

WORKSHOP: "WIRE FIGURES FOR PAINTINGS"



Summary: Participants learn to create miniature figures of themselves or a character they invented. They work from pencil sketches either provided or created themselves. The line drawing is recreated in wire, with garments and accessories cut out of colourful pop cans. These figures are then attached to a stylized painted canvas or board created as a group. Participants can also create individual landscapes and additional figures to take home.

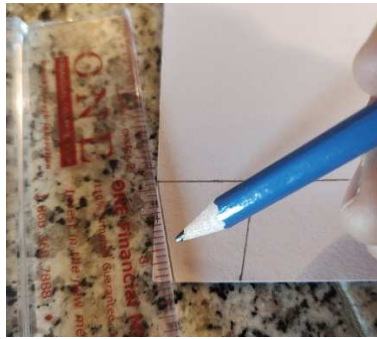
Materials and Equipment:

painted landscape on board or canvas	pencil, eraser, sharpener
wire cutters/flush cutters	markers
round nose pliers	sketch paper
needle nose pliers	scissors
tin snips	safety glasses
a long, fine point nail	hammer
table covers	work gloves
cordless drill	tracing paper
drill bit slightly larger than 2x wire thickness	extension cord
wood block to hammer on	masking tape
ruler	small colourful beads
sewing kit	thread
hockey tape	colourful empty pop cans
2 towels	hot glue gun
scrap cardboard	hot glue
20-gauge copper/aluminum wire, assorted colours	optional: mirror
optional: magazine face pictures (not provided)	optional: photo of participant
instructions/ideas sheet	sample artwork

Class Plan:

1. Decide how you would like to create your figure. The entire figure can be sketched at the start or you can build it up one step at a time as you go. This writeup provides the steps for creating your figure one section at a time.
 - a. Option 1: Sketch a drawing of yourself, working from a mirror.
 - b. Option 2: Tracing over a photograph of yourself or someone else.
 - c. Option 3: Trace over a face in a magazine.
 - d. Option 4: Sketch a character of your own creation.

- e. Option 5: Work from a template shape provided.
2. Sketch a body section the side of the figure you want to create. Here we're making a dress shape.



3. Cut a flat section of coloured pop can using tin snips. We recommend wearing safety glasses and work gloves when using tin snips on pop cans, filing metal pieces and cutting and bending wires. Cut edges can be very sharp.



4. Trace your body section onto a sheet of pop can in the colours you like. Place the flowers or design on your pop can on your design to enhance it, like flowers or swirls on a dress.



5. Cut out the body shape using tin snips.



6. Options: Gently file the edges of your pop can pieces with a small fine file so they are not sharp.
 - a. The body section could also be cut larger and the edges folded over like seams in sewing.
7. Optional: You can also make the edges even smoother with fine sandpaper for metal. Be careful not to sand the colourful surface off of your pop can pieces. Definitely wear gloves if you are doing this step.
8. Make tiny holes with a nail/screw and a hammer where the head, arms and legs will attach. Work on a scrap piece of wood, so you don't hammer holes in your work surface. Hammer from the front to the back, so the sharper part that dimples out is on the back. The sharp part can be gently hammered flat.



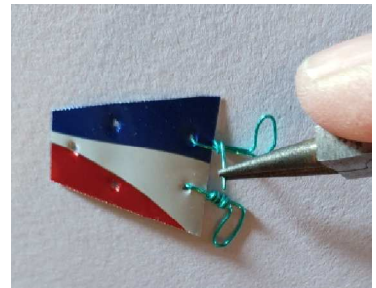
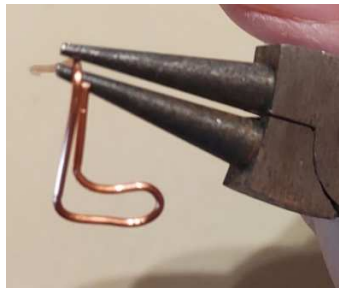
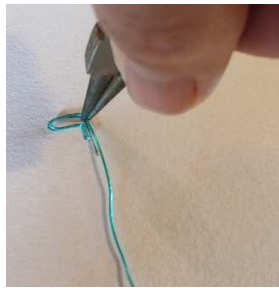
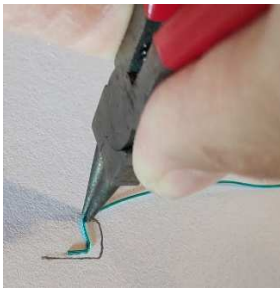
- a. If making a figure with multiple sections like shirts and shorts, add extra holes to join those pieces.



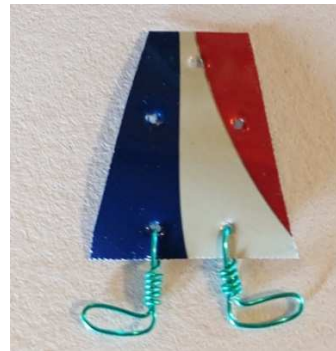
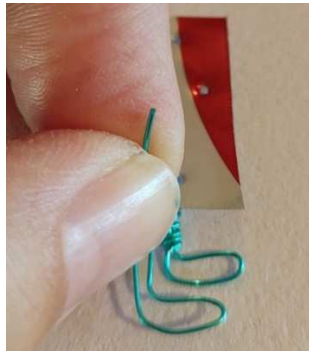
9. Choose a wire colour matching your drawing theme. Try out fun colours if you like. We used a 20-gauge wire. The higher the gauge number, the thinner the wire. Thicker wires are harder to bend into details. Wires too thin will not hold their shape well enough.



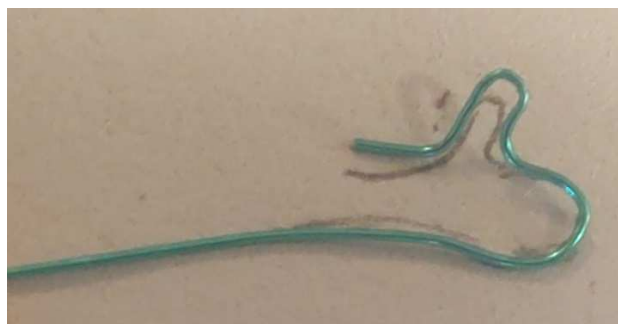
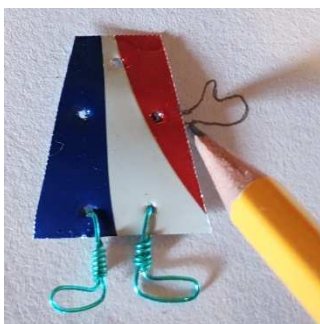
10. If you are using thinly coated coloured wire, try wrapping the tips of your pliers with tiny pieces of hockey tape if the colour scrapes off the wire while working with it.
11. Sketch a leg for your figure using the body shape as a gauge for size.
12. Create a leg in coloured wire that complements your body piece colour. Use your drawing as a guide to the size, starting at one point, looping through the hole in the body piece and then twisting the end of the wire around the leg to hold it in place.



13. Compare your leg to the next one, working the same way to make them as similar as possible.



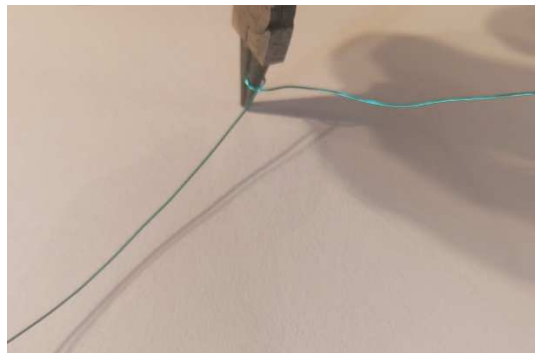
14. Repeat the above steps to create arms.



15. For the head/hair, work from a sketch as a guide or work free form if you prefer.



16. We started with a loop at the top for attaching to the painting later.



17. Wrap the wire back and forth following the hair lines on the drawing (left side). Then twist the wire around the loops to hold them together (right side).



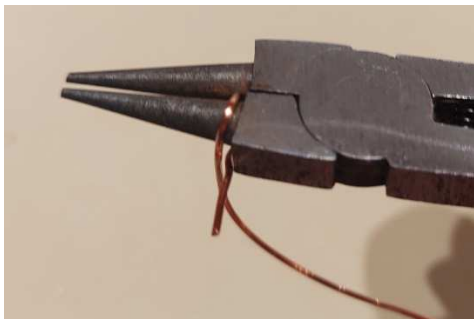
18. Take a wire across the face making a small complete loop for an eye, a long open loop down for a nose, another small closed loop for the second eye, and finally attaching it to the hair wires on the other side of the face.



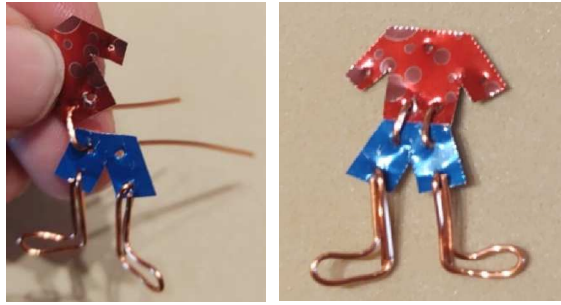
19. Optional: Thread small translucent beads on your wire and bend it to hold them in place for eyes in the previous step.
20. Attach the head to the body by threading one wire end through the hole in the body and folding it back on itself for the neck. Then twist the other wire end around it to hold it in place.



21. If you are making a body with multiple sections like a t-shirt top and shorts bottom, connect the two sections with jump rings or create your own with wire.
 - a. Twist your wire around the tip of round nose beading pliers.



- b. Fit your wire section loops through the holes in your pop can pieces. Trim off the extra wire cutters and close the wire ring with the pliers.



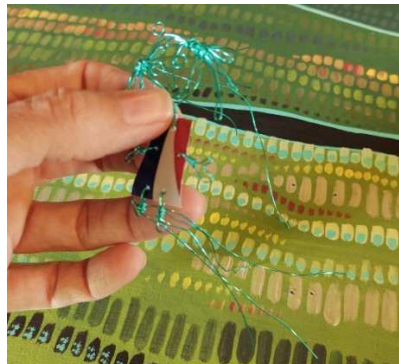
22. Decide where on your painting you would like to attach your figures. Consider scale relative to the rest of the painting. We placed ours near the bottom of the painting in the foreground.



23. Option 1: For stretched canvas paintings, stitch your figures onto the canvas with tiny stitches anchoring them in a few places.
24. Option 2: For gallery board paintings, mark 3-4 locations on your painting around your figure.
- Drill a tiny hole in your painting at each of these locations. Here we use a cordless drill and drill bit slightly wider than the width of two wire thicknesses.



- Attach a loop of wire to your figure, passing it over an existing wire in your figure (below left). Add three more wires at locations on the figure matching the locations where you drilled holes on the painting (below right).



- c. Pass the two wire ends at the first location through the matching hole in the painting.



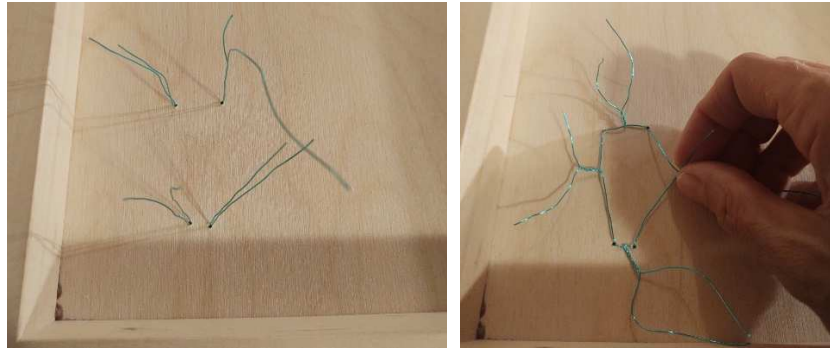
- d. Thread all four sets of wire ends into their respective painting holes.



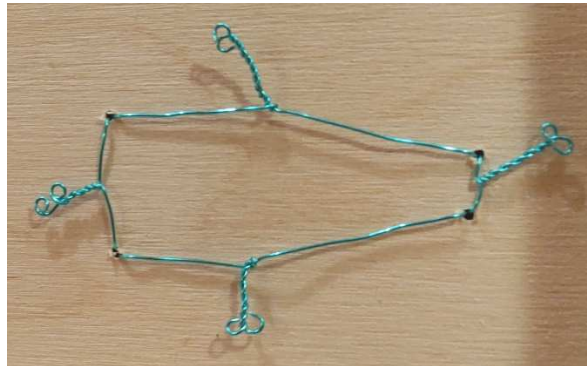
- e. Pull the wire sets from the back to flatten the figure against the painting surface.



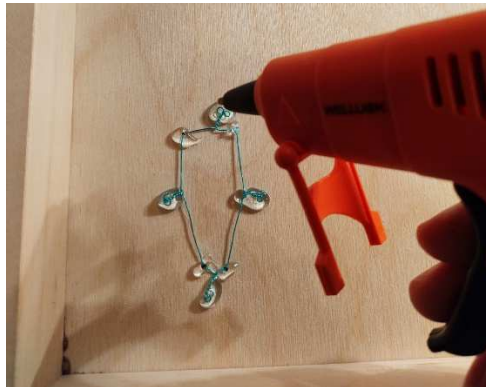
- f. Flip your painting over, placing it face down on a towel to protect the painted surface (below left).
Twist one wire together with a wire from the adjacent set (below right).



- g. Trim the wire ends to about ¼" long and twist the ends into tiny loops using rounded tip pliers.

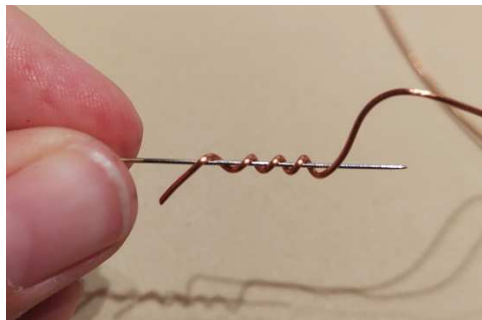


- h. Coat the joined ends of each wire set with hot glue.

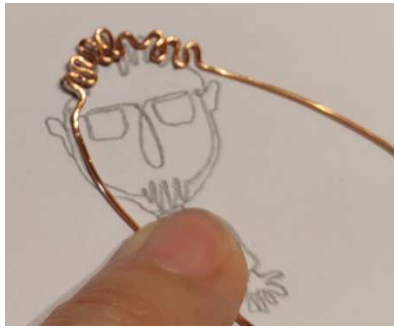


25. Create fun embellishments and details using everyday items as jigs:

- a. Wrap wire around a pin or skewer without pulling too tight, then slide the skewer out to create curly hair. Use a thicker skewer for wider ringlets or springs.



- b. Make wavy or short hair with tiny wire zig zags.



- c. Make more figures to create a gathering by having each person in a workshop add a figure to a group painting.



26. Happy creating, and please share pictures of your creations if you feel comfortable.

Useful Information/Adaptions/Variations:

- Try creating an animal, tree or other shape using the same technique.
- Simply work abstract if you prefer not to plan in advance.
- Cut sections of colourful pop cans and attach them to your background to create a setting.
- Try creating accessories with the same technique and add found objects to your setting.

Trouble Shooting:

- Work larger if making very small figures is too small to see or fiddly to work with.
- Try using a lighted bench mounted magnifier to help with seeing smaller shapes.
- If your shape does not sit as flat as you want, tap it gently with a hammer on an anvil or board.