

Storm King Art Center Teacher Resource



Sculpture: A 3-D Experience

Explore constructed, cast, and carved creations in Storm King's striking setting. Discover how sculptors invite us to engage with form, space, balance, scale, and materials. Recommended for grades K-12.

Dear Teachers,

We are delighted to welcome you to Storm King Art Center, a 500-acre outdoor museum located in New York's Hudson Valley, where visitors experience large-scale sculpture and site-specific commissions under open sky.

This resource is designed to help you prepare to explore the theme of "Sculpture: A 3-D Experience" with your students at Storm King. By approaching visits through a thematic lens, we hope to engage learners in focused close looking, activities, and conversation—providing a solid foundation as students construct connections throughout their experience.

Whether you have chosen a guided tour or will be facilitating your own visit, this resource offers pre-visit ideas to prepare for your trip, tips and tools for onsite engagement, and post-visit activity prompts for continued exploration.

During a guided visit, your educator might build the experience around a particular sub-theme related to Sculpture (ex: Scale, Process, Abstraction). Please be in touch at least two weeks before your program if you have specific interests.

While you may not see all artworks in this packet during a guided program, we invite you to visit additional artworks after your tour, if time allows. The artworks in this packet are situated within one mile of the School Group arrival area.

If you have additional questions about your upcoming visit, please contact us at:
groups@stormkingartcenter.org

We look forward to welcoming you and your students soon!

Sincerely,
The Storm King Education Team

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Cover Image: Louise Nevelson (American, born Russia, 1899–1988), *City on the High Mountain*, 1983. Painted steel, 20 ft. 6 in. x 23 ft. x 13 ft. 6 in. (624.8 x 701 x 411.5 cm). Purchase Fund. © 2017 Estate of Louise Nevelson/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Pre-Visit

INTRODUCTION TO STORM KING ART CENTER

Storm King Art Center is a 500-acre outdoor museum, where visitors experience large-scale sculpture under open sky. We strongly recommend you download our new, free mobile guide on the Bloomberg Connects app (available on the Apple Store, Google Play, or at <https://www.bloombergconnects.org/>). Here you'll find photos, videos, audio recordings, maps, suggested routes, activities for children and families, and more. You and your students can learn more about Storm King's [environmental stewardship](#), collection, and community connections in this brief [Oral History video](#), featuring Storm King President, John P. Stern.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME “SCULPTURE: A 3-D EXPERIENCE”

Ask students what they think a sculpture is, and how it is different from a painting or drawing. A sculpture is a three-dimensional artwork, and some elements of sculpture that students will explore at Storm King include: Form, Negative Space, and Balance.

Form: A sculptural form is a three-dimensional shape, with length, width, and height. Invite students to create three dimensional forms with their bodies, paper, or clay. Can they create a form that is geometric (cone, sphere, cube)? An organic, or free-flowing, form? A form that represents something familiar? An abstract form?

Negative Space: Negative space is the “empty” space within and around the form of the sculpture. Display an object with clearly defined negative spaces, like a chair with slats or a plant. Ask students to fully cover a sheet of paper with a pencil. Then, ask them to use an eraser to reveal only the negative spaces they see within and around the object (a demo might be helpful). Younger students can trace the negative spaces in the air with their fingers, or create different shapes within the negative space of their bodies (a circle with their arms, a triangle with their legs, etc).

Balance: Sculptors create pieces that are structurally and visually balanced. They need to think about the amount of weight in different areas, and how that might affect a sculpture’s center of gravity. One [activity](#) to explore center of gravity is to stack text books or blocks, and slowly slide the top object as far over the edge of the stack as it will balance (to its center of gravity). Continue all the way down the stack. Or, students could see how they need to shift their own center of gravity when they stand on one leg and then bend that leg.

OBSERVE AND DISCUSS

Project or print an image of Joel Shapiro’s sculpture, [Untitled](#) (page 4). Ask students what they notice about form, negative space, and balance in the sculpture. Share Joel Shapiro’s [Oral History Video](#). In small groups or partners, ask students to discuss what they noticed about the artist’s choices and process. What are their reactions to seeing the sculpture indoors vs. outdoors?

Artwork Images and Information



Joel Shapiro (American, b. 1941), *Untitled*, 1994. Bronze, 21 ft. x 19 ft. x 14 ft. (640.1 x 579.1 x 426.7 cm). Gift of Sony Corporation of America. Generous support also provided by Georgina T. and Thomas A. Russo. © 2017 Joel Shapiro/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

[Untitled \(1994\) by Joel Shapiro](#)

Joel Shapiro's untitled sculpture, composed of five diagonal bronze beams and inspired by the form of a walking man, activates the space it inhabits and encourages viewers to experience it from all angles. At the time of its creation, the twenty-one-foot-tall sculpture was the largest work the artist had ever created.

The sculpture takes its form from a model that Shapiro first created out of wood; such light, small-scale models allow the artist a greater freedom and fluidity to experiment with sculptural form. Working with an industrial fabricator, Shapiro then translated his model into this large bronze sculpture that still bears clues of its origins in wood. The work was originally commissioned by the Sony Corporation of America for the lobby of their former headquarters on Madison Avenue in Manhattan, and was installed there in 1995; it was sited at Storm King, in collaboration with the artist, in 2016.

Many examples of Shapiro's work derive from the abstract, geometric style of Minimalist sculpture while also explicitly referencing the human figure—a subject almost entirely absent from the Minimalist generation that preceded him. Since the early 1980s, the figure has been a

primary focus for the artist; even so, he views his subjects as instruments to aid his and his viewers' contemplation of abstract or perceptual space. "The object in and of itself is totally boring," Shapiro has noted. "The only interesting sculpture is sculpture that deals with spatial issues of perception."

Media: Joel Shapiro's [Oral History Video](#); Audio recording and photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects.



Louise Nevelson (American, born Russia, 1899–1988), *City on the High Mountain*, 1983. Painted steel, 20 ft. 6 in. x 23 ft. x 13 ft. 6 in. (624.8 x 701 x 411.5 cm). Purchase Fund. © 2017 Estate of Louise Nevelson/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

[City on the High Mountain \(1983\) by Louise Nevelson](#)

Louise Nevelson's *City on the High Mountain*, sited just outside Storm King's Museum Building, is a playful and complex assemblage of black-painted steel. Nevelson frequently combined elements from existing works to create new compositions, and *City on a High Mountain* is sourced from models for different sculptures she had created several years earlier. Conjoining the elements with large curvilinear shapes, she eventually enlarged what was a ten-foot model to the sculpture's current height of more than twenty feet. Additional pieces added to create the final composition include the grill-like "lace," which reminded her of lace doilies from her childhood, and a gong-like, suspended element. Of the ball of railroad spikes, created several years earlier and placed at the very top, Nevelson noted, "Sometimes it's only a period that really finishes the sentence, and that was the period that finished that sentence." The entire assemblage is painted black, a signature color Nevelson used extensively for three decades. "In the academic world, they used to say black and white were no colors," Nevelson observed, "but I'm twisting that to tell you that for me it is the total color. It means totality. It means: contains all."

Media: Audio recording and photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects



Charles Simonds (American, b. 1945), *Dwellings*, 1981. Clay, sand, ceramic bricks, and sticks, 13 x 22 1/2 x 10 in. (33 x 57.2 x 25.4 cm). Purchased with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and gift of the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation

[Dwellings \(1981\) by Charles Simonds](#)

Storm King's two works by Charles Simonds, each entitled *Dwellings*, are small, detailed installations resembling miniature civilizations. Simonds cut his miniature bricks from flat sheets of clay with a knife, then laid them in place with tweezers. Installed in consecutive window bays of the Museum Building, the installations resemble archaeological remains of the Native American cave dwellings Simonds saw on visits to the southwest United States as a child. Simonds began his series of *Dwellings* in building crevices and vacant lots near his New York City home in the early 1970s. He reflected, "Working in the street revealed extraordinary possibilities to me that threw into relief the limitations of timeless white spaces and their inhabitants." At the time, he was surprised and excited by how much local "truckers and workers ... jumped in and loved [the projects], it lightened their day." He was happy, he noted, to have created an art form that was appreciated outside the art world.

Media: Audio recording and photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects



Left: Ursula von Rydingsvard (American, born Germany, b. 1942), *Luba*, 2009–10. Cedar, cast bronze, and graphite, 17 ft. 8 in. x 11 ft. 7 in. x 7 ft. 4 in. (538.5 x 353.1 x 223.5 cm). Made possible through generous lead support from the artist, Roberta and Steven Denning, Galerie Lelong, Nancy Brown Negley and The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston, and Thomas A. and Georgina T. Russo. Additional support is provided by an anonymous donor, the Hazen Polsky Foundation, the Ohnell Family Foundation, and Hume R. Steyer. Special thanks also go to Henry S. McNeil and Marion Swingle. © Ursula von Rydingsvard, courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York

Right: Ursula von Rydingsvard (American, born Germany, b. 1942), *For Paul*, 1990–92/2001. Cedar and graphite, 14 ft. 4 in. x 9 ft. x 13 ft. 8 in. (436.9 x 274.3 x 416.6 cm). Gift of Sherry and Joel Mallin, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, Vera G. List, Ann M. Hatch, and Steven and Nancy Oliver. © Ursula von Rydingsvard, courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York

[Luba \(2009–10\) by Ursula von Rydingsvard](#) and [For Paul \(1990–92/2001\) by Ursula von Rydingsvard](#)

Ursula von Rydingsvard's primary material—used in constructing both *Luba* and *For Paul*—is four-by-four lengths of cedar wood, a material that, as the artist has said, “it seems to be I’m able to speak through.” Von Rydingsvard stacks, glues, and cuts into these beams freehand with a circular saw—an intuitive process that the artist has likened to the freedom and creativity that many artists associate with the process of drawing. *Luba* is the first work on a large scale that von Rydingsvard created in solid cedar. *For Paul*, made nearly twenty years prior, is composed of an internal honeycomb pattern and sited so that its repeated openings can be seen from a landing above. *For Paul* is dedicated to von Rydingsvard's husband.

Von Rydingsvard's sculptures are large, but retain a sense of human scale. On one side of the main form of *Luba*, a delicate appendage extends down to the ground; von Rydingsvard has said that it is intended to resemble the arm of a mother cradling a baby. The lower portion of this arm, supporting its spindly reach, is made of bronze and marks the first time von Rydingsvard

has combined bronze and cedar into a single work. Highlighting the handiwork and a physical, tangible connection to her sculpture, von Rydingsvard then rubbed graphite into areas of the surface of *Luba*, emphasizing the shadow and depth of the circular saw's cuts.

Von Rydingsvard has described her background as influential within her practice. Born to Polish and Ukrainian peasant farmers, her early childhood was marked by the strain of living in eight different refugee camps over the course of five years in postwar Germany. She immigrated with her family to the United States when she was still a small child. In form, process, and meaning, she sees her work as responsive to eastern European peasant traditions.

Media: Ursula von Rydingsvard's [Oral History Video](#); Audio recording and photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects.

During Your Visit at Storm King

GENERAL INFORMATION

PREPARE TO BE OUTDOORS: Storm King is a 500-acre outdoor sculpture museum. We're open rain or shine. Please be sure your group comes prepared to spend the day outdoors, wears comfortable walking shoes, and brings sunscreen, bug spray, and weather-appropriate attire.

HELP US PROTECT THE SCULPTURES: Touching, walking on, or climbing on most of the works of art at Storm King is prohibited. The sunscreen, hand lotion, bug spray, and even natural oils on your hands damage the surface of the sculptures. You might not think one touch matters but remember, about 200,000 people visit Storm King every year. Thousands of touches add up to lots of damage.

INTERACTIVE ARTWORKS: Artworks which visitors may touch and with which you may physically interact are designated on the map and on the grounds with a hand icon.

GROUND: The Art Center's grounds comprise varied terrain including rolling meadows, hills, wooded areas, paved paths, and gravel paths. During guided tours, please be prepared to cover up to one mile on grass. If you have a limited amount of time, we suggest making your way to Museum Hill to see the sculptures, vistas, and Visitor Center.

ACCESSIBILITY: There are gravel paths throughout the Art Center that can be utilized by strollers and/or wheelchairs. For guided tours, more accessible routes may be planned with advanced notice. You can also find accessible routes on Storm King's digital guide on the Bloomberg Connects app. Groups with limited mobility are always welcome to use the public tram on a first come, first served basis. Seating is limited and cannot be guaranteed. If you have questions about the use of the public tram, please contact us at groups@stormkingartcenter.org to discuss your group's needs.

TIME: We recommend planning at least 3 hours for your visit. Guided tours are usually 45-60 minutes. If your visit is self-guided, or you have time before or after your tour, you may have lunch at a designated picnic area, and explore the grounds on your own. Suggestions for student engagement are available on pages 12 & 14 of this resource packet.

MATERIALS: You may choose to bring pencils and sketchbooks or notebooks for students to draw and write during the self-guided portion of your visit. Suggestions for student engagement are available on pages 12 & 14 of this resource packet.

MAP: Access an up-to-date map of Storm King under the heading "Grounds and Accessibility" on our ["Visit" webpage](#), or pick up a map when you arrive at Storm King.

SCULPTURE: A 3-D EXPERIENCE

Continue exploring the theme of sculpture with your students at Storm King. If you are on a self-guided visit, or have time before or after your tour, walk the grounds. What do students notice about form, space, and balance in each sculpture you encounter?

Visit some or all of the artworks featured in this resource packet:



Artwork: *Untitled* (1994) by Joel Shapiro

Location: Maple Rooms; see map on page 12

Engagement: View from multiple angles. Ask students what they notice about the artwork in person, which they did not notice when viewing a photo of it in class. Ask younger students to recreate the form with their bodies. Invite older students to sketch or photograph from multiple angles. The artist described this sculpture as having “a lot of energy.” What do students see that might relate to the idea of energy?



Artworks: *Luba* (2009–10) and *For Paul* (1990–92/2001) by Ursula von Rydingsvard

Location: Museum Hill; see map on page 12

Engagement: What do students notice about the materials and form? How many different words can they use to describe these sculptures? What do students notice about balance and negative space in *Luba*? Can they find the area of the sculpture where the artist used bronze? Why do they think she might have made that choice?



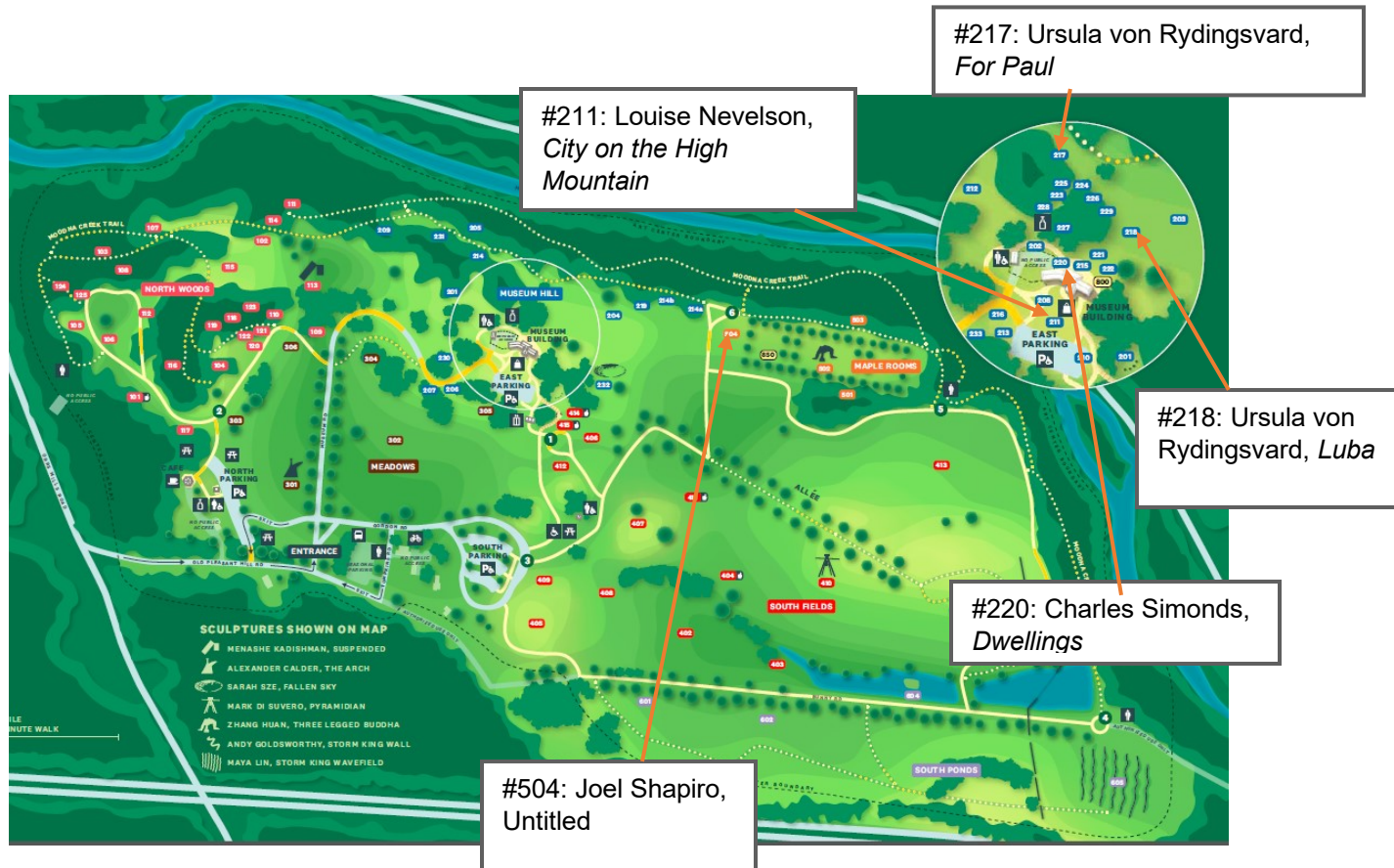
Artworks: *City on the High Mountain* (1983) by Louise Nevelson and *Dwellings* (1981) by Charles Simonds

Location: Museum Hill; see map on page 12

Engagement: Observe, compare, and contrast these two sculptures. Ask younger students to tell a story about living in each place. Ask older students to consider how the scale and materials affect their interpretation and experience of each work.



“SCULPTURE: A 3-D EXPERIENCE” ARTWORK LOCATIONS



TIPS AND TECHNIQUES FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AT STORM KING

EXPLORE PERSPECTIVE. View sculptures and vistas from afar, close up, above, and below. Move around and through artworks to experience them from different angles. Invite students to create a rectangle with their hands to use as a viewfinder, “zooming in” on details and “cropping” views. Try photographing the same artwork or area from multiple perspectives. Ask students to imagine or draw what something might look like from a bird’s-eye view or a worm’s-eye view.

ENGAGE YOUR SENSES. Take the time to slow down and breathe deeply. What scents do you notice? What sounds do you hear? Invite students to create a six word poem or story inspired by their sensory experiences. In addition to feeling the tickle of breezes and grass blades, we invite visitors to interact with sculptures marked on the map with a green hand icon.

EMBRACE THE LANDSCAPE. Enjoy cloud gazing, downhill rolling, and creature and critter watching. Please engage with the land safely and respectfully.

SKETCH. Ask students to try capturing sculptures and vistas with single-line contour drawings. Challenge them to create quick sketches without lifting their pencil from the page. Try drawing the same artwork or area from multiple angles. Zoom in on details. Experiment with mark making to capture different textures and create compositions featuring both sculpture and landscape.

GET MOVING! Encourage students to explore ideas with their bodies. They might physically recreate shapes they observe, or respond to art and nature through dance and movement.

ASK OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS. Engage students in conversation by asking open-ended questions, such as: What do you notice? What does this make you think of? What do you wonder? What artworks or areas do you like the most? Why?

CONSIDER TITLES. While the audio guide and Storm King [website](#) can provide additional information about each artwork, many works have nearby placards listing the artist and title. You might add an additional layer to group conversations by considering how a title might relate to an artwork.

TUNE INTO THE AUDIO GUIDE. Accessible on Storm King’s new digital guide on the free Bloomberg Connects App. Make the most of your visit with audio and video commentary by artists and Storm King staff. Artwork lookup numbers can be found on the map and on the label next to each artwork.

PICK UP AN INTERACTIVE GUIDE. You can pick up our [Field Guide for Young Explorers](#) at the Visitor Center on Museum Hill, or from staff members when you arrive. Explore art and landscape with guided prompts for drawing, writing, and conversation.

Post-Visit

REFLECT

Ask students to individually journal, or talk with a partner, about their visit to Storm King. What are some sculptures and ideas they explored?

MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS

Review some images of sculptures at Storm King, and consider choices that each artist made about form, negative space, and balance.

Play Ursula von Rydingsvard's [Oral History Video](#) for students.

Some questions for older students: What did you learn about the artist's materials and process? Why do you think she might have chosen to make *For Paul* taller when it was placed below a hill? What ideas came up about the form and negative space of *Luba*?

For younger students: Act out the process of stacking imaginary wood planks and carving the edges. Recreate the form of *Luba* with your body. The artist said the word *Luba*, in Polish and Russian, means a female that you have a closeness to, and that part of the sculpture is inspired by the space under someone's arm. What feelings or ideas do you have when you look at that part of the sculpture?

ART EXPLORATION

Prompt for Students: Using one material, how will you create a sculpture that features form, negative space, and balance?

Offer students one material, such as clay, aluminum foil, or paper. If using paper, you might want to also provide tape or glue.

First, lead students in an inquiry with the material. What are all of the different ways that they can shape it (ex: roll, bend, etc)? How can they make the material balance and stand on its own?

After students have created their sculptures, ask them to create a drawing that shows a space where they imagine their sculpture being displayed, and that shows the scale of the sculpture. The scale is a sculpture's size compared to people, spaces, and objects around it.

Invite students to share some of their choices with the class, or do a "gallery walk" around the room to explore students' sculptures and sketches.

Resources

Storm King Art Center Collection

<https://collections.stormking.org/index.php/About/collection>

John P. Stern Oral History

<https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/oralhistory/4867>

Exploratorium Teacher Institute. "Take It from the Top: How does this stack up?"

<https://www.exploratorium.edu/snacks/take-it-from-top>

Joel Shapiro Oral History

<https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/oralhistory/5722>

Ursula von Rydingsvard Oral History

<https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/oralhistory/4861>

Storm King Art Center Groups

<https://stormking.org/groups/>