

Twisted Wire Sculpture

Ruth Asawa's *Untitled (S.114, Hanging, Six-Lobed Continuous Form within a Form with One Suspended and Two Tied Spheres)*, ca. 1958

Key Concepts

- Lines and shapes
- Materials and process
- Shadows

Materials

- 4 pieces of wire, each 30" long. Tip: use wire that bends easily
- A piece of string
- Optional: a clipboard, or a binder clip and sturdy piece of cardboard

Introduction

- Describe the lines in this sculpture. Are they thin or thick? Curvy or angular? How would you describe the shapes in this sculpture? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What questions would you ask the artist about how she made this artwork? What challenges might she have faced while creating it?
- What does this work of art make you think of? If you could give this sculpture a different title, what would it be?

Instructions

1. Gather your pieces of wire into one bundle and bend them all in half.
2. Leaving a little loop at the bend, twist the wires together a few times. Tip: clamp the top loop with a clipboard, or a binder clip attached to a sturdy piece of cardboard, to make the next steps easier.
3. Separate the eight pieces of wire that extend from the top loop so your bundle of wires looks a bit like an octopus.
4. Grab two neighboring wires and twist them around each other three or four times.
5. Repeat this process with the other three pairs of wires until all pairs of wires are twisted together. You should now have four pairs of wires twisted together. You've just completed the first row of twists.
6. Now take the right wire from one pair and twist it with the left wire in the neighboring pair.

7. Repeat this process three more times to complete the row.
8. Repeat steps 4 and 5.
9. Gather all of the wires together and twist them tightly two or three times.
10. Shape your wires into an orb, by pulling the twisted sides outward slightly.
11. To make a second orb, splay the wires out and repeat the steps above.
12. Twist the remaining wires together several times to secure them.
Optional: if you'd like, you can use longer lengths of wire to make a sculpture with three, four, or even five orbs!
13. Slip a piece of string through the top loop and hang your sculpture.

Relevant Information

California artist Ruth Asawa is perhaps best known for her wire sculptures, which she thought of as three dimensional line drawings in space. She made her sculptures from ordinary, industrial materials such as copper and brass wire, and pioneered a technique of looping a single wire into graceful, wavy, billowy shapes. This wire technique was inspired by a trip to Mexico, where a craftsman taught Asawa how to loop a basket. For other wire sculptures, she began with a bundle of wires that she divided and tied into branching forms. Though Asawa's sculptures suggest things like waves, jellyfish, plants, and trees, they do not represent specific objects.

Discussion

- What were some of the decisions you made in creating your artwork?
- Does the shape of your work remind you of anything? If so, what does it remind you of?
- What title did you give your artwork? How does the title relate to your work of art?
- Check out the shadows that your work makes. Do the shadows get you to see your work differently? How so?