

## Soft Wax Sculpture lesson plan



### National Curriculum: KS3 Art

When Edgar Degas died a number of soft wax sculptures including 'Horse Walking' were found in his studio. Later they were cast into bronze. This lesson plan is inspired by the techniques that Degas used in his studio just over one hundred years ago. They still work today. Find out how it was made and give your class the opportunity to work in exactly the same way as Degas by watching the videos and following the plan below.

### Learning Objectives

Pupils should increase their proficiency in the handling of different materials. In addition students can gain knowledge and understanding of the work and approaches of artists, craftspeople or designers from contemporary and/or historical contexts, periods, societies and cultures. Students can refine their ideas as work progresses through experimenting with media, materials, techniques and process.

### Overview

This lesson plan can be used:

- To start a sculpture project.
- To develop ideas and understanding of processes and materials.
- As part of study of any artist using armature building, modelling or lost wax casting as part of their process.
- As part of individual study

## Suggested Classroom Activity

### Part 1.

#### Background

'Horse Walking' by the famous Impressionist painter Edgar Degas was found in his studio, with a number of other sculptures, after his death. The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge has two bronze horses by Degas in its collection.



Degas never exhibited his sculptures in his lifetime as he regarded sculpture in a similar way to drawing, as a way of exploring a subject. This sculpture was made from soft modelling wax on a wire armature and was later cast into bronze.



Watch video one. In this video Tim Mathews from The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge describes how the sculpture was made. There is a longer version of this film in the Review section of CultureStreet where a Year 9 group find out more about the artist, the sculpture and how it was made and then tell us what they think.

## Part 2.

### Making a wire armature

Having discovered how Degas made his sculpture of a 'Horse Walking' you can use these two short videos to gain a greater understanding of the techniques and processes. Once you understand the process it is simple to have a go at making a small wax sculpture yourself.



Watch video two.

This video is a short time-lapse film showing how to make a wire armature.

### Modelling in soft wax



Watch video three.

This short time-lapse video show the addition and modelling of the wax onto the armature to make a horse sculpture. Now you can begin adding your soft modelling wax. Warm the wax with your hands using small pieces at a time and working around your sculpture.

## Development Activity

There are a number of other resources on CultureStreet about sculpture, the lost wax process and casting sculpture into bronze that can be used to support this lesson plan. You could start with CultureStreet's section on Miro and the Sculpture in Wax workshop. In this workshop delivered by Yorkshire Sculpture Park Year 9 students make a sculpture

in wax that is cast into bronze. If you want to make a sculpture in clay rather than wax there is an artist led workshop where students make animal themed clay pots that might help you get started. There is also a KS3 wire sculpture workshop led by an artist working at the National Seed Bank.

