

LIKE A BAT! CREATE A HANGING WIRE SCULPTURE

Let's get inspired by Beatrix Potter's striking watercolour *Study of the head of a bat, full face* and create your own hanging wire sculpture.



Beatrix Potter. *Study of the head of a bat, full face*, 1888. Watercolour, with traces of charcoal on paper, Sheet: 11.4 x 9 cm. Gift of the Trier-Fodor Foundation, 1991. © Art Gallery of Ontario 91/117

Potter is best known as the author and illustrator of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902), but did you know she also created many detailed watercolour animal studies. Check out this watercolour of her brother's pet bat in the AGO Collection.

Have you ever seen a bat sleep? They sleep hanging upside down so they can take off and fly straight into the air!

That reminds us of a hanging sculpture. Lots of artists create sculptures that suspend and hang in the air just like a bat. The artist Alexander Calder made hanging wire sculptures that even move! It's your turn – can you make a hanging “upside down” sculpture?

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Materials:

- Any wire that is easy to bend with your fingers and wire cutters (or you can use pipe cleaners too!)
- Tissue paper (white if you want to paint it, or try experimenting with coloured tissue)
- White glue and water (mixed together in a container – use 50% of each)
- Watercolour or acrylic paint and a paintbrush
- String (or another way to hang your sculpture)
- Other odds and ends for decoration like coloured ribbons or strips of paper (optional)

Experiment with wire:

- Using your fingers, bend the wire to create different shapes – this part is almost like drawing. Remember to leave enough wire at the end of each piece so you can attach the pieces together.
- Our sculpture will be abstract – which means it doesn't look like or represent any one thing. It focuses on different shapes and forms and can look like lots of different things! We made shapes like ovals, and spirals, and something inspired by a bat wing. Will your sculpture be abstract? Will it look like an animal, or something else you can imagine?



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- Attach the wire shapes by twisting the wire ends together. Make sure to attach one extra wire and bend into a hook. This is how you will hang your piece.

Add tissue paper:

- Hold your tissue paper against the wire sculpture and brush it gently with the glue and water mixture (you might need an extra set of helper hands for this part!). The tissue paper is very fragile – if it rips, you can add a few layers at the same time.



- To make your sculpture strong, make sure to add at least 2-3 layers of tissue and make sure the water and glue mixture soaks all the way through. You can cover the whole sculpture with tissue paper or just a few parts – whatever you like!
- Let your sculpture dry – overnight is best. When your sculpture is dry the tissue paper areas will be hard and strong.

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Time to decorate and hang:

- Use your watercolour or acrylic paint to decorate your sculpture. Paint solid colours or patterns, and you can even add ribbons or string or extra twists and curls of paper to bring your sculpture to life.
- Hang it! Just like a bat – our sculpture will hang and be suspended in the air. You can hang it from a nail in the wall or from a string tied to the ceiling.



Variations:

- What other ways could you create sculptures that hang like a bat? Using paper, fabric, string or even origami. Have fun and create lots of different hanging sculptures!
- What other animals could inspire a sculpture? How would you make a sculpture like a giraffe, an elephant or a monkey?

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