FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / 3–5 / 26

# Courtyard Sculpture Lab

TEACHER GUIDE • lesson design & facilitation

Grade band: 3–5 | 4–5 sessions, 45–55 minutes

Media: paper armature, cardboard, clean reusable materials, safe fastening tools

## The artistic problem

Build a tabletop sculpture for an imagined gathering courtyard.

**Essential question:** How can shape and negative space invite people to look or move?

**Place-based cultural lens:** Study public gardens and courtyards as spaces for art and community activity.

## Learning targets

- Investigate the question: How can shape and negative space invite people to look or move?
- Apply armature, balance, negative space, safe joints in a deliberate original composition.
- Use critique evidence to improve armature and name one next step.

## Student-visible success criteria

- The final artwork solves this problem: Build a tabletop sculpture for an imagined gathering courtyard.
- Artwork includes stable structure, visible negative space, and revised base.
- Process evidence shows three different options before selection.
- Visual decisions demonstrate armature and support the intended audience.
- Feedback results in at least one visible revision that the student can explain.

## Standards & studio habits

Louisiana Grade 3–4: VA-CE-E1, VA-CE-E3, VA-AP-E6; Grade 5 (5–8 cluster): VA-CE-M2, VA-CE-M7

Studio Habits of Mind: Develop Craft, Stretch & Explore, Express, Reflect. These habits are developed interactively, not in a fixed rank or sequence.

Instructional alignment: Louisiana benchmark codes are official broad grade-cluster benchmarks; specific expectations are developed locally. The ten instructional stages come from the supplied Artistic Investigations framework.

## Preparation & materials

- Drawing paper or sketchbook for idea studies
- paper armature, cardboard, clean reusable materials, safe fastening tools
- Samples and images from reliable sources, with attribution
- Tools appropriate to local safety rules and grade level

- Choice of visual, oral, or written reflection tools

## 10-stage teaching sequence

**01 / Engage** Present the artistic question: How can shape and negative space invite people to look or move? Give students two contrasting examples that do not dictate a finished product.

**02 / Investigate** Study public gardens and courtyards as spaces for art and community activity. Gather visual evidence and note what is observed rather than assumed.

**03 / Skill Studio** Demonstrate armature, balance, negative space, safe joints. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates.

**04 / Generate** Develop three possibilities for the challenge: Build a tabletop sculpture for an imagined gathering courtyard. Change the focal point, material, arrangement or viewer perspective between drafts.

**05 / Plan** Compare sketches to the success check (stable structure, visible negative space, and revised base); choose a direction and state why it better communicates the intention.

**06 / Produce** Produce an original visual response using armature, balance, negative space, safe joints; conference on one technical choice and one contextual question.

**07 / Critique** Partners identify where the artwork communicates the intended idea and locate evidence of armature in the work.

**08 / Revise** Revisit the specific checkpoint: Stable structure, visible negative space, and revised base. Make one visible change after critique and preserve the initial view for comparison.

**09 / Present** Present with a title, medium, one key artistic decision and any needed credit or contextual limitation.

**10 / Reflect** Reflect: What evidence proves you improved armature? What will you try or investigate next?

## Studio sessions & evidence checkpoints

| Session | Teaching move | Capture evidence |
|---|---|---|
| Day 1 | **Observe + question**<br>Study public gardens and courtyards as spaces for art and community activity. | Notice/wonder log and initial study. |
| Day 2 | **Develop craft**<br>Demonstrate armature, balance, negative space, safe joints. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates. | Technique trials and feedback. |
| Day 3 | **Generate + plan**<br>Produce three proposals and select one using criteria. | Three thumbnails and written/oral rationale. |
| Day 4 | **Produce + critique**<br>Create and test work against the checkpoint: Stable structure, visible negative space, and revised base. | Work sample and peer response. |
| Day 5 | **Revise + exhibit**<br>Make one substantial change; present and reflect. | Before/after evidence and a precise next step. |

## Key technique to model

armature, balance, negative space, safe joints

## Access without lowering the artistic goal

Model nonvisual encounter options and different viewing heights. Offer physical samples, captioned images, accessible demonstrations, flexible planning modes, and alternate materials while retaining the common visual learning target.

## Teacher coaching questions

- What is the visual problem you are solving?
- Which decision communicates your intended meaning most clearly?
- What does your reference prove, and what are you still imagining?
- What could a viewer misunderstand?
- What visible revision will strengthen your next version?

## Cultural care

Use only teacher-approved materials and no unapproved adhesives or tools.

## Stretch & explore

Photograph the sculpture from three viewpoints.

Design provenance: Original Studio Fieldnotes investigation developed for the 50-lesson library; informed by the teacher-supplied ten-stage Artistic Investigations architecture and reflective Studio Habits framework.