



NUA  
Summer  
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Series

# Designing sculptures

Workshop developed by  
Kaitlin Ferguson

## Objective

Learn the process of designing a sculpture for a public space, from coming up with the concept of an idea, to sketching ideas and finish by making a model or 'maquette' of your sculpture design.

## Key outcomes

- Growing confidence in designing and creating in 3D
- Develop your understanding of designing for public spaces
- Bring your ideas to life through model making skills

Kaitlin Ferguson, Wave Maker, 2018,  
commissioned for the Heritage Sculpture  
Trail Wells-next-the-sea, Norfolk



## You will need

### For designing:

- Paper to draw on
- Pencil or pen to draw with

### For model or 'maquette' making:

You don't need any specialist materials for your model just use things you can find around the house. These could include:

- Card (from recycling such as cereal boxes)
- Cardboard from cardboard boxes
- Cardboard tubes (toilet paper, kitchen towel, crisp tubes)
- Card and paper - can be any colour
- Post it notes
- Any other materials you can find round the house e.g clothes pegs, cocktail sticks, wire...

### For connecting materials:

- Masking tape
- Glue stick
- Sticky tape
- Plasticine or blu tack
- Stapler

### Tools:

- Scissors

## Background

Artists, designers and architects make models or 'maquettes' to test ideas out, to think through the scale of the piece and to predict potential problems. The process of model making itself can even help inspire ideas. When designing sculpture for a public space it is also important to consider the requirements of the site.





Kaitlin Ferguson in collaboration with Natalia Bezerra, LITHOS, 2019, site-specific public sculpture commissioned for Poldra Sculpture Park, Portugal

## Key considerations when a Sculptor makes their work

### Location

- What is the location of the site?
- Is it an urban or natural setting?
- What features are there? These could be geographical, historical or architectural.

### Size and scale

- What is the size of the artwork?
- What is the scale of the artwork?  
Consider how the size of the piece will sit in relation to its surroundings and those who will come across it.

### Materials

- What materials is the sculpture made of?

### Environmental impact

- What will the environmental impact will the work have?
- What carbon footprint will it produce in terms of materials, production and installation?
- What can I do to make this as environmentally sensitive as possible?

### Audience

- Who are the key audiences for the work?
- How will people interact with it?

## Title and information

- What is the title of the work?
- How much information do you want audiences to have about the work when they first encounter it?
- Do you want it to sit in the landscape independently or have a display panel to give information?

## Activity

### Step one: coming up with a sculpture concept

- Choose a location for your sculpture, whether urban or natural. This could be in a city, in front of a train station or perhaps a more rural setting such as a park, gardens, nature reserve or by the sea.
- Choose a style for your sculpture. This could be abstract, geometric, inspired by nature, figurative, an environmental piece of 'Land Art' or you could invent your own style!

### Step two: designing and sketching your sculpture

- Once you have selected your site and sculpture style, sketch a few ideas on a piece of paper, ideally 3-4 different options.
- Select your favourite and focus on that design. Sketch out the idea from a few different angles, so that you can plan what your sculpture will look like from all perspectives.
- Have a look back at the 'key considerations' above and think carefully about how your sculpture concept could come to life.



### Step three: building a 'maquette'

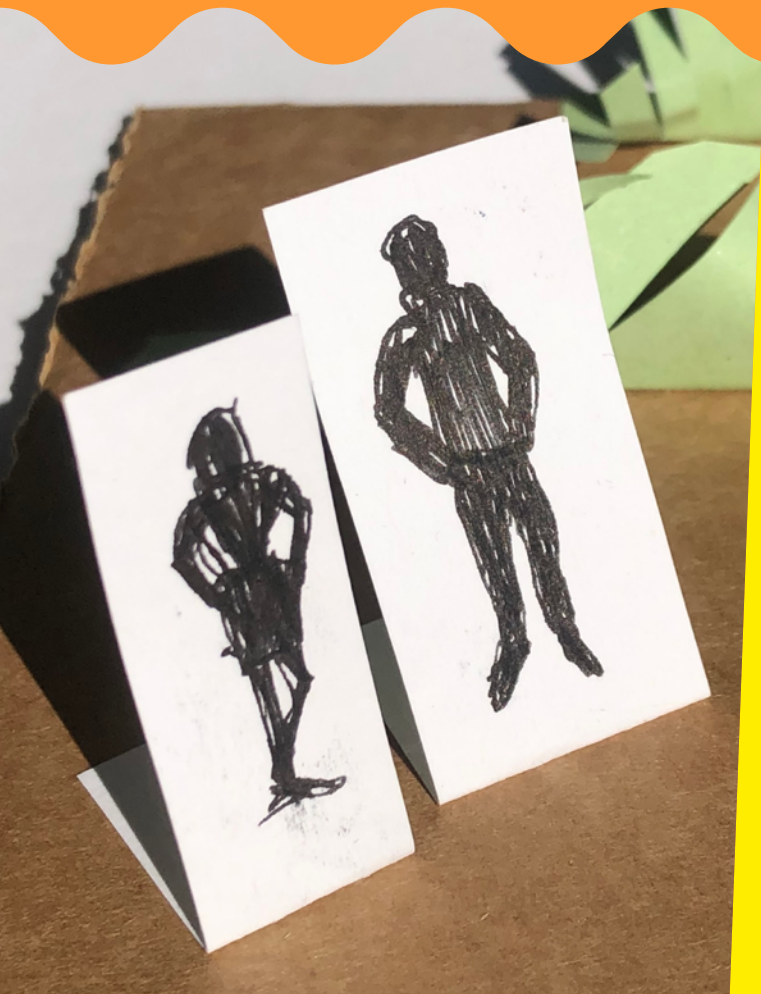
When building a sculptural maquette you don't need any specialist materials, you can simply use things you have around the house.

- To start with, use a piece of cardboard (such as a cardboard box from the recycling) and cut a base to build your sculpture model on – roughly 15 x 30 cm.
- On a separate piece of card or on a post it note draw a couple of figures. Cut these out and fold over the end of the card to create a little tab and stick them to your board. These figures will give your sculpture scale.
- Depending on the materials you have to hand, construct your sculptural maquette. You could experiment with different paper folding techniques, use wire to create forms or cut up cardboard boxes and stick them together to create shapes. Use tape or glue to secure your maquette to the base.

### Step four – review

- Once you've created your maquette, compare it against the key considerations – how has your idea evolved?

Example of scale figures



An example of a finished maquette

### Let's go further

- You could take the sculpture to the location you have designed it for and photograph it in context.
- Alternatively, you could photograph your maquette and photoshop a backdrop in.

### Inspiration and further resources

Find out more about Kaitlin Ferguson:



[Website](#)



[@kaitlinferguson3](#)

### Look up the following sculptures:

- Abstract Barbara Hepworth 'Family of Man' (1970)
- Inspired by Nature Maggi Hambling 'Scallop' (2003)
- Figurative - Henry Moore 'Reclining Woman' (1956)
- Environmental - Robert Smithson 'Spiral Jetty' (1970)

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