



Aluminum Foil Sculptures

Summary Description: Children explore the sculptural possibilities of working with aluminum foil.

Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality: Creative Arts – 1. Early Learning Expectation: Visual Arts. Children show how they feel, what they think, and what they are learning through experiences in the visual arts.

HighScope Curriculum content: KDI 40. Art.

Also: KDI 35. Spatial awareness

HighScope COR Advantage items: X. Art.

Also: T. Geometry: Shapes and spatial awareness

Time of day: Small-group time

Materials:

- Aluminum foil (two sheets per child and teacher to start with; extra sheets as needed)
- Supplementary materials, such as ribbon and pipe cleaners for wrapping or decorating
- Examples of sculpture art reproductions from the DIA (for links to sculptures from the DIA, please see page 3)

Definition: A SCULPTURE is a three-dimensional (3D) piece of artwork.

Vocabulary words/topics to focus on while conversing with children:

sculpture, build, color, size, shape, and texture.

Beginning: Talk with the children about the DIA field trip and show them the pictures of sculpture art. Then talk about things you've seen the children fold,



roll, or crumple: for example, paper towels, napkins, or leaves. Say something like, “Aluminum foil is another material you can roll, fold, or crumple into different shapes.” Demonstrate ways to roll, fold, and crumple aluminum foil. Continue by saying something like “When artists do that, they call it making a sculpture. I wonder what sculptures you will make.” Give each child one or two pieces of aluminum foil.

Middle: Circulate among the children. Talk about how the foil looks and feels, how children’s actions affect the foil’s appearance, and what, if anything, they make with the foil. Use words related to texture (smooth, bumpy, pointy), action (bend, twist), and shape (curved, straight, round, flat) to help children experience their art from various sensory perspectives. Encourage children to use supplementary materials, if desired, to wrap or decorate their sculptures.

The chart below offers an example, at each developmental level, of what children may say and do, along with ideas for scaffolding (supporting and gently extending) their learning.

Scaffolding Learning at Each Developmental Level		
Earlier	Middle	Later
Children may: Explore the foil without trying to make something.	Children may: Accidentally make something and then label it: for example, they may crumple the foil and then say, “Hey! I made a ball!”	Children may: Intentionally make something: for example, they may say they are going to make a dog and mold the foil so it has ears and a tail.
Adults can: Describe children’s actions; for example,	Adults can: Acknowledge children’s observations by saying	Adults can: Comment on the representational

"You flattened it" or "You scrunched the foil."	something like "You squeezed the foil between your hands and made it round, like a ball."	features children have included and ask them to describe how they made them.
Gentle extension: Encourage children to handle the foil in different ways and comment on how they are transforming the material: "It was shiny and smooth — now it's rough and wrinkled."	Gentle extension: Ask children what they think would happen if they used their hands in a different way with the foil.	Gentle extension: Wonder what else children could make with the foil and what they would have to do to make it: for example, if the child suggests a giraffe, adults might ask the child how he or she would make its long neck.

End: Let children know when there are about five minutes left in the activity. Then put away the materials together. Let the children know where the foil will be stored if they want to use it again at worktime. Tell them to "scrunch" a part of their body as they move to the next activity in the daily routine.

Follow up: Supply other materials the children can mold. For example, in addition to play dough and clay, offer beeswax, wet sand, and newspaper. Provide photographs, exhibition posters, and reproduction postcards of sculptures made of metal and other materials.

Links to sculptures from the Detroit Institute of Arts:



Viewing this as a printed resource? You can find the art pieces listed below by visiting <https://dia.org/collection> and searching for each art piece by name.

- *Coo Wha Zee, 1962*
- *Man Crossing a Square on a Sunny Morning, 1950*
- *Moonmad, 1944*
- *Reclining Figure, 1939*
- *Spirit Box, 2009*