MARK DI SUVERO
BIG MO
TOM HANAFAN
RIVER’S EDGE PARK
IOWAWESTPUBLICART.ORG
Mark di Suvero is one of the most important American sculptors and is famous for being a pioneer in the use of steel as an art medium and the use of various objects as raw materials to build his sculptures. He was born in Shanghai, China in 1933, to Italian diplomats. His family moved to the United States in 1941 to escape the political unrest caused by World War II. While earning his degree in architecture at the University of California, he became involved in the art world and started to work as a sculptor. He moved to New York City, which was the center of the art world at that time.

While working for a cabinetmaker, Mark di Suvero was critically injured in an elevator accident that could have killed him. Doctors told him that he would never walk again, but he trained himself to walk with only his hands. He felt it was not complete and needed something more. That was when he added the moving pieces on top that rotate in opposite directions.

Mark di Suvero refers to his works as miniatures, compared to the bridge. He says that his works are so large that they could be seen from space. His large-scale sculptures can be seen in Europe, Australia, Canada, and all over the United States. His materials are so gestural and implied the actions of the artists as they made them. Mark di Suvero’s works are symbolic structures as widely different as mathematics, language, religion, and art. They are made to look like forms from nature? Which are made to look like actual creatures?

What do you think you might feel if you could move around and through the sculpture? How do you see this sculpture in relation to the location of the sculpture? What do you think Mark di Suvero was trying to say with this sculpture?

Mark di Suvero says, “Steel is an incredibly substantive capability that’s capable of handling space differently than marble or bronze. You can’t get steel’s cantilevering and weight. What structure in your area would have required humans to work together to build? What do you think Mark di Suvero was trying to say with this sculpture?

Vocabulary

Center of Gravity – the point at which the distribution of weight of an object is balanced;

Galvanised – characterized by regular lines and shapes;

Gesture – a movement of part of the body to express an idea or meaning;

Kinds of sounds you did talk about in your video? What do you think it was like to make art with these sounds?”

Mark di Suvero uses different kinds of steel for his sculptures. What kind of steel would you use? What kind of movement would you do on this sculpture? What do you think the movement relates to the location of the sculpture? What would you feel as you look at this sculpture?

Experimental with Art Making

Each student will create a flat piece of a sculpture out of poster board. Three-quarters of the sculptures should be made out of cardboard or stiff paper, with a maximum thickness of not more than 12 inches. They can be bent at an angle (like a V or an L). One-quarter of the students should create curved pieces. They should be no less than 6 inches. Divide the class into groups of four. Each group of four students will create a sculpture using paper punches and brads to attach the pieces.

As you put up your sculptures together you will need to problem solve: Where will you put your sculpture? Do you have a cantilever structure or an actual table? Will you be able to add any extra pieces to achieve either abrasive or artistic design? What do you think you might feel if you could move around and through the sculpture? What do you think Mark di Suvero was trying to say with this sculpture? What kind of movement are you going to use? Think back to the artists you have seen for our sculptures. What will you be doing to your sculpture? What will power the movement? Will you have to modify the design of your original sculpture to make it power? What will power your idea? Will you make sure to relate some element of nature?

After students are done, ask the following questions:

What is the most difficult engineering problem you encountered while designing your piece?

Explore big ideas:

Artists create motion in their art works.

Connect with Other Art, Artists and Cultures

Other artists and cultures have used motion in their art works, when it didn’t actually move. Look at the following works: Mark di Suvero, drawing 1 and drawing 2; Beethoven’s Quartet; Old Glory. With a national and international reputation for high quality art that attracts visitors from all over the world and boosts economic development. Curriculum author credit: Center for Innovation in Arts Education, University of Nebraska Omaha, Shari Hotchkiss, Dr. Joanna Swidzki

about the artist

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