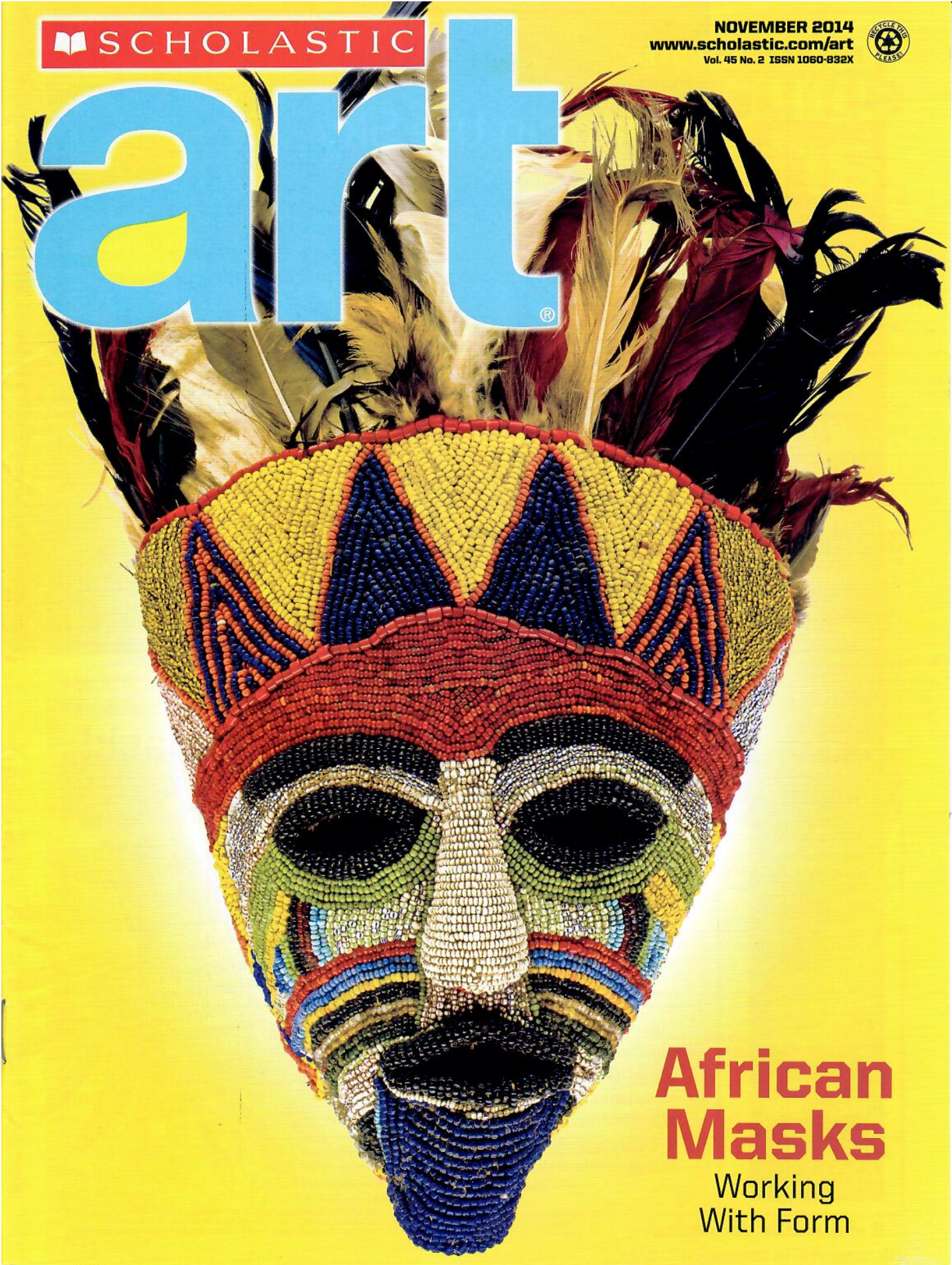


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art



African Masks

Working
With Form

SCHOLASTIC
art

NOVEMBER 2014
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Cover: Mask, Tabwa Culture, 20th c. Mixed media, 40.6x30.5x8.9cm. Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN. The William Hood Dunwoody Fund/ Bridgeman Images.

Giant in the Sky

You are walking through a vast desert—there is nothing around for miles and miles. Suddenly, you come upon a giant structure that looks like a man with outstretched arms. It is so large that you don't even reach the top of the third finger on one of the man's hands. Does this experience make you feel small?

That's the feeling South African artist Daniel Popper was hoping to inspire when he created the work on the right for an outdoor arts festival in his home country. Popper built *Reflections*, the 30-foot-high, three-story sculpture, using reclaimed wood. What other "reflections," or thoughts about big ideas does this monumental work of art inspire in you?



ART Contest: Design a Mask!

Use what you learn about African masks in this issue to design a mask that celebrates an important event in your life. Send in your design for a chance to win a Blick gift card!

To enter, download the official entry form at scholastic.com/art. Then draw your mask and mail in your design. The Grand Prize is a gift card worth \$150. The runner-up and third prize are \$100 and \$75 gift cards. The teachers of the winning students will also win \$50 gift cards. Good luck!



NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Open to legal residents of the 50 United States and District of Columbia in grades 4-12. All entries must be received by 12/1/2014. Void where prohibited. For complete details and official rules, go to www.scholastic.com/art.



How does the installation of this monumental sculpture in a desolate desert bring meaning to the piece?

Daniel Popper, *Reflections*, 2019. Height: 9 meters (29.5 feet); 3 levels (vertical). ©Daniel Popper. Image provided with permission from ArtkaBurn/Jonx Pillemer.

GAS MASKS

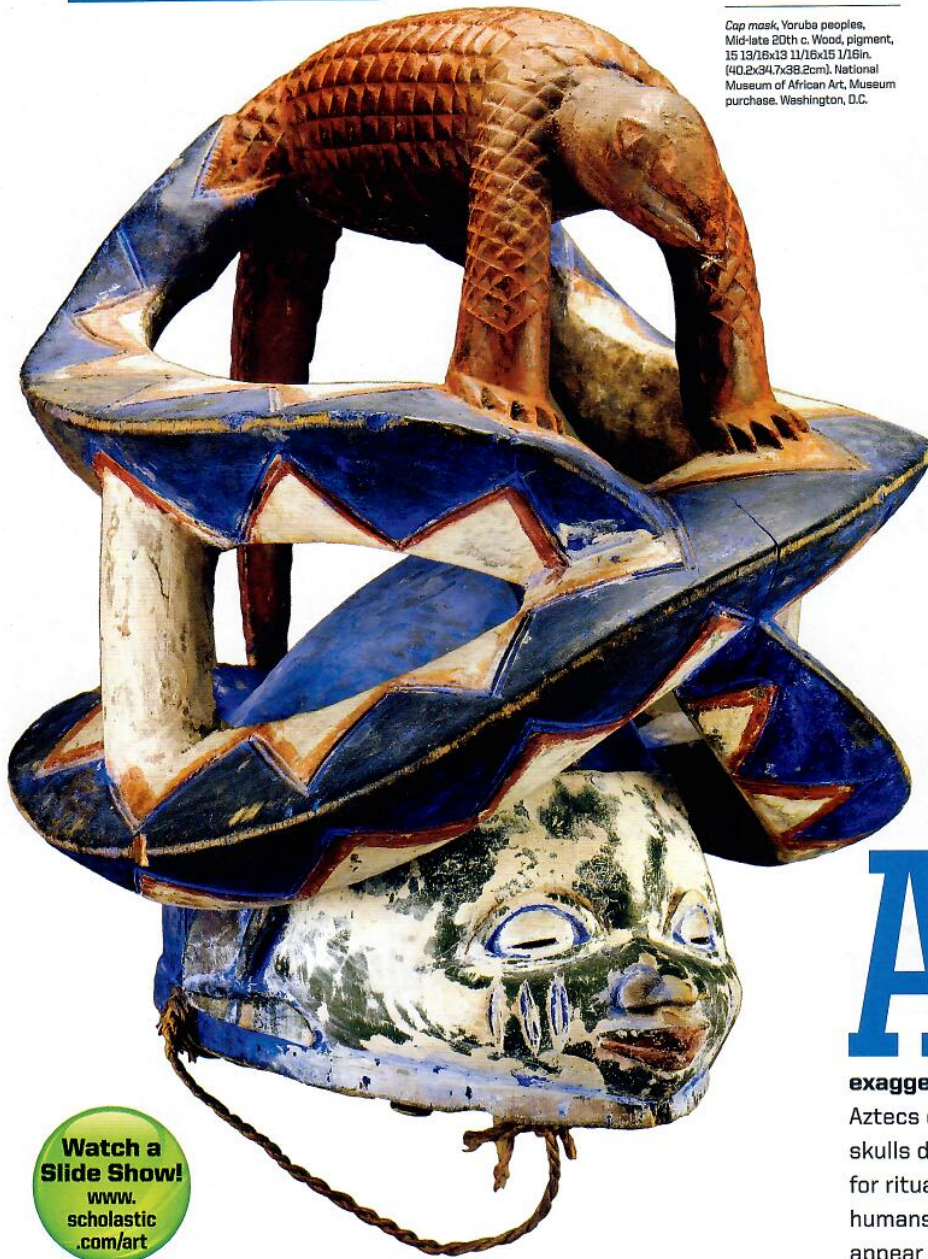
West African artist Romuald Hazoumè (rom-OH haz-OO-meh) gives traditional African masks a modern twist. The artist uses discarded plastic gasoline canisters as the primary form for the masks. The open spout becomes the mouth, and the handle forms the nose. He adds found objects, like heels from shoes, to create hair and other details. Hazoumè uses his masks to make a powerful political statement. The works draw attention to an underground system in which men are forced to smuggle fuel from Nigeria, a country in Africa, to neighboring country Benin. By transforming the empty fuel containers into masks, Hazoumè gives a face to an important problem.

How does Romuald Hazoumè turn traditional African mask-making on its head?

Romuald Hazoumè (b. 1962, Benin), left: *Dr Nibo*, 2013. Found objects, 22x28x26cm. Courtesy of October Gallery, London. Right: *Ear Splitting*, 1999. Plastic can, brush, speakers, 16x8x6in. (42x22x15cm). Courtesy of CAAC - The Pigozzi Collection, Geneva. Artwork: ©Romuald Hazoumè. ©2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.



AFRICAN MASKS



What makes this mask an open form?

Cap mask, Yoruba peoples, Mid-late 20th c. Wood, pigment, 15 13/16x13 11/16x15 1/16in. (40.2x34.7x39.2cm). National Museum of African Art, Museum purchase, Washington, D.C.



Which characteristics suggest that this mask represents an antelope?

Mbambi Mask, 20th c. Wood, pigment, raffia, 19x10x4in. (48.3x25.4x10.2cm). The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The Robert C. Winton Fund. (98.153) Bridgeman Images.

Watch a Slide Show!
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Carving Into Tradition

The carved masks of Africa reveal the craftsmanship of its people

Around the world, in almost every culture, people have created and worn masks. In ancient Greece, actors in plays donned “comedy” and “tragedy” masks with **exaggerated** facial expressions. The Aztecs of ancient Mexico used real human skulls decorated with turquoise as masks for rituals (see page 11). Even prehistoric humans likely wore masks—images of them appear in cave paintings.

Masks play an especially important role in African traditions. Mask makers often hold an honored place in society because of their finely honed sculpting skills and knowledge of cultural traditions. People of the various cultures wear masks for religious ceremonies, to initiate rites of passage, and for celebrations. Though masks serve important cultural purposes, each one is a unique work of art. They are sculptures that are meant to be worn.

Animal Accessories

Do you recognize the animal the mask left **represents**? It's an antelope! Herds of antelope live in the forests of the Democratic Republic of the Congo where this mask was made. The dancers who wear these masks in ceremonies imitate the animal's quick movements.

To create this mask, a craftsman used simple chisel-and crowbar-like tools to **carve** a piece of wood into the mask's **form**, or shape. He **simplified** the features, keeping only the most basic elements, such as the long horns protruding from the top. He then used natural pigments from



What is the role of pattern in this mask's design?

Banda Mask, Nalu peoples, Guinea, 19th-20th c. Wood, paint; raffia and textile attachments reconstructed 1995, 12 13/16x52 1/2in. (32.5x133.4cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1964. (1978.412.307) Image ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

limestone and tree bark to paint the piece. The red heart, **outlined** in white, gives the mask a friendly appearance.

Heavy Hats

Some masks aren't worn over the face at all. The Yoruba (YOR-uh-bah) peoples of Nigeria wear cap masks, like the one far left, on top of the head. The mask shows two pythons attacking an African animal called a pangolin. The snakes and the pangolin's legs are **positive forms**. Between them is an interior **negative space**. The positive forms surround the negative space, making this an **open form** piece. Scales are **incised**, or carved, into the surface of the pangolin's back, adding **texture** to the work.

The Nalu (NAY-loo) peoples of Guinea created the Banda mask below left, which is also worn on top of the head. Carved from wood, large Nalu masks can weigh as much as 80 pounds!

This mask is a **composite** of a human face, a crocodile jaw, and antelope horns. Painted **patterns** emphasize each of these creatures. For example, the **repeating** triangles on the edge represent a crocodile's sharp teeth. The attached raffia, which is thin strips of leaves from a palm tree, moves with the dancer during ceremonies and creates a sound that adds to the rhythm of accompanying drums.

Constructed Carvings

The long mask above right is a Bwa (bwah) Plank mask from Burkina Faso (bur-KEE-nuh FAH-so). The bottom part of the mask is worn over the face. A hook-shaped form protrudes from the center of the mask, where the wearer's forehead would be. The rest of the mask extends above the wearer's head. Plank masks are carved from wood that is very light-weight, allowing the wearer to dance despite the added height of the mask.

The **bold lines** and **geometric shapes** carved into the mask's surface have a graphic quality. The black, white, and red designs are actually symbols that are recognizable within the community.



Why are the geometric shapes on the surface of this mask important?

Leper Mask, Bwa peoples, Burkina Faso, 20th c. Wood, pigment, H: 34 3/4in. (88.3cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Thomas G.B. Wheelock, 1997. (1997.444.7) Image ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

AFRICAN MASKS

Putting It Together

Some African artists combine materials to create striking masks

How does the carved wood contrast with the surrounding fibers?

Mosquerade Hood (Kanaga), Dogon peoples, Mali, 19th-20th c. Wood, fiber, hide, pigment, 18 1/8x22 13/16in. (46x57.9cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Lester Wunderman, 1987 (1987.74h). Image ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

On the previous pages, you read about four carved African masks. The masks on these pages also have some carved elements, but they were created in different ways.

African artists used simple tools to **assemble**, or put together, many smaller pieces—from fabric and beads to seashells and natural fibers. The unique ways in which the artists combined materials have resulted in masks that are more than the sum of their parts.

Moving Masks

During rituals performed by Mali's Dogon (DOH-gon) peoples, dancers wear masks like the ones shown below. The two horizontal crossbars represent heaven and earth. The vertical wooden bar that connects them represents the humans' place between heaven and earth. Bright fibers surround the head and adorn the dancers' arms, **contrasting** with the mask's solid wooden structure.

Material Importance

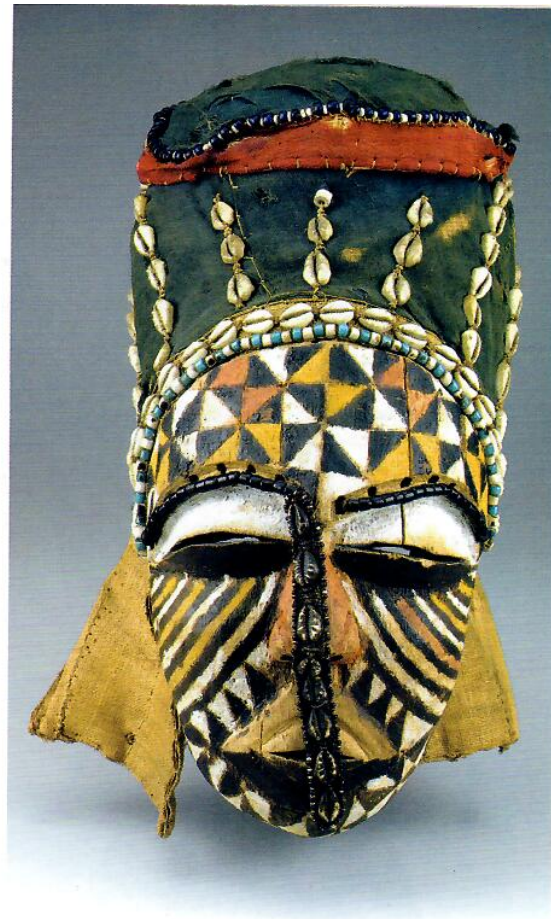
The materials added to a mask can be **symbolic**, which means they stand for something else. The face of the mask at right, from the Wè (wee) peoples of Ivory Coast, is made of carved wood. Small, square teeth, made of repurposed metal from agricultural tools, add to the mask's startling expression. A wide fringe, carved from wood to look like leopard teeth, **radiates** from the mask. The artist also added real fur on the sides of the face and around the **tubular** eyes. The addition of such rare and valuable materials indicates that this mask represents power. Before





How does the artist show that this mask symbolizes power?

Face mask, early 1900s. Wood, metal, cloth, fur. H: 38.1cm. Cleveland Museum of Art. Image source: Bridgeman Images.



ceremonies, the artist would **polish** the painted surface of the mask by rubbing the wood with leaves.

The mask above right represents the wife of an ancestral king to the Bushoong (ba-SHEWNG) peoples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The cowrie shells and beads sewn onto a carved form symbolize wealth and power. These materials show the community members that the mask represents an important person.

Covered Carving

The Ejagham (eh-JAH-gahm) peoples of Nigeria believe that a deity named Nimm lives in a sacred lake and takes the form of a crocodile. To make the mask on the right, which represents Nimm, an artist covered carved wood in antelope skin, giving the mask a lifelike appearance. Then the artist used plant materials to shape the long, **three-dimensional** spirals on the top, which represent a woman's hair.

WRITE ABOUT ART

Study the two photographs on page 6. Write a paragraph explaining how it would be different to observe the Dogon mask in a museum compared with seeing it used during a traditional ritual.

How can you tell that this mask represents an important figure in the community?

Ngody Mwaash Mask, Bushoong Culture, 20th c. Wood, cloth, cowrie shells, beads, pigment, plant fibers, 16x6 7/8x6 7/16in. (40.6x17.5x16.4cm). Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN. Gift of David and Sara Lieberman. Image source: Bridgeman Images.



What technique did the artist use to make this mask look lifelike?

Crest Mask, Ejagham peoples, Nigeria, late 19th to mid-20th c. Wood, animal skin, palm fiber, bamboo, metal, pigment, 25x33 7/8in. (63.5x86cm). National Museum of African Art. Museum purchase.

Softer Side

Unexpected materials challenge expectations about what makes a mask



SKETCHBOOK STARTER

The elephant mask on page 9 is stylized. Sketch a design for a stylized mask representing a different animal.

How did the artist create this fabric-like material?

Fiber mask with costume, Pende peoples, mid-20th c. Raffia, paper, dye, 68x42x19in. (172.7x106.7x48.7cm). National Museum of African Art. Gift of Ambassador Kenneth L. Brown.

What techniques were used to create this mask?

Mask, Luba peoples, 19th-20th c. Raffia palm fiber, wood, bamboo, 10 3/16x8 1/8x4 5/16in. (25.8x20.6x11cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Purchase, Nelson A. Rockefeller Gift, 1961. (1978.412.420). Image: ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.



You've seen how masks can be carved or assembled from rigid materials like wood. But can a mask be a **soft sculpture**? Some craftspeople use unexpected materials, such as plant fibers and beads, to create ornate masks. These masks may be made of soft or flexible materials, but they hold their shapes like more traditional masks.

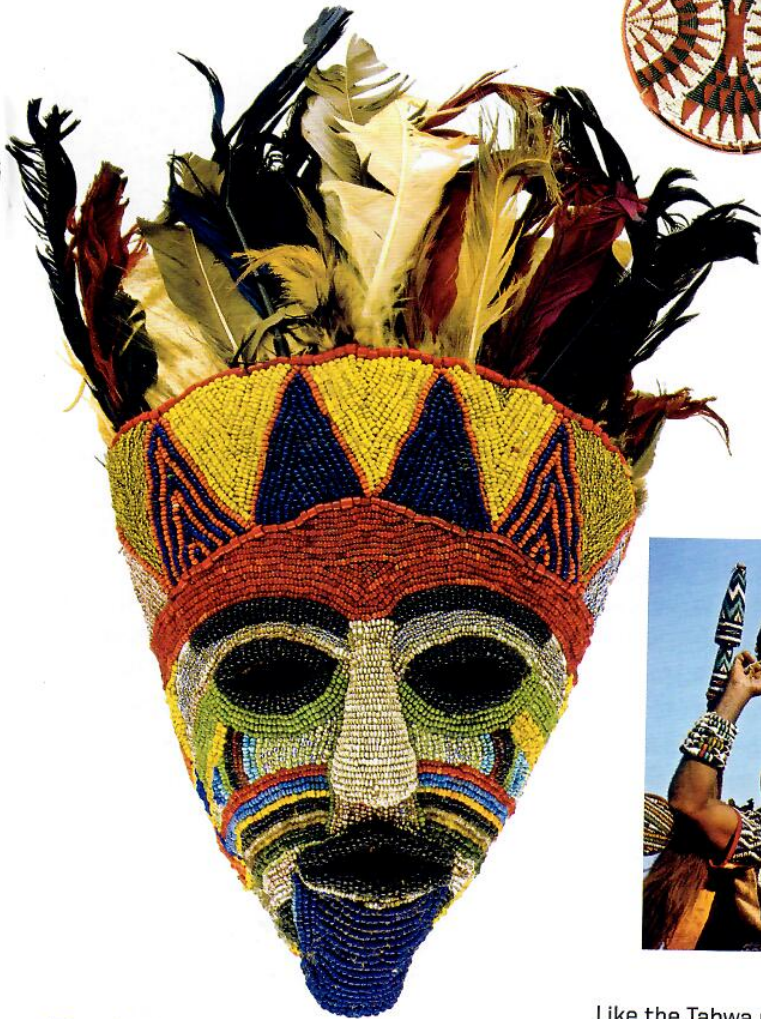
Versatile Raffia

Just like you might knit a sweater, the Pende (pen-DAY) peoples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo create fabric-like material by **weaving** plant fibers together. The fabric is durable enough to be worn in ceremonial dances. In the example at left, the artist added raffia fringe. During the dance, the raffia rustles as it moves.

The Luba (LOO-bah) peoples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo also use raffia fiber to make masks. Luba weavers **bind** the fibers together so tightly that they become a rigid surface. Each bundled strand is sewn to the next, forming the **contours** of a face. In the mask above, the rounded "skin" contrasts with the prickly texture of the "beard." The artist simplified the features of the face, outlining the eyes and reducing the nose to a vertical line.

How did the artist who made this mask emphasize the shape of the form?

Mask, Tabwa peoples, 20th c. Mixed media, 40.6x30.5x8.9cm. Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN, The William Hood Dunwoody Fund/Bridgeman Images.



Beaded Beings

The mask above, made by the Tabwa (TAHB-wah) peoples of Zambia, has a **beaded** surface, that echoes the contours of a real human face. The artist **stylized** this mask, reducing human facial features to their most basic forms. The artist used areas of **flat color** to make features, such as the white teardrop-shaped nose, look graphic. Bright **interlocking** triangles line the crown of the head, emphasizing the mask's triangular shape. The wild arrangement of soft feathers contrasts with the rigid construction of the face.

Bamileke Tribesman Wearing Elaborate Mask and Headdress. ©Paul Almeida/Corbis.



How can you tell that this mask represents an elephant?

Elephant (Aka) Mask, Bamileke, 19th-20th c. Cotton, glass beads, wood, 61x24 1/2in. (154.9x62.2cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of David Partman, 1980 (1980.554.2). Image ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.



Like the Tabwa mask, the mask above is stylized. Created by the Bamileke (bahm-ee-LAY-kay) peoples of Cameroon, it represents an elephant. The artist turned the animal's large ears into stiff circles. Look carefully at the image of a man wearing a mask like the one at right. A long panel hangs in front of his chest like an elephant's trunk. As the wearer moves, the panel swings from side to side.

A **zigzag pattern** made with glass beads adorns the surface of the mask. Wearing this mask is a special privilege. Among the Bamileke, elephants symbolize strength and power, and beadwork is associated with royalty.

5 Things to Know About World Masks



Can you identify four areas of enclosed space in the mask above?

Gara Yaka mask, Sri Lanka. ©G. Carfagna/De Agostini/Getty Images.

1 CARVED COBRAS ▲

This Gara Yaka mask is from Sri Lanka, an island country off the southeast coast of India. The artist carved the mask from wood. Its complex form is divided into thirds: The main figure is in the center, with cobras adorning either side. The snakes' **scrolling** figures create **enclosed spaces**—negative space surrounded by the wood form. The artist painted the mask with bright colors, then added intricate black lines to accent the contours of the mask's surface. A delicate **crosshatch** pattern creates the texture of the cobras' skin and highlights the work's three-dimensional shape.



How did the artist make this metal headdress?

Dancer's Headpiece in the Form of a Panjiri Bhuta (boar spirit deity), India, 18th c. Copper alloy, 17 1/8 x 21 1/4 x 1 1/2 in. (42.5 x 52.94 x 36.83 cm). Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), South and Southeast Asian Acquisition Fund (M.2005.49a-b).

2 CAST METAL HEADPIECE ▲

This boar-shaped headpiece is from Kerala (KEH-rah-lah), a state in India. An artist **cast** this heavy work, which is worn on top of the head, from copper alloy. The artist poured molten metal into a **mold**, then removed the mold, revealing the intricate headpiece. The animal has large, stylized eyes, and a long, flat tongue extends from its partially open mouth. This work is a headpiece for a person, but the boar depicted also wears a headress. It is laced with small areas of negative space, which add an **ornate**, textured quality to the work.



3 ASSEMBLED SWIMMING SPIRIT

This mask represents an amikuk, (AH-meh-kook), a spirit that lives in the ground and swims beneath people's feet. The Kuskokwim Yupik (KUHS-kuh-kwim YOO-pik) peoples of Alaska carved the face from driftwood and painted it before assembling the outer rings, feathers, and baleen, a part of some whales' mouths. The artist carefully attached each of these materials using narrow strips of leather. Small elements hang from the bottom, bringing motion to the form. The oval mask is **symmetrical**: The right and left sides of the face are balanced with the same composition on each side.

How did the artist create balance in this mask?

Mask representing "amikuk," a spirit that lives in the ground. Kuskokwim Eskimo, ca. 1910. Driftwood, feather/feathers, pigment/pigments, baleen, 39x80x9.5cm. National Museum of the American Indian. Collected by A.H. Twitchell. Acquired by MAI (9/9421).



4 GILDED DISGUISE

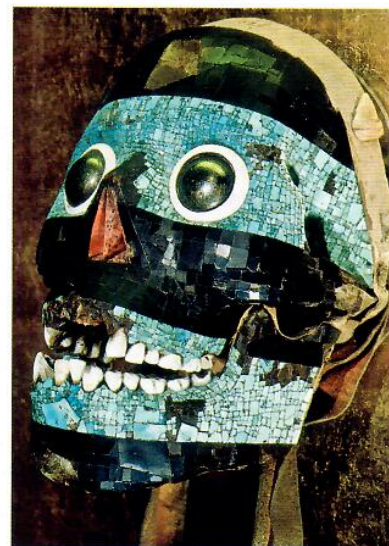
Bugaku (boo-gah-koo) is an ancient form of Japanese dance. Participants wear elaborate costumes and masks, like this one. An artist carved this mask from wood and then **lacquered** it, applying a dense finish to harden and protect the surface. The artist also **gilded** parts of the mask, attaching a very thin layer of gold to give the impression that the work is actually solid gold. The chin, which includes a beard made of real hair, dangles from thin cords to bring a sense of life to the face. The artist carved raised eyebrows that radiate from wide eyes, and flaring nostrils, each giving the mask a fearsome expression.

What makes the surface of this mask distinctive?

Mask for bugaku performance, Edo period, Japan, 17th c. Lacquered and gilt wood, also hair. H: 33.5cm. British Museum, London. Photo: ©The Trustees of the British Museum/Art Resource, NY.

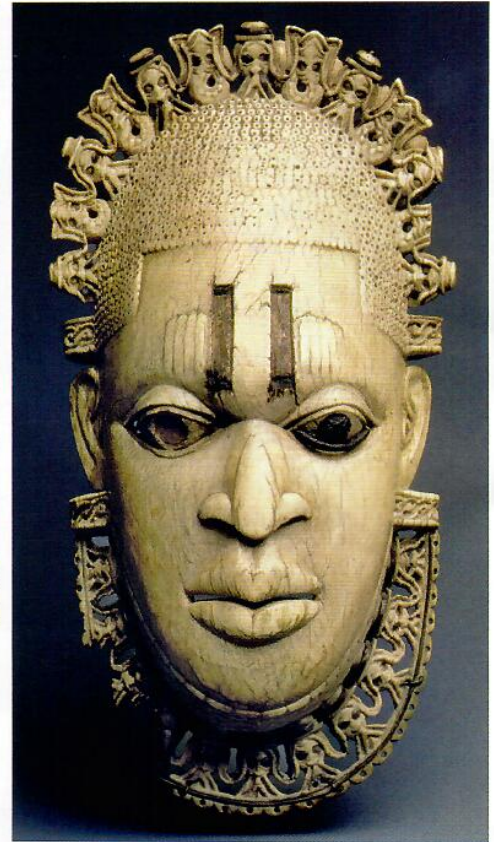
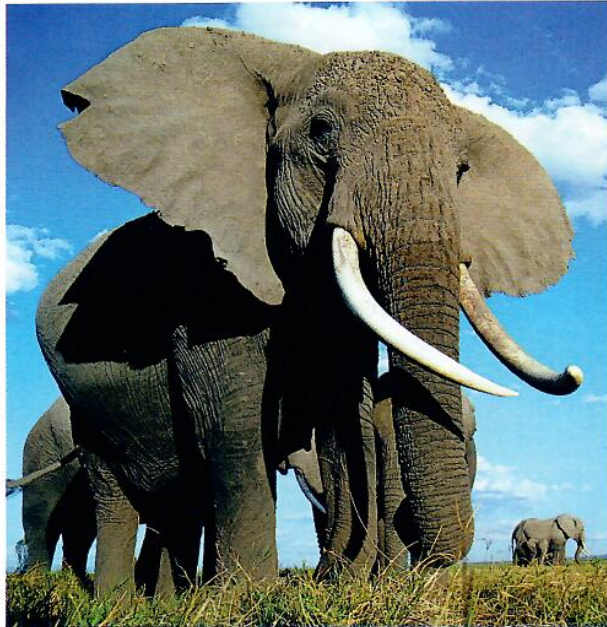
5 MOSAIC SKULL

This mask represents Tezcatlipoca (tes-kaht-lih-POH-kah), one of the four creator deities of ancient Mexico's Aztec people. The surface of the mask is a **mosaic**, with small fragments of turquoise and black lignite (coal) affixed to a real human skull. The mosaic is arranged in a wide **striped** pattern. The bright turquoise contrasts the dark eyes and white teeth. The **reflective** surface of the lignite highlights the contours of the cheekbones. The artist removed the back of the skull and lined the inside with deerskin. A leather strap creates a **hinge**, allowing the wearer to move the jaw.



What technique did the artist who made this mask use to create the striped pattern?

Mask of Tezcatlipoca the Smoking Mirror, Mixtec/Aztec, Mexico, ca. 1500. Turquoise and lignite mosaic set over a human skull. ©Warner Forman/Universal Images Group/Getty Images.



Saving Elephants

You decide if a new law will help stop elephant poaching

Around the world, elephants are endangered. In Africa, poachers hunt the massive mammals for their ivory tusks. Ivory can be carved into beautiful works of art, like the mask shown above right.

The United States government is trying to help stop the poaching. In 1989, the U.S. imposed a law making it illegal to trade new African elephant ivory. But it is hard to distinguish antique ivory from new ivory taken from recently killed elephants. Despite the 1989 law, poachers continued to kill elephants, secretly selling new ivory artworks as antiques on the black market.

In an effort to stop black-market poaching, the U.S. government recently revised the 1989 law to include a ban on the sale of antique ivory as well as new ivory. Unless collectors can prove that their ivory artwork was made before 1914 or that they acquired it before 1974, they no longer have the legal right to sell it. With this ban in place, the government hopes to discourage poachers by making most ivory objects, both new and old, worthless.

Most people want to save the elephants, but some are not happy about the new law. Antique-ivory collectors argue that the law won't help save elephants, but will hurt their businesses. They also point out that the new law applies only to American collectors. The largest demand for ivory is from Asia, where the material is sacred in some religions. So while American collectors won't be able to sell their antique ivory, poachers will still have plenty of demand in Asia for new ivory.

What do you think? To stop the sale of new ivory, is it right to ban the sale of antique ivory in the U.S.?

The mask above is made of elephant ivory.

African Mask Idia, the first Iyoba (Queen Mother of Benin), 18th c. Ivory. Photo: The Granger Collection, NYC. All rights reserved.



CRAFT AN ARGUMENT

1. Why does the U.S. government think it is necessary to ban the sale of nearly all ivory?
2. Why do antique-ivory collectors believe that banning the sale of antique ivory won't stop poaching?
3. Choose a position. Is it right to change the laws about antique ivory in order to stop the sale of new ivory?

STUDENT OF THE MONTH

Sci-Fi Sculptor

This award-winning sculpture sprang from a wild imagination

How did John emphasize some of the gazelle's features?

For John Vaile, art is a welcome escape. His award-winning sculpture of a gazelle-human hybrid creature shows his creativity and willingness to play. "Art class is a way for me to get away from my schoolwork and just do something that I enjoy," says John, 17. A junior at Archmere Academy in Claymont, Delaware, John hopes to study biology in college and eventually go to medical school.

When did you first get serious about art? My school requires us to take a few electives, so I decided to try art. I have a great teacher, and I really got into it.

What inspired this award-winning sculpture? I decided to sculpt an animal and thought the gazelle was just cool-looking. I knew it would be an interesting challenge to make the horns.

What made you decide to include a part of a human face? It's just an idea that came to me in the moment. So I started experimenting. I used a mold to make a human face with clay, and then incorporated it into my sculpture.

How did you create your sculpture? First I made a base by coiling the clay. Then I rolled out a slab of clay and made a cylindrical support for the head to sit on. Then I sculpted the form, building up the nose and head. Once the clay was thick enough, I hollowed out the inside of the piece so it wouldn't be too heavy. The horns had to be created separately. After they hardened a little bit but could still be manipulated, I added them to the sculpture. Then I perfected the rough surface. My teacher helped me fire it in a metal trash can outside my school. Finally, I touched up the features that I wanted to highlight, like the eyes, with black and copper paint.

Why did you fire it in a trash can? I wanted the sculpture to have a natural finish. The carbon from the fire gave the surface a nice range of colors from brown and tan to black.

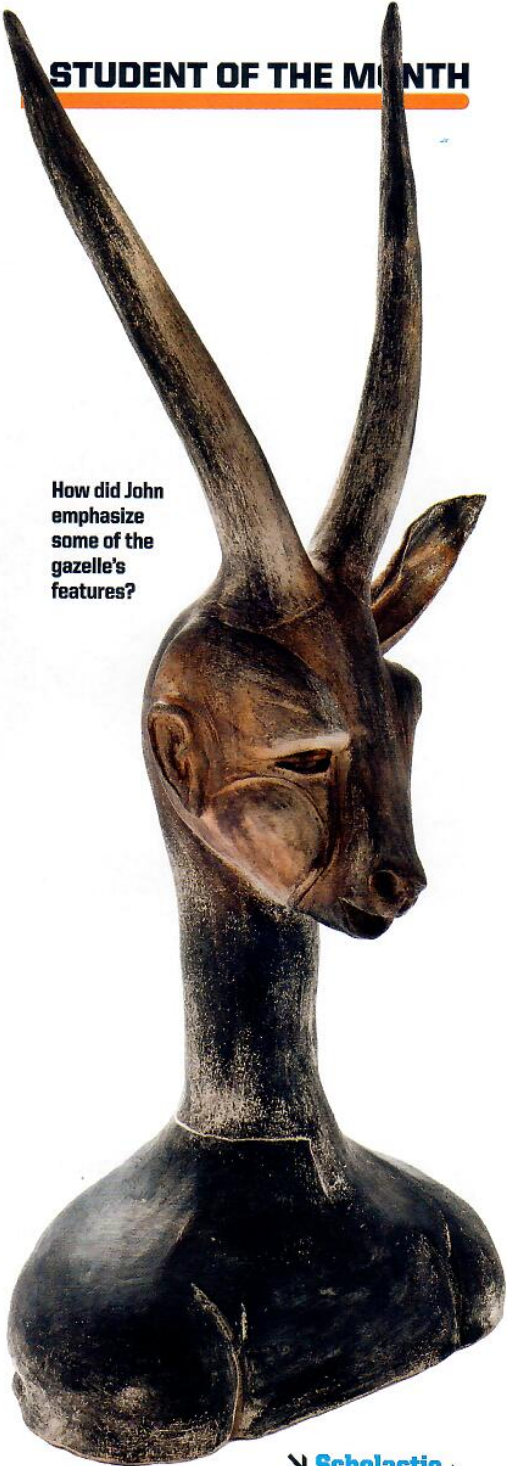
Do you have advice for aspiring artists like yourself? Just do whatever makes you happy. Don't be pressured into doing what everybody else is doing. Do something unique. And if it doesn't work out, you can always try something new.

John Vaile, 17, American Visions Award, Sculpture. Images courtesy of the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers and the Scholastic Art & Writing Award Winners of 2014.

Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

John won an American Visions Award for his sculpture in the 2014 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. To find out more about this program, visit artandwriting.org.

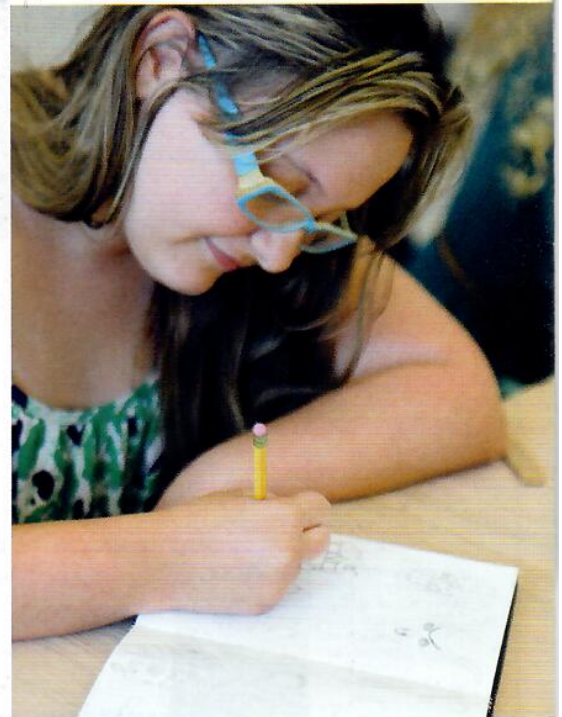
John Vaile



The student who made this mask added sand to create texture.



Sketch a few designs for your mask.



Create an African-Inspired Mask

Use what you've learned to develop a mask to celebrate an important event in your life

You've seen how African artists create the masks used in traditional ceremonies. Now it's your turn to sketch a design, choose symbolic materials, and assemble your own mask.

Watch a Video!
www.scholastic.com/art

MATERIALS

- pencil
- paper
- cardboard
- scissors
- X-acto knife
- ruler
- glue
- paint
- paintbrushes
- found objects (lace, fabric, electronic parts, magazine clippings, etc.)
- natural materials (leaves, sand, dirt, tree bark, shells, etc.)

STEP 1 Select a Theme

How are African masks used in ceremonies? They might be used to celebrate life's important events, such as weddings, births, or coming of age. Choose an important event in your life. Then create a mask to celebrate this event. First, make a few pencil sketches on paper to create a design for your mask. Remember that your mask is a sculpture. Your sketches should indicate areas that you want to emphasize with three-dimensional elements. Then make a list of materials that symbolize your theme. These can include both found objects and natural materials.

TIP: Get creative with your materials list. Unusual materials make more interesting masks!



How did the student who made this mask use found objects?

Cut out the eyes with an X-acto knife.



Paint or collage the background.



Glue found objects and natural materials to your mask.



The student who made this mask used outlines to add detail.

STEP 2 Create Your Mask

Draw the outline of your mask on a sheet of cardboard, card stock, or poster board. The scale of your mask should be life-size or slightly larger. Draw a very faint vertical line through the center of your mask. This will help keep it symmetrical. Sketch the facial features and any other details onto your mask. Use scissors to cut out the mask. If you'd like, you can also cut holes for features such as the eyes and mouth using an X-acto knife. If you are using cardboard, turn your mask over and score the back carefully with several vertical lines. This will help the mask fit the contours of your face.

TIP: Your mask doesn't have to be an oval or a circle.

STEP 3 Personalize Your Mask

Paint or collage the entire surface of your mask to create an interesting background. When it is dry, work with found and natural materials from your list to embellish your mask. As you arrange your materials, make choices about how the shape, color, and texture of the materials can emphasize parts of the face. Remember to incorporate elements and principles of art such as form, shape, pattern, balance, texture, and color. When you are happy with the arrangement of your materials, glue them to your mask.

TIP: Experiment before attaching your materials. Varied arrangements can show your theme in different ways.

Prepared by Kera Dobrowolaki
Dr. Phillips High School
Orlando, Florida

Art Above the Rest

John Piper talks about making the world's most famous balloons

SCHOLASTIC ART: What is your job?

JOHN PIPER: I oversee the illustrators, designers, and sculptors who make Macy's events happen. A big part of our job is making the balloons for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

SA: How did you get your job?

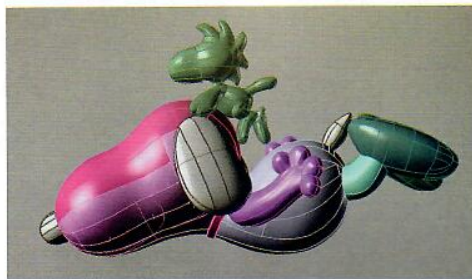
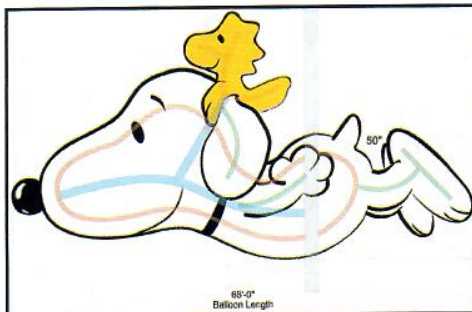
JP: I started as a carpenter working on the floats for the parade. Then the head of the studio asked if I wanted to work on the balloons. Of course I did! When he retired a few years later, he handed me the reins.

SA: How do you make a balloon?

JP: An artist makes a pencil sketch and then turns it into a 2-D scale computer drawing. Artists use the scale drawing to build an armature, which is like a metal skeleton. They add clay, sculpting it to look exactly like we want the character to look in its flying pose. Then we make two rigid molds from the clay. We paint one mold to look just like the balloon. The designers draw all the technical information on the surface of the other mold. This becomes the blueprint for the balloon. We translate this information to create patterns for the fabric that will become the balloon.

SA: What science is involved in making sure the balloons float?

JP: You have to work out the physics of the weight of the fabric and the paint versus



Technical drawings help artists develop balloons like Snoopy and Woodstock.

the lift of the helium inside the balloon. The smallest balloon we can make is a 10-foot-diameter sphere. Anything smaller won't float because the helium won't have enough lift to counter the weight of the fabric and paint.

SA: What do you love about your job?

JP: I love the moment when the parade begins and all the spectators start cheering. There is nothing so exhilarating as hearing three-and-a-half million people cheering in appreciation of your work.

SA: Do you have advice for students who want to be production designers?

JP: Always be open to unexpected opportunities. You never know which path will lead you to happiness.

John Piper



CAREER PROFILE

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

SALARY: Production designers earn between \$55,000 and \$75,000 per year, depending on location and experience.

EDUCATION: Most production designers have a bachelor's degree in production design.

GETTING STARTED:

- ▶ Volunteer at a theater to get practice building sets and props.
- ▶ Study different design sensibilities that you can apply to your work.
- ▶ Turn your favorite cartoon characters into designs for balloons in your sketchbook.