

A VERY NOBLE CAR: MAKING MODELS WITH MEANING

"The cars tell a story because they form a part of history." - Leandro Gómez Quintero

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students are introduced to Cuban artist Leandro Gómez Quintero. A former teacher of history and philosophy, he uses cardboard and refuse found on local streets and beaches to create small-scale models of the vintage cars and trucks in his remote city of Baracoa. He is especially drawn to the Willys Jeeps that were first imported to Cuba during World War II. The models are painstakingly detailed and aged so they realistically represent aspects of daily life in Baracoa. Students view a video to learn how Leandro Gómez Quintero works, the materials that he uses, and the reasons behind his choice of subject matter. After viewing the video and participating in discussion, students brainstorm ideas for a scale model that represents an aspect of their own life or an interest of theirs. Students problem-solve translating scale and proportion, and they experiment with basic materials to achieve desired effects in their finished models.

Grade Level: 7–12

Estimated Time: four to six 45-minute class periods

Craft In America Theme/Episode: MINIATURES

Background Information



Leandro Gómez Quintero (b. 1976, Baracoa, Cuba) uses paper, cardboard and found objects to create models of American cars and Jeeps, all of which are used as methods of transportation in his hometown. They are individually hand painted and detailed to mimic the original vehicle. His sculpture represents Willys Jeeps from 1942–1955, as well as Dodge Power Wagons, GMCs, and Fords from the era. These sculptures are representations of what his community sees on a daily basis and Leandro hopes to preserve and offer knowledge through his art, as well as reflect the history of transportation and everyday life in Cuba. Quintero says, "They bring humor and call attention

to the fact that we are an isolated community within a country that has been isolated for many years. By showing the people a part of their everyday lives in a lighthearted way, they come to appreciate and can smile at some of the difficulties that we encounter in just trying to live our lives and getting from one place to another."

(Courtesy of International Folk Art Alliance, 2017)

Key Concepts

- Making art can be playful and enjoyable.
- Artists use creative experimenting to solve problems when making art.
- Artists practice skills to help them develop and refine their artworks.

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Critical Questions

- How can making art be playful and enjoyable?
- How do artists experiment when making art?
- How can art skills help us develop and refine our artworks?

Objectives

Students will:

- Students will understand that the process of making art can be playful and involve problem solving.
- Students will experiment to solve problems while making a miniature model.
- Students will practice skills to help them develop and refine their chosen model.

Vocabulary

Compelling, ingenuity, iteration, laminating, miniature, model, perspective, proportion, replica, scale, scoring (creasing paper)

Interdisciplinary Connections

- Spanish: The video is a good source for learning some Spanish vocabulary since Leandro Gómez Quintero speaks Spanish, and English subtitles appear when he speaks. You might make a list of words he uses such as paper, cardboard, recycling, bicycle, etc. for students to listen and look for. Also, any students who are fluent in Spanish can help any non-Spanish speaking classmates to listen for and locate the words, as well as help with pronunciation.
- Social Studies: Possible lesson topics might include the following:
 - The role of Willys Jeeps in World War II.
 - Trade issues that affect Cuba, which lead to Leandro Gómez Quintero's need to "resolve," as his friend says, the problems of scarcity of art materials (and of automobiles.)
 - A look at the complex, historic relations between the United States and Cuba.
- Geography: Use a wall map (or print copies of a smaller map) that includes southeast states in the U.S. (especially Florida,) the Gulf of Mexico and adjacent land, and the Caribbean states (including Cuba, with Baracoa highlighted) so students develop a sense of the location where Leandro Gómez Quintero lives.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

This lesson addresses the following standards. The performance standards listed here are directly related to the lesson's goals.

- Visual Arts/Creating #VA:Cr2.1.8a
Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of artmaking or designing.
Process Component: Investigate
Anchor Standard: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- Visual Arts/Responding #VA:Re7.1.8a
Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment and impact the visual image that one conveys to others.
Process Component: Perceive
Anchor Standard: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

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- Visual Arts/Connecting #VA:Cn11.1.7a
Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses.
Process Component: Interpret
Anchor Standard: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Resources and Materials for Teaching Resources

- Craft in America MINIATURES episode, craftinamerica.org/episode/miniatures, Leandro Gómez Quintero's segment, and Craft in America's website, craftinamerica.org
- The introduction to the Miniatures episode briefly shows other artists attending the International Folk Art Market, and they show additional compelling examples of many works in miniature.
- Share the images of Leandro Gómez Quintero's work on the Craft in America website with students. More images of his work can be found by a Google search of Leandro Gómez Quintero's name, and these may be printed out for class use.
- Map (see "geography", above.)
- YouTube is a valuable source for how-to videos. Students can research videos to see, for example, how to work with cardboard or how to make models. This may help in problem solving their model construction.

Worksheets

- Worksheet 1: A Very Noble Car
- Worksheet 2: Making It Work
- Worksheet 3: Telling a Story

Materials

- Sketchbooks
- Pencils, markers
- Paper of all kinds: colorful scraps, newsprint, and plain copy paper
- Index cards for artist's statements
- Rulers
- Templates and stencils; especially shapes for tracing
- Protractors and/or compasses for drawing circles and other shapes
- Paper punches
- Scissors
- Craft knives or X-acto knives
- Placemat sized pieces of cardboard or plastic cutting mats to protect tables from knives
- Cardboard: Collect (and flatten for use) thin cardboard boxes such as cracker, candy and cereal boxes; as well as corrugated cardboard boxes.
- Tape
- Glues: hot glue guns and glue sticks; white glue
- Brass paper fasteners
- Staplers and staples
- Sturdy large eyed needles and string for potential attachment methods
- Paint (acrylic or tempera) and paintbrushes



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- Collected materials inspired by those in the video: bits and pieces of broken objects, discarded cups and utensils (cleaned off after lunch), discarded plastic bags, lids and caps from containers such as toothpaste, empty product containers and bottles (such as shampoo) of all sorts.
- Optional: paper maché materials for further sculpting possibilities

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

(one to two 45 minute class period)

Students will view the MINIATURES episode, focusing on the segment featuring artist Leandro Gómez Quintero, craftinamerica.org/episode/miniatures. Using the questions on Worksheet 1: A Very Noble Car, the teacher guides the class to listening for and recording information about the artist. Through class discussions and with sketchbooks, students begin to brainstorm a scale model that represents or is a replica of something that they are interested in or care about. Using Worksheet 2: Making It Work, students begin determining how they will build their model, considering scale, proportion, construction, and materials. After studio work constructing models, students use Worksheet 3: Telling a Story to reflect on the project, share a story about their model, and create an artist's statement for display.

Before Viewing

Introduce the scope of the lesson to students, sharing the key concepts, critical questions, and objectives. Share photos of Leandro Gómez Quintero's work and invite students to begin a list on the board guessing what materials he uses for the models.

Have students use Worksheet 1: A Very Noble Car, to fill in answers to questions about the video. Pause the video at different times so students can record their answers. Have them work together in small groups to spot and share the answers to the questions. Possible discussion responses are listed after Worksheet 1. Class discussion can happen during viewing and after viewing.

After Viewing

Take time after students complete Worksheet 1 for further discussion. What did students find interesting? Next, introduce the scope of the project. Ask the class: After seeing Leandro Gómez Quintero's work, what kind of model would you want to make? Have some student volunteers doodle and sketch ideas from their classmates on the board to encourage brainstorming. Help prompt students to talk about things they like. In addition to trucks, what are some other things that move that would be fun to create in miniature? (Examples might be roller coasters, scooters, skateboards and cars.) Think about places...(Movie theater, mall, school, kitchen, sports arena, your neighborhood.) Think about activities you like to do...(Hiking, cycling, basketball, tennis, watching TV, playing video games.) What part of that favorite thing could you recreate in miniature? This question encourages students to narrow down their idea; for example, from a roller coaster to a single roller coaster car, from a kitchen to a little stove with cookies cooling on a tray, or from a playing field to a bench with some tiny sports equipment.

Studio Production

(two to six 45-minute class periods)

Students can begin sketching their ideas in their sketchbooks. As they sketch and you circulate, encourage students to think about the following. Can something be difficult to make but still

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enjoyable? Do you think the models are easy for Leandro Gómez Quintero to make? Encourage students to draw sketches of some things they think would be fun to make and enjoyable to have. If you are good at thinking up ideas, you could share some with friends to help them brainstorm. Encourage students to share ideas with at least one classmate. Ask each other: How do you think you'll make that?

Hand out worksheet 2 and give students time to examine it. Then have students gather for a demonstration. It's helpful to get a student volunteer or two to try each technique next to you, so the class can watch a peer try the techniques. There are four techniques to demonstrate; you may want to show them at intervals during students' work time.

Demonstrations

Scoring paper

Demonstrate scoring paper and lightweight cardboard. Use a dull but pointed tool (knitting needles work well) to press into paper without cutting it while "drawing" a line (straight or curved) across the paper. Demonstrate creasing the paper after creating the scoring line.



Cutting cardboard with X-acto knives

Focus on safety as well as protecting table surfaces with a cardboard sheet or a plastic mat.

Joining cardboard pieces with paper strips

Cardboard edges and angles (such as where a model car roof meets the side of a car) can be secured together neatly by using strips of lightweight paper the way you would use tape. Cut the strips 1" wide. Cut the lengths equal to the length of the edges being connected. Fold the paper strip lengthwise so it will fit the edges of the cardboard that will be glued. Then open the paper strip and apply glue with a brush. (Mix equal parts white glue and water and keep this solution in a lidded jar.) Quickly apply the glue-painted paper strip along the cardboard edges to connect them. Prop the glued pieces until they dry.

Laminating paper

The same glue and water solution may be used to laminate the surface of cardboard when covering it with paper- for example with a patterned, colored, or decorative paper. If you want the paper to wrap around the cardboard edges, cut the paper slightly larger than the surface of the cardboard to be covered. Otherwise cut the paper to fit the cardboard without overhang. Apply the glue and water solution with a wide paintbrush to the back of the paper, then place the glued side of the paper on top of the cardboard and smooth it out, wrapping any edges around the cardboard. The paper will appear even smoother as it dries and shrinks.

One more discussion, about scale and proportion

Explain scale to students by looking at dollhouse scale (miniature furniture examples are useful here.) Dollhouse scale is 1:12, meaning 1 foot in the human world equals 1 inch in typical miniatures dollhouse world. A 6 foot tall human is 6 inches tall in dollhouse scale. "Playscale," or fashion doll scale (such as Barbie) is 1:6, meaning that 1-inch in fashion doll scale equals 6 inches in real life. A 6 foot human would be 12-inches tall in fashion doll scale. You can also look at the world of model trains to see various miniature scales such as N, HO, and O scale. Proportion, in

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this project, concerns striving to keep the parts of a model in scale or in proportion with each other: matching in apparent size so as to look like the actual size original. However, if students' work develops varying proportions (or scales) it could still be appealing as in a cartoon representation with exaggerated or varying proportions.

Making Models

Worksheet 2: Making It Work guides and directs students through steps of planning their models. Have tools available for students to sketch, estimate scale and measurements, and experiment with the techniques you demonstrated. Use the worksheet as a guide to circulate and check for understanding as students sketch, estimate sizing, imagine and sketch the parts they will need to make or find, and plan their model. When students finish the sheet, they are ready to begin constructing their model.

CLOSING STRATEGIES

Worksheet 3: Telling a Story instructs students to tell a short story about their model. Students interview a classmate about their model, listen to the classmate's story, and record it on their own worksheet. Students are guided to reflect on their skill building and construction process in making their model.

Reflection

Hand out index cards for students to create an artist's statement to be displayed with their work. They should include: Their name, the title of the work, the size of the model in inches, and the materials they used. Help students to choose an idea from Worksheet 3; such as a sentence about their story or a statement of a skill they developed, to add to their artist's statement. Students can punch a hole in the card and use a length of string to create a loop that can attach or hang next to their project. For display in school in a showcase or other suitable area, allow students to work together determining how to arrange the models.

Assessment

In discussions with the class and with individual students throughout the lesson; by examining the students' worksheets; and by witnessing the students' studio work, it should be evident that the student:

- Understands that the process of making art can be playful and involve problem solving.
- Experimented with materials to solve problems while making a miniature model.
- Practice skills that helped them develop and refine their chosen model.

Extensions

Once students have experimented with making a cardboard model, a future project could focus on furniture design or architecture as both fields use small-scale models as part of designing full-scale works.

Authors

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Worksheet #1: A Very Noble Car

"At night, I would see the silhouette of a Willys Jeep going down the street, lit only by the moon. And I said, I love that car." - Leandro Gómez Quintero

Write your answers to the questions as you watch the video:

1. What are the various ways people travel in Baracoa? List them here as you notice them.
2. Leandro Gómez Quintero makes small-scale versions of the vehicles in his city. How does he make them look "realistic?"
3. Why did Leandro Gómez Quintero start making Jeeps? What did he work at before he became an artist?
4. In what ways are Leandro Gómez Quintero's cars similar to toys you have seen? In what ways is his work playful? Think about his use of imagination.
5. What does Leandro Gómez Quintero use to make the vehicles? Where does he get his materials?
6. Leandro Gómez Quintero says, "I sometimes wonder what I would do in another country, another place with more resources. But then my work wouldn't be the same." What are some ways his work might not "be the same"?
7. The artist describes his interest in the Willys Jeeps he makes in several ways. He is interested in their history. He feels happy when making them. He wishes he had an actual Willys Jeep. He takes a ride in his friend's 1952 Jeep, which his friend, José Aurelio Vilató, describes as "a very noble car, very strong." And when Leandro Gómez Quintero first saw a Jeep as a boy, he says it was like falling in love. Can you think of something you like as much as that? It could be a thing, like a car, or a place, or maybe an activity. Could you turn that something into a model?

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Discussion of Worksheet 1: A Very Noble Car

1. What are the various ways people travel in Baracoa? List them here as you notice them.
Walking, bicycles, horses, horse drawn carriages, cars, trucks, and buses.
2. Leandro Gómez Quintero makes small-scale versions of the vehicles in his city. How does he make them look “realistic?”
The artist takes pains to add the effects of age and includes details to show how they are used. For example he adds dirt to the tires to show the effects of driving on a rocky road. He loads a truck body with lumber, and adds a lunch sack for the driver.
3. Why did Leandro Gómez Quintero start making Jeeps? What did he work at before he became an artist?
Leandro Gómez Quintero was a teacher of history and philosophy. When teaching his students about World War II, he made models of Willys Jeeps, to help illustrate their use in the war. These war surplus vehicles are a common part of everyday life in Baracoa, and would be familiar to his students.
4. In what ways are Leandro Gómez Quintero’s cars similar to toys you have seen? In what ways is his work playful? Think about his use of imagination.
The artist’s models, like toys, are miniature versions of objects. Representations of trucks and other vehicles are popular toys. His work is playful in that it can make us remember playing with toys. He tells stories about the models, and imaginative storytelling is playful. He enjoys his work, and things we enjoy can feel like play.
5. What does Leandro Gómez Quintero use to make the vehicles? Where does he get his materials?
During this discussion, students could re-examine their images of his work and then add or take away from their list on the board. Leandro Gómez Quintero uses anything he can find. Cardboard is the main structural material. He uses all sorts of scrap materials, including a cap from toothpaste, plastic bags, and parts of various containers, etc. He gathers his materials from the streets and beaches of Baracoa.
6. Leandro Gómez Quintero says, “I sometimes wonder what I would do in another country, another place with more resources. But then my work wouldn’t be the same.” What are some ways his work might not “be the same”?
This can be an involved discussion with many opinions: New versus old, perfect versus imperfect, fantasy versus realism. Some students may think new materials would make a more attractive and newer looking car. It might be easier to make a model with new materials. On the other hand, in the world of model building using packaged kits, many makers choose to customize the kit. They may choose to age the appearance as Leandro Gómez Quintero does. They might add graffiti to a train car on a model railroad to make it more realistic.
7. The artist describes his interest in the Willys Jeeps he makes in several ways. He is interested in their history. He feels happy when making them. He wishes he had an actual Willys Jeep. He takes a ride in his friend’s 1952 Jeep, which the friend, José Aurelio Vilató, describes as “a very noble car, very strong.” And when Leandro Gómez Quintero first saw a Jeep as a boy, he says it was like falling in love. Can you think of something you like as much as that? It could be a thing, like a car, or a place, or maybe an activity. Could you turn that something into a model?
This question prepares students to think about what they may want to make. Vehicles inspired by Leandro Gómez Quintero’s work are a possibility. Students may want to make a model version of an object, a place, a hobby, activity, event, or sport.

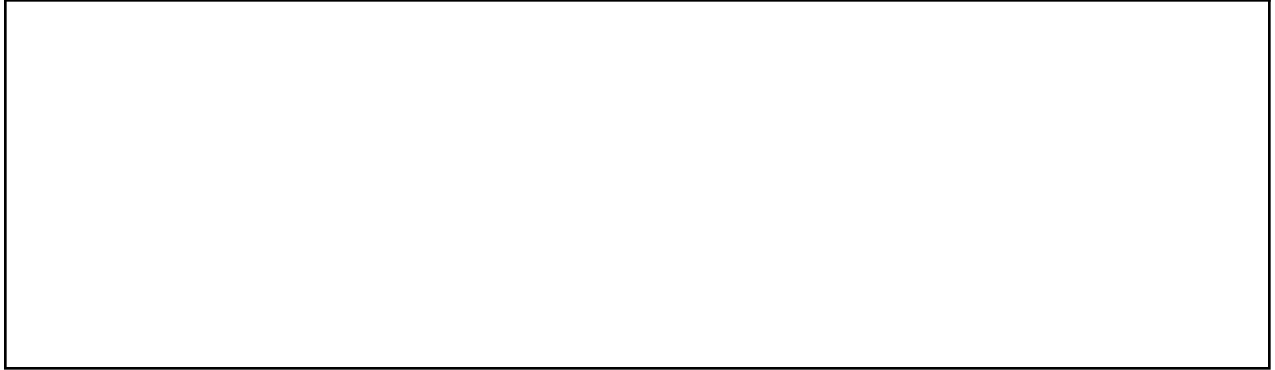
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Worksheet 2: Making It Work

"I study its components so that later I know how to assemble it." - Leandro Gómez Quintero

Making your model will involve improvisation, experimenting, problem solving, and maybe iterations. Iterations happen when you need to, or want to, restart your project. Each new version is an iteration. Going through iterations is common practice for artists, designers, and engineers. Using your imagination, you have generated some ideas for a model. Concentrate on one idea. Sketch it here.



Scale and Proportion

It's made with attention to detail in the proportions of the car and basic shapes of the original."
- Leandro Gómez Quintero

How will you make your model? How big or small should it be? Get a ruler and some paper. Look at the measurements on the ruler and estimate how high you'd like your model to be. Starting with that measurement, estimate other measurements of your model. Hold the piece of paper up and fold it or manipulate it to get an impression of different measurements. Label the sketch with the measurements you think might work. This can be complex! Some of the measuring and estimating will happen while you are working and building your model. You can adjust measurements as you work. You also might start, and then see you need to re-start. (Remember iterations!)

Materials

"My basic raw material is cardboard." - Leandro Gómez Quintero

"...If you don't have something, you just find some other way to make it work. And so he carves tires out of packing Styrofoam that people throw away." - Stuart Ashman

Think about the various pieces you will need for the model. Sketch the parts separately below and label them. Most pieces will probably be paper and cardboard. However, also you can think about some found objects that might work for different parts, now that you see the individual shapes you will need. Make a list of any objects that would be useful, and think about what you might be able to find at school or home that would normally be thrown away but could become part of your model.

Creating and building a model can feel like a super power. You measure and experiment with different materials and start building and then you have a model of something that has meaning for you. Just as Leandro's models are different from a model kit, your model will be unique. Being able to make things really is a super power.

