

## Title: Wearable Sculpture & the Art of the Ancient Mediterranean



**Developed by:** Robin Jensen

**Suggested grade level:** 11-12

**Length of time:** 2-3 weeks of 1-hour classes per day

**Subject Areas:** Visual Art, History, Language Arts

### **Rationale:**

Throughout the ages, people have created and worn body adornments to represent many aspects of their lives, belief systems, geography, and artistic abilities. The jewelry that we choose to wear often defines us as individuals and as a society. In an exploration of the jewelry and traditions of ancient Mediterranean and our own cultures, students will be encouraged to expand and challenge their notions of body adornment and sculpture while experimenting with non traditional materials and techniques to communicate an intended meaning through their work.

### **Classroom set up:**

This project is intended to be completed by each individual student in the classroom but could easily be adapted for students working in small groups.

**Materials:**

This project requires a large collection of found materials such as fabric, wire, old toys, shells, wood scraps, yarns, or tinfoil; anything easily found and replaced. Tools such as hot glue guns or pliers are also useful to encourage a wide range of responses to this project. Students should be responsible for bringing in the materials not readily available in the class that they will need for their designs.

**Suggested resources/images:**

The Internet is rich in resources pertaining to wearable art and Egyptian art. An ancient Egyptian jewelry museum image search is also worthwhile.

**Suggested Outcomes:**

Key Stage Outcomes that can be achieved by this project:

Students will be expected to create and or present collaboratively and independently expressive products in the arts for a range of audiences and purposes.

Students will be expected to demonstrate critical awareness of and value for the role of the arts in creating and reflecting culture.

Students will respect the contributions of the arts of individuals and cultural groups in local and global contexts and value the arts as a record of human experience and expression

**Introduction:**

Using available resources, invite students to investigate and discuss the jewelry of the ancient Mediterranean. They may work individually or in small groups to respond to questions in their sketchbooks or they might discuss and write about specific images of Mediterranean jewelry that have been collected. Students may also be asked to research this topic online. Consider these discussion points:

Who might have worn these objects? At what time of day/month/year? In what settings?

What do these pieces tell us about the artist, the wearer, or the culture in which it was worn?

Has today's jewelry remained the same or changed from the time of the ancient Mediterranean? In what ways?

Do we have new forms of adornment that did not exist in ancient times? If so, what are they?

How might you define the term “jewelry”?

Why do we continue to wear objects made for the same locations on our bodies and often using similar materials?

Does an object have to be worn to be considered jewelry?

What is the difference between sculpture and jewelry?

**Suggestions for Teaching and Learning:**

Students will be encouraged to make wearable sculpture using materials they have collected. The student does not actually have to wear the piece; it can be created for anyone. It does not have to be comfortable, practical, or beautiful. Encourage students to make an object that is not conventional or easily recognizable as a ring, necklace, bracelet, crown, or earrings.

Invite them, instead, to create something such as an object for the ear that continues down the shoulder and along the arm or an object that begins on a finger like a ring but has long fringes that reach to the floor.

Jewelry often tells us something about the wearer: life passages, economic class, social standing, political offices, spiritual or religious affiliations, etc. Students might imagine how their sculptures will do this. They should be encouraged to make connections between the materials and the form and function of the object. For example, they might design an armband made of velvet with soft materials on the inside but contrasting sharp glass, metal, or nails on the outside, communicating the idea of someone who is soft and gentle on the inside but who appears rough and dangerous on the outside. Students should consider how the material and form will tell us something about the function of their sculpture and how it changes our perception of the wearer. Materials and meaning should work together to successfully communicate ideas to the viewer.

Ask students initially to develop their ideas for designs in sketchbooks. Some may find it easier to make an initial list of materials and techniques they would like to use and then develop the meaning and function of the sculpture in such a way that it complements the materials. Other students will be more comfortable developing the conceptual side of the design first by brainstorming potential purposes or meanings for the sculpture and then finding suitable material to communicate the intended ideas.

For future assessment purposes, ask students to write down or record in some manner the initial intended meaning or message of the design they are going to make.

Students should be given sufficient time to research, develop, and discuss ideas before beginning the actual construction of their designs, (2-4 classes) and then begin to work independently towards completion. Some students will work more efficiently if they set specific short-term goals to be accomplished within established deadlines. Teachers may find that helping each student to refine their ideas will give them the confidence they need to realize their plans.

### **Extension of Ideas:**

Students may be asked to create a small gallery in which ordinary contemporary objects are presented as artifacts as they might appear in a museum 1000 years from now. How does this change the way we see or interpret the objects? Consider how viewing an ancient Mediterranean bracelet in a museum might change the way we see its value. Has the object changed into a symbol of a culture or is it still just bracelet even if it is never worn?

Stage a fashion show featuring students' wearable art for peers, parents, community members

Invite jewelry artists from various cultures in your community to share their particular artistry with student

### **Suggestions for Assessment:**

Invite students to interpret the works of other students either verbally or in writing, focusing on how form and materials are working together to communicate an idea. Ask students to discuss alternative interpretations others may have had on their work

In a group format, reflect upon ideas and attitudes students may have as to what they believe jewelry is and how it may or may not be considered sculpture.

Students might be encouraged to reflect in sketchbooks or journals on the entire process from inspiration to completion

Develop, with students, a rubric to help assess their success in achieving their intentions

Discuss the common experience of how artworks often begin as one idea and develop into another and how this may create innovation or frustration

Teachers can observe students during the process for evidence of comprehension of the connection between materials, meaning and form, the ability to develop a plan and carry it out, innovative uses of materials and techniques, insight into the connection between sculpture and its wearer.