

Self-Portrait Sculpture

by Sharon Gorberg

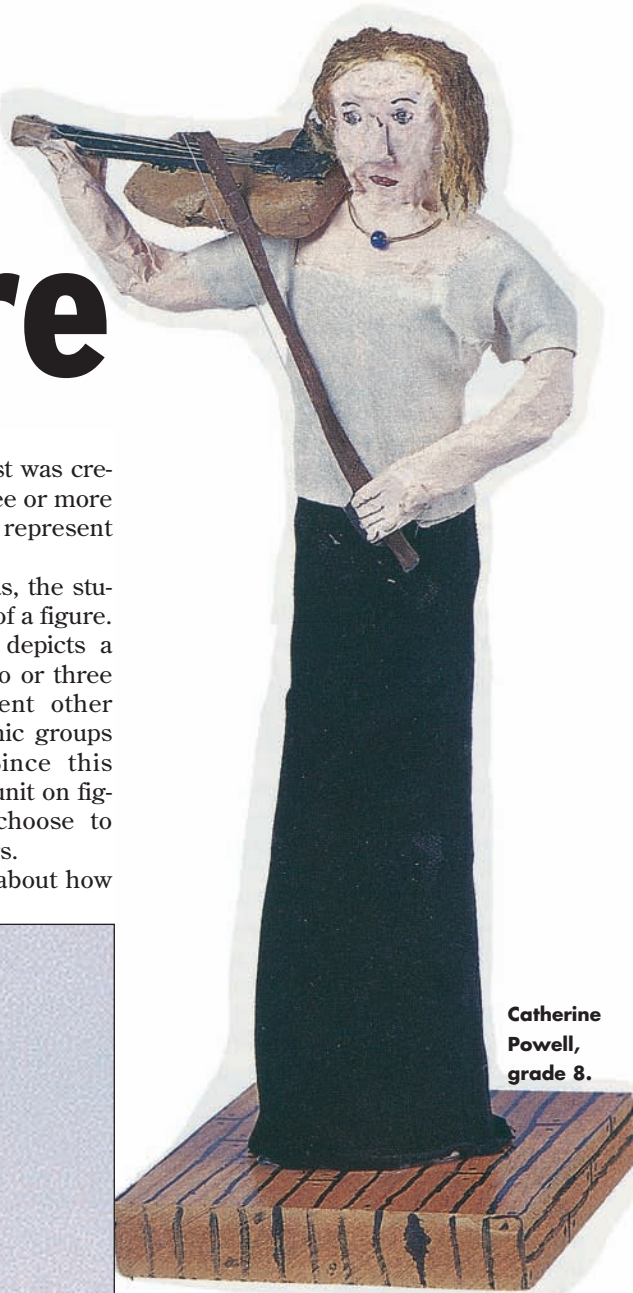
This self-portrait sculpture project developed out of a desire to create a three-dimensional assignment that the eighth-grade girls could use to explore issues of personal identity. Discussions about cultural, racial and religious identity led to conversations about the roles we play in the various areas of our lives.

Family relationships, personal talents, interests and ambitions became central to what the girls wanted to say about themselves. We discussed how these themes could be visually represented using color, texture and shape.

From these discussions a list was created and the girls chose three or more aspects of themselves to represent through their sculpture.

After clarifying their ideas, the students begin with a drawing of a figure. Many choose a pose that depicts a favorite activity, and add two or three other images that represent other interests or cultural or ethnic groups to which they belong. Since this assignment follows a short unit on figure drawing, some girls choose to work from previous drawings.

An initial demonstration about how



Catherine Powell, grade 8.



Simone Burke, grade 8.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will...

- explore issues of personal identity.
- gain an understanding of how to create a three-dimensional figure using wire, papier-mâché and mixed media.
- gain an understanding of how art media can be used as a vehicle for self-expression and to communicate specific ideas.



Yijing Yang, grade 8.

to manipulate, form and attach two pieces of wire was all that was needed to make these figures come alive. We use 16-gauge aluminum wire, as it is easy to bend and produces a light sculpture. Once the pose is completed, the armature is stuffed or wrapped with small pieces of newspaper held in place with masking tape.

Although in past years we have used a variety of materials to build up the figure, old fashioned papier-mâché has proven to be the most successful. We use wallpaper paste mixed with water until it is the consistency of pudding.

When the sculptures are dry, the girls use acrylic paint, along with a variety of mixed media such as yarn and fabric, to complete the pieces. Polymer clay is the perfect media to add details such



Emily Ma, grade 8.

SELF-PORTRAIT SCULPTURE

The assignment is to create a representation of yourself in the form of a figure sculpture. Your personal identity, or what makes you "you," is made up of many things, such as your cultural background and the roles you play in life.

1. How many cultures or groups do you belong to?

ethnic	religious
age	family
gender	other
racial	

2. Think about the variety of roles you play:

friend	musician
daughter	writer
sibling	actor
student	dancer
teammate	other
artist	

3. Choose one or more words from the "culture" list, and one or more words from the "roles" list that most describe who you are.

4. Begin with a drawing of a figure. Choose a pose that reflects something about you, perhaps engaging in an activity you enjoy doing. Use color, texture and shape to translate your idea into a visual expression of who you are.

This assignment sheet helped start the project.

as sports equipment, backpacks and books. The maintenance department supplied scrap wood for bases.

This assignment has become a favorite with our eighth-graders. The figures in their mini environments are a source of great pride to the girls and are a charming visual statement that reveals the many sides that make up who they are. ■

Sharon Gorberg teaches art at Winsor School in Boston, Mass.

MATERIALS

- 16-gauge aluminum wire
- small wire cutters*
- newspaper
- wallpaper paste
- polymer clay
- acrylic paint
- yarn and fabric

*Safety Tip: Demonstrate proper use of wire cutters and caution students to be careful when manipulating the wire into armatures. The ends of the wire are very sharp!