

LEVEL: PRIMARY

SOURCE: Latin America & Caribbean Series
 Published by Mennonite Central Committee, 1997

FANTASTIC SCULPTURES

by Florence Temko

Fantastic sculptures from Haiti are made from a very unusual material: used oil drums. It all began with Georges Liautaud, who loved working with tools even as a child. When he grew up, he became a blacksmith. As a hobby, he cut and hammered decorative designs into steel sheeting recycled from empty oil drums. He cut off the top and bottom of a barrel and cut open the side, which left a flat sheet of metal measuring six by three feet. After he scratched on his drawing, he cut it out with heavy shears. To highlight the natural black-brown color, he textured the surface by pounding and cutting lines and circles into it. Using only these simple materials, he let his imagination fly into the creation of supernatural figures.

In this way, Liautaud initiated an entirely new art form, which inspired other Haitians to create their own metal sculptures. Their work became recognized for its artistic merit, and their reliefs (sculptures that project shapes from the background, in contrast to sculptures in the round) are sought by collectors and prized by art museums in many countries.

You can try this sculpture technique, using disposable aluminum baking pans sold in supermarkets. Use your imagination to create original designs.

To make a fish sculpture, you need:

- disposable aluminum baking pan
- scissors
- pencil or felt-tip marker
- hammer, nail, screwdriver
- sandpaper
- thick piles of newspapers or magazines to work on.

Caution: Cut edges of the aluminum may be sharp. Work slowly and carefully.

1. Cut off the sides of the baking pan, leaving a flat sheet.
2. Draw on the outline of the fish. Redraw it until you are satisfied.
3. Cut out your drawing. Always cut into corners, as shown by the direction of the arrows.

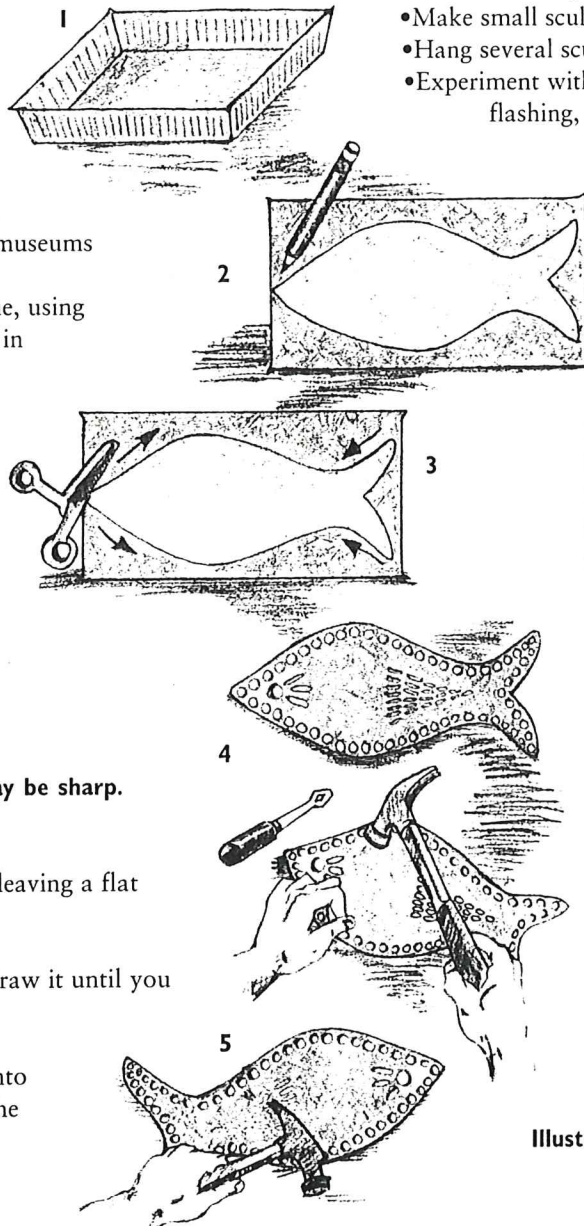
4. Draw on circles and short lines. Coins can help you draw round circles. Hammer them in with the nail and screwdriver. Turn over the fish to display the raised design. Some marks may have gone all the way through.
5. Smooth any rough edges by sliding the hammer head across them. Rub them with sandpaper if necessary.

OTHER IDEAS

- Design birds, bats, comic-strip characters, robots, flowers, trees or other objects. Make them as fantastic as possible.
- Make holes with a paper punch.
- Color the design with markers. Authentic Haitian reliefs are black or brown, but you can choose any color you like.
- Scallop or zigzag the edges.

•Attach the sculpture to a wooden board
 •Make small sculptures as holiday ornaments.
 •Hang several sculptures as a mobile.
 •Experiment with other materials. Aluminum flashing, sold in hardware stores and used for fixing roofs, handles more like sheets made from oil drums. You can cut it with tin snips or an old pair of strong scissors. (Do not use good scissors, as you will ruin them.)

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