



## COLLECTION OVERVIEW

The Donald J. Hall Sculpture Park stretches over 22 acres of meandering, tree-lined pathways and wide-open green spaces. Established in 1986 with a collection of monumental bronzes by British artist Henry Moore, today the Sculpture Park is home to more than 30 works by leading artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, including Magdalena Abakanowicz, Alexander Calder, Robert Morris, and Andy Goldsworthy.

Students who visit the Sculpture Park will encounter works that represent the diversity of modern and contemporary sculpture, ranging from playful to somber, abstract to realistic, and organic to geometric. They will also have an opportunity to examine the sites chosen for these works, considering the ways that outdoor sculptures respond to and are affected by their environment.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through the activities outlined in this guide:

- Students will explore the diverse forms that modern and contemporary sculpture can take.
- Students will recognize that modern and contemporary sculpture can challenge traditional notions of what sculpture is.
- Students will consider the choices an artist makes when creating a sculpture that will be placed outdoors.
- Students will design original site-specific sculptures.

## USING THIS GUIDE

This guide can be used to supplement a class visit to the Donald J. Hall Sculpture Park or to support classroom study using the museum's online collection. To view images and labels for the works referenced in the guide, visit the Sculpture Park collection online at [art.nelson-atkins.org/mycollections/6394/donald-j-hall-sculpture-park](https://art.nelson-atkins.org/mycollections/6394/donald-j-hall-sculpture-park).

Inside this guide you will find activity ideas, discussion questions, and suggested resources that can be used before, during, and after a visit to or study of the Sculpture Park. During each of those stages, students will be asked to consider the following themes related to outdoor sculpture:

### Challenging Conventions

What is a sculpture, and how does it interact with the viewer and with its environment? Explore how many modern and contemporary artists are answering these questions in new ways.

### Materials Matter

What must an artist consider when choosing materials for an outdoor sculpture? Learn how both form and function factor in to this decision.

### The Design Process

How does an artist develop an idea for a sculpture from initial concept to finished piece? Compare approaches used by different sculptors.

### Sculpture + Site

What goes into designing a sculpture for a specific site? Examine the relationship between a site-specific work of art and its intended location.

Interested in arranging a docent-led tour of the Sculpture Park for your students? Find availability and scheduling instructions at [nelson-atkins.org/tours](https://nelson-atkins.org/tours).

## THE DONALD J. HALL SCULPTURE PARK

The FREE 22-acre Sculpture Park is home to the nation's largest collection of monumental bronze sculptures. The park is open year-round, dawn to dusk.



## BEFORE YOUR VISIT

### Challenging Conventions

As a class, make a mind map or use another brainstorming tool to gather words or concepts that come to mind when students think about sculpture. For example, what are sculptures typically made of? Where can they be found? What forms do they take?

Then, share this definition of ‘sculpture’ taken from the Oxford Advanced American Dictionary:

***Sculpture:*** *a work of art that is a solid figure or object made by carving or shaping wood, stone, clay, or metal.*

Discuss: Does that definition match the concepts you came up with as a class? Can students think of any sculptures they’ve seen that *don’t* seem to align with that definition? Students should be on the lookout for such convention-defying sculptures in the Sculpture Park!

### Materials Matter

Discuss the environmental conditions that an outdoor sculpture in Kansas City would need to endure. What kinds of materials would be suited to that purpose? What other considerations might be important to a sculptor when choosing a material?

### The Design Process

Artists follow a variety of processes and approaches when creating sculptures. Some artists like to make detailed plans in advance, so that the final sculpture comes together according to a specific design. Others take a more instinctive approach, working out the design as they go. Watch the short videos below, and discuss each artist’s process. Where would you place each of them on a scale ranging from most planned to most spontaneous?

- **Jan Hendrix** interview with Bill Zahner: [azahner.com/creations/art](http://azahner.com/creations/art)
- **Henry Moore** documentary: [youtu.be/7PfKuB7z-7c?si=uvcbbbb8atMBSI7mb&t=958](https://youtu.be/7PfKuB7z-7c?si=uvcbbbb8atMBSI7mb&t=958) (from the 16-minute mark to the 20-minute mark)
- **Ursula von Rydingsvard** studio visit: [art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s4/ursula-von-rydingsvard-in-ecology-segment](http://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s4/ursula-von-rydingsvard-in-ecology-segment) (to the 7-minute mark)
- **Mark di Suvero** conversation with Lowell McKegney: [vimeo.com/7578856](https://vimeo.com/7578856)

Encourage students to look for works by these artists in the Sculpture Park.

### Sculpture + Site

Sculpture isn’t found solely at an art museum—we can see it in the world around us, too. Have students spend a few days looking for sculptures in their community. They can keep a field journal noting:

- A description and/or sketch of each sculpture they see
- The material it’s made from
- Details about its location—what sights, sounds, and activities do they notice in the area around it?

## IN THE SCULPTURE PARK

### Challenging Conventions

View Andy Goldsworthy's *Walking Wall* (2019) and Robert Morris's *Glass Labyrinth* (2013) with students. Discuss:

- In what ways do these two works of art match your expectations for what a sculpture is, how it looks, and how people interact with it?
- How does each of these works differ from a typical sculpture?
- Would you still consider these works to be sculptures? Why or why not?

### Materials Matter

Have students keep a log of the different materials they see in the Sculpture Park. For each one, they can note:

- The material's appearance (Is it rough or smooth? Shiny or dull? Natural or man-made?)
- Any signs of wear, dirt, or damage to the material from being outdoors
- Clues about how the artist shaped or worked with the material to create the sculpture (Can they see bolts, carving marks, etc.?)
- How might the sculpture look different if the artist had chosen a different material?

### The Design Process

Take a look at the *Shuttlecocks* designed by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, and share the sketches and models the artists made while developing their ideas (viewable at [art.nelson-atkins.org/mycollections/6395/shuttlecocks](https://art.nelson-atkins.org/mycollections/6395/shuttlecocks)). Working in pairs or small groups, students can each choose one sketch or model and compare it to the final sculptures, considering:

- How are the final *Shuttlecocks* similar to and different from your chosen sketch or model?
- What might the sketch or model tell you about the artists' design process?
- Why do you think these artists ultimately made the choices they did in the final works?

### Sculpture + Site

Some of the sculptures in the Sculpture Park are *site-specific*—meaning they were made specifically for the locations they are in now—while others were placed according to the needs and objectives of the museum. Invite students to choose one work in the Sculpture Park and consider the following questions related to its location:

- Is this sculpture placed near other works that are similar to it? Or does it stand off on its own?
- Is the sculpture placed in a spot where it is noticeable from a distance? Or is it more tucked away?
- Why do you think this sculpture was placed in this spot?
- How might your experience of the sculpture be different if it were located elsewhere?

Examples of site-specific works: Andy Goldsworthy, *Walking Wall* (2019), Robert Morris, *Glass Labyrinth* (2013), Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, *Shuttlecocks* (1994), Walter De Maria, *One Sun/34 Moons* (2002).

## AFTER YOUR VISIT

After spending some time exploring the works in the Donald J. Hall Sculpture Park, challenge students to design their own outdoor sculptures using what they have learned. Students can consider each of the elements below in creating their original designs.

### Challenging Conventions

Can students think of a way to make their sculptures defy the standard expectations of a sculpture? For example, can they add an element of movement, design it to change over time, or make it interactive in some way?

### Materials Matter

Have students come up with two possible materials that could be used to create their outdoor sculptures. Then, ask them to decide which material they would ultimately choose and explain the reasons for their choice.

### The Design Process

Encourage students to try both an intuitive approach to designing their sculptures and a more methodical approach. For intuitive design, they can use toothpicks and gummy candies to build a sculpture model without any forethought—simply adding each new element one by one. They can also try working through a series of sketches and scale models to create and refine a plan for their sculpture. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?

### Sculpture + Site

Challenge students to consider the relationship between their sculpture and the site where it will be placed. Once they decide on a location, encourage them to think about ways to “fit” their sculpture to that site—both in terms of the actual terrain, and in terms of what else will be going on around the sculpture. What is important about that place, and how could that be reflected in the sculpture itself? How will their sculpture enhance or otherwise affect peoples’ experience in that place?

## SUGGESTED RESOURCES

### Books

*A Labyrinth for the Park: Celebrating the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Donald J. Hall Sculpture Park*, 2014. Available in the ERC.

*Modern Sculpture at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art: An Anniversary Celebration*, 1999. Available in the ERC.



### Web

*Outdoor Sculpture* video, Smithsonian American Art Museum, [americanart.si.edu/videos/outdoor-sculpture-165867](http://americanart.si.edu/videos/outdoor-sculpture-165867)

*The Oversized Pop Art of Claes Oldenburg* segment, CBS Sunday Morning, [youtube.com/watch?v=ZrknTntFPdE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrknTntFPdE)

### Interactive

*Sculpture Art Connection Kit*, available in the ERC.



## GLOSSARY

<b>Abstraction</b>	Art that is made up of forms that have been simplified or stylized until they no longer resemble the objects they are based on, or forms that have no basis in external reality
<b>Additive</b>	A sculptural technique in which materials are built up or added to create a form
<b>Bronze</b>	A metal alloy traditionally composed of copper and tin
<b>Casting</b>	The process of making a sculpture by pouring liquid material into a mold
<b>Dynamic</b>	Relating to energy or to objects in motion
<b>Fiberglass</b>	A common type of reinforced plastic made using glass fibers
<b>Geometric</b>	Characterized by regular lines and angles
<b>In-the-round</b>	Sculpture that the viewer can access from all sides
<b>Maquette</b>	A small model in wax or clay that is made as a preliminary sketch
<b>Material</b>	The substance out of which a thing is or can be made
<b>Natural</b>	The form of an object which has not been altered or manipulated, but is in its original form found in nature
<b>Organic</b>	Taking the shape of objects found in nature, such as plants, animals, or landforms
<b>Patina</b>	A surface coating, usually greenish, which forms naturally on copper, bronze and other metals; often considered an aesthetic enhancement
<b>Realism</b>	Art that aims to reproduce reality exactly
<b>Relief sculpture</b>	Sculpted forms that project from a flat background, e.g. a coin
<b>Scale</b>	The size of one object in relation to other objects
<b>Site-specific</b>	Art that is designed for a specific location
<b>Stainless Steel</b>	A corrosion-resistant steel that has many domestic and industrial uses
<b>Subtractive</b>	A sculptural technique in which unwanted parts are carved or cut away
<b>Three-dimensional</b>	Having or appearing to have measurements that extend into the three dimensions of width, height, and depth

## EDUCATOR RESOURCE CENTER

This guide was produced by the Educator Resource Center (ERC) at the Nelson-Atkins. The ERC is available to support educators through a variety of programs and resources. If you are interested in learning more about ways to link museum works with classroom learning, we invite you to connect with the ERC to access:

- Curriculum consultations
- Circulating resources
- Professional development workshops

Please visit [nelson-atkins.org/educators/resources](https://nelson-atkins.org/educators/resources) for more information.



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