORTATION

Metro stops are Judiciary Square (red line), Navy Memorial/Archives (yellow/green line), and Smithsonian (orange/blue line).

Metered street parking is available along the Mall for cars and vans. Buses may let students off at the entrance noted on your confirmation sheet. Parking for buses is allowed on Independence Avenue next to the Washington Monument.

Please check your school tour confirmation letter for the location where your tour will begin. If you are unable to keep this appointment, notify the Tour Scheduler at 202.842.6249 as soon as possible.

LUNCH FACILITIES

Groups may not bring sack lunches. Please note this change in policy.

There are no special lunch facilities for school groups. Groups may purchase their lunches from the full-service cafeteria. Group meal plans can be arranged by calling 202.216.2480.

Restrooms are located by the cafeteria and near main entrances of the Gallery.

WHAT TO BRING

Hand-held cameras, pencils, and pads are allowed in the permanent collection areas, but not in special exhibitions. The use of a tripod, easel, or ink and chalk

drawing materials is prohibited without special advance permission. Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering the Gallery. Visitors may not wear backpacks in the galleries; backpacks must be checked or carried by hand. We recommend that students leave their backpacks at school or on the bus to prevent entry delays. For further information on museum visitor policies, please see: <http://www.nga.gov/ginfo/policies.htm>

MUSEUM PUBLICATIONS AND REPRODUCTIONS

Postcards are available in the museum shops for 50 cents each; 11 x 14-inch reproductions are \$5.00 each. Museum shops are located in the East Building Concourse (next to the cafeteria), and on the ground floor of the West Building between the 4th and 6th Street entrances.

ACCESSIBILITY

The 6th Street entrance to the West Building at Constitution Avenue and the 4th Street entrance to the East Building each have ramps to accommodate visitors in wheelchairs. The 6th Street entrance may be used as a drop-off and pick-up location. Please inform your docents prior to your tour of any special needs for your students.

DISCOUNT POLICY AND ORDERING INFORMATION

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