

FAMILY ART ACTIVITY – Hard & Soft Sculptures

Barbara Chase-Riboud is a visual artist, best-selling novelist and award-winning poet. Her sculpture, *Malcom X #5*, is made of polished bronze and silk and will serve as our inspiration in combining hard and soft elements to make our own small scale sculptures.

Activity:

Head out into your yard, garage, or even the kitchen junk drawer, on a search for miscellaneous objects that are either hard or soft.

After you collect a number of items, sort them into categories: hard and soft. Have a discussion about similarities and differences between the objects. You could even use a Venn Diagram or similar graphic organizer to record your findings.

After you spend some time investigating potential materials, choose which materials you will use to create your sculpture.

Combine at least two different materials/objects that will create a juxtaposition, or contrasting effect, between them. For example, a stone wrapped with blades of grass, paper clips combined with pieces of soft yarn, Play-Doh and chopsticks, or kitchen utensils jutting from a block of cheese (art you can eat!).

While this artist chose two materials that are of a similar color, you could also create visual interest by choosing to contrast colors, textures, or sheen (shiny vs. dull).

Share a photo of your finished sculpture online and tag #nashermuseum!



Barbara Chase-Riboud, *Malcom X #5*, 2003
Polished bronze and silk with steel support, 76 ½ x 29 x 27 inches (194.3 x 73.7 x 68.6 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. Gift of Nigel and Ayodele Hart, 2017.22.1 © Barbara Chase-Riboud



Barbara Chase-Riboud at Michael Lowenstein Gallery, 2018. (Unattributed, Creative Commons License)

Biography:

Barbara Chase-Riboud was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1939. She attended the Philadelphia Museum School of Art, received her Bachelors of Fine Arts from the Tyler School at Temple University, and became the first African-American to receive a MFA degree from Yale University.

In 1979, she wrote her first novel, *Sally Hemmings*, which became an international bestseller. She has published four other novels and three collections of poetry while also continuing her work as a visual artist. She has won the Carl Sandburg Prize for poetry, the Women's Caucus for Art's Lifetime Achievement Award. In 1996, she was knighted by the French Government and received the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

Label Text:

Sculptor Barbara Chase-Riboud combines metals with textiles to create imposing works inspired by identity, history, and loss. Materials are central to the artist's work. In the late 1950s, Chase-Riboud developed a lost-wax casting technique that allowed her to create folded and bent sheets of bronze. She later combined this with long braided skeins of cascading silk and wool to create her signature style of heavy metal elements that appear to be supported by flowing fibers. Inspired by what she saw at the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers, Algeria in 1969, Chase-Riboud created her first work in the Malcolm series as a memorial to the slain civil rights leader, Malcolm X. She returned to the subject several times over the next four decades, creating twenty works total, the most recent of which were finished in 2016. *Malcolm X #5* is an imposing monument characterized by the artist's signature combination of faceted and polished bronze that appears to hover over braided golden silk.