



Soap Carving

Sculpture
Upper KS2 and KS3

Outcomes

Pupils will...

- Be introduced to a female, contemporary artist.
- Create a 3D art piece.
- Experiment with a new material, using a variety of tools.

Materials

- Soap bars (one per person)
- Wooden clay tools
- Metal spoons
- Old paintbrushes
- Paper
- Pencils

Art curriculum links

KS2: Improves mastery of art and design techniques, including sculpture with a range of materials.

KS2: Introduce to great artists in history.

KS3: Increase proficiency in the handling of different materials.

KS3: Learn about the history of art styles and major movements up to the present day.

Cross-curriculum links

- Neolithic art (history)

Artists to look at

- Solange Pessoa
- Barbara Hepworth
- Mária Bartusová

Workshop development and image credit:
Paul Thompson, Artist Educator

Instructions and adaptations

01. Pupils to spend time sketching out some ideas for their sculpture.

You can use the 'Guidance for Pupils' resource on the next page to guide your delivery if you prefer.

- **If you are looking at a particular artist, you might want to share some images of their work.**
- **If you have a particular theme you can discuss this with the class to get them thinking about how they might translate the theme into sculpture.**

02. When designs are finalised, demonstrate the sculpting technique to the pupils.

Use a pencil or tool to roughly sketch out the design onto the soap.

Use wooden clay tools to gently carve out the designs – emphasise that they need to shave layers off to create deeper marks, the soap may break if they dig too deeply.

Show the different kind of marks you can make using the different tools.

- **For older pupils, you can introduce sharper tools for more definition, for example metal wax carving tools work well.**

03. Instruct pupils to look at their sketches and transfer designs lightly to their soap bars.

Offer a soap bar (per table) for pupils to test out different tools and marks.

Pupils to carve their designs into their soap bar until they are satisfied.

04. Bring the class back together at the end to review their stones.

Which artists or ideas influenced your initial designs?

Did you have a favourite tool to use? Why? Is there a tool you didn't like using? Why?

How did you feel whilst sculpting your designs into the material?

- **Option to get the pupils to 'curate' their stones into an installation – lay down a sheet of paper or take them outside and position the stones - inspired by Solange Pessoa.**

Guidance for pupils

01. Choose your story.
What do you want your stone to say?

Here are some ideas:

- The Moment Stone - Carve shapes showing a special moment | memory.
- The Dream Stone - Carve symbols showing your future hopes and dreams.
- The Environment Stone - Sculpt things from nature that are important to you.
- The Shape Stone - Create shapes in your stone that you like and enjoy.

02. Feel the stone

- Close your eyes and hold your soap in your hands.
- Think about how it feels.
- What shape do you want it to be?

03. Plan your design

- Keep it simple! Big shapes and deep lines work best.

04. Carving and shaping

- Use a tool to lightly mark your ideas and shapes onto the soap.
- Use your tools to shave away at the soap until you have the shape you want.
- Start to add details, marks and shapes, creating those memories.

05. The big reveal

- Gently rub at any bumps with your fingers, cloth or sandpaper to smooth the soap.
- Remember that this is a “soft” stone. Treat it like a treasure!

Health and safety

01. Respect.
Treat the materials and the tools with care and thought.
02. Sit down.
Never carve when standing or moving around.
03. Keep it low.
Always carve on the table, never in your lap and make sure you are not too close to anyone else.
04. Away from you.
Move your tool away from your body and your “holding hand.”
The hand holding the soap must be behind the tool being used.
05. Keep clean and tidy up.
Soap carving can be messy so stop at times and tidy up around you.
Wearing an apron is always a good idea.
06. Small and gentle.
Smaller carvings and markings done gently are best.

Glossary

Buffing

To smooth the surface of the sculpture.

Carving

Using tools to remove material.

In the round (Freestanding)

A sculpture that is fully three-dimensional and meant to be viewed from all sides.

Incising (Detailing)

Adding fine lines, textures, or features to the surface of the sculpture using smaller tools.

Negative space

The empty area around, between or through an object.

Positive space

The actual solid form of your sculpture.

Roughing out

Removing large chunks of soap to create an approximate.

Score | Etch

Lightly marking guidelines or outlines onto the surface.

Shaving | Scraping

Removing a very thin layer of soap.

Shavings

The bits of soap that are left over after carving.

Subtractive sculpting

Removal of material from a larger object to create the final sculpture.

Whittling | Slicing

To take thin, shallow slices rather than deep cuts.

