



Art and Writing

Teacher Guide

Ideas and activities in this guide are designed to merge creative and critical aspects of art and writing using works in the Nasher collection. Most of the exercises will work best when students visit the galleries, although some may be adapted for classroom use.

This guide is intended for students in grades 6-12, but some activities may be appropriate or adaptable for students in other grade levels.

Nasher Sculpture Center

2001 Flora Street, Dallas, Texas 75201
Education Department: 214.242.5170

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Concrete Poetry

Draw upon the shapes and forms of works in the Nasher collection to inspire interpretive poetry.

Concrete poetry, sometimes called pattern poetry or shape poetry, is poetry in which the arrangement of words is just as important as their meaning. Concrete poems may emphasize elements of an artistic shape using related words (see example A), or may place conventional elements of poetry within an unconventional shape (see example B).

Concrete Silhouettes

Select one of the provided silhouettes of artworks from the Nasher collection. Gather students in front of the work in the gallery, or show students images of the original artwork (available at www.nashersculpturecenter.org). Ask them to carefully study the visual elements of the artwork and consider what descriptive words come to mind for each portion of the object. Students should fill their silhouettes with words or sentences that describe their reaction to what they see, placing corresponding words and phrases in appropriate areas of the silhouette.

Concrete Sketches

In the galleries, ask students to select a sculpture with a shape, form, or subject that intrigues them. Each student should spend several minutes looking closely at their selected artwork from multiple angles, finally choosing what they think is the most interesting viewpoint. With paper and pencil, have each student draw a faint outline of their sculpture from the chosen direction, being sure to make this outline large enough to fill with words. Within the shape, have students create a narrative poem about the sculpture.

TEKS

English

- Write in a variety of forms using effective word choice, structure, and sentence forms with emphasis on organizing logical arguments with clearly related definitions, theses, and evidence; write persuasively; write to report and describe; and write poems, plays, and stories
- Write in a voice and style appropriate to audience and purpose
- Describe how meanings are communicated through elements of design such as shape, line, color, and texture
- Analyze relationships, ideas, and cultures as represented in various media

Creative Writing

- Write expressive, informative, and persuasive literary texts effectively
- Elaborate by using concrete images, figurative language, sensory observation, dialogue, and other rhetorical devices to enhance meaning
- Use word choice, sentence structure, and repetition to create tone

***See Appendix for silhouettes**



Example A: Concrete Silhouette



Example B: Concrete Sketch

My Verbs are Not Mad

Find inspiration in the creative process of American artist Richard Serra to discover the latent action in every artwork, and explore the verb as a part of speech.

In the mid-1960s, many artists began to look at the process involved in producing sculpture. American artist Richard Serra compiled a list of words that describe many different ways of making sculpture. He referred to the words on his *Verb List* (1967-1968) as, “actions to relate to oneself, material, place and process.” Serra went on to create works that realized the actions of some of these verbs and learned more about the actions taken when an artist makes things.

Use Serra’s verbs as a springboard to discuss how words relate to objects and how artists think about and create their artworks.

Art in Action

As a group, read Serra’s verb list aloud, asking students to look up or define any words they may be unfamiliar with. Select a handful of verbs to discuss in depth. Ask students to describe what it means to take this action and how it is performed. At the Nasher, have each student select an artwork in the galleries or garden, and find five of Serra’s verbs that they can relate to it in some way, writing down why they selected these words and how they are associated with the sculpture. Bring the group together in front of the artworks and ask each student to share his/her list and the reasoning behind his/her choices. Discuss which verbs were chosen because they have to do with how the artwork was made, and which were chosen because they relate to how it looks.

TEKS

English

- Expand vocabulary through wide reading, listening, and discussing
- Use reference material such as glossary, dictionary, thesaurus, and available technology to determine precise meanings and usage
- Discriminate between connotative and denotative meanings and interpret the connotative power of words
- Describe how meanings are communicated through elements of design such as shape, line, color, and texture
- Analyze relationships, ideas, and cultures as represented in various media

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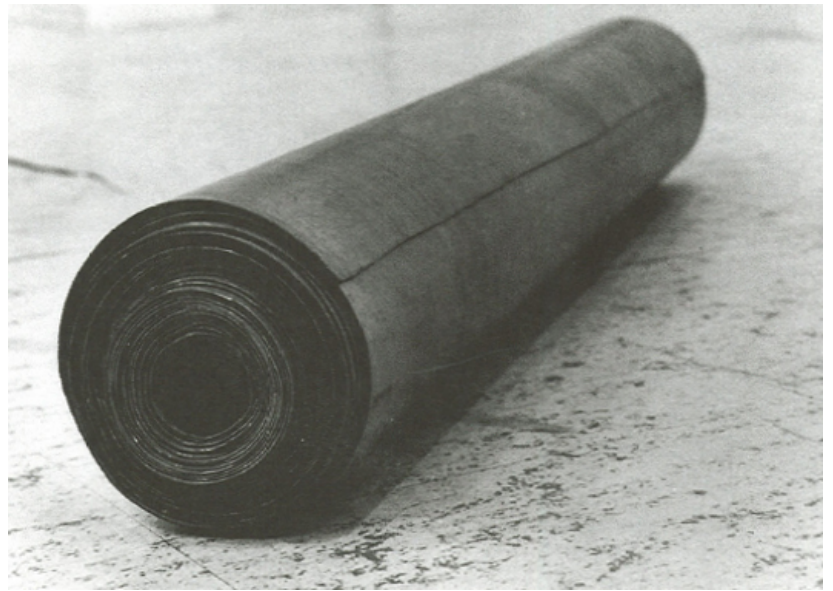
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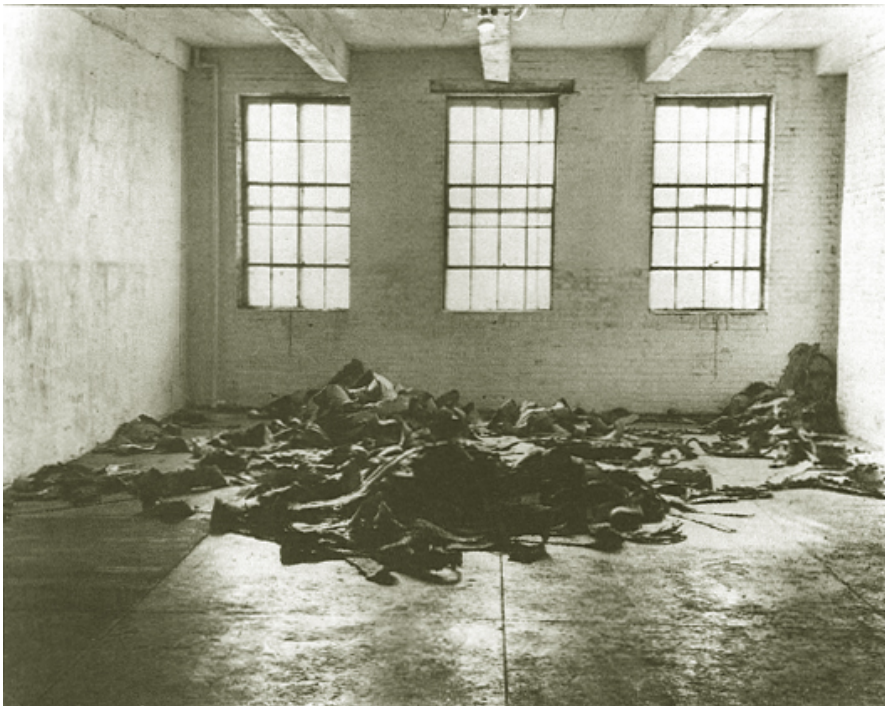
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 to continue



to splash



to roll



to scatter

Writing Prompts

Many works of art suggest or incorporate narrative elements. Use art as inspiration for language by writing about works in the Nasher collection from creative perspectives.

Every Person Has a Story

In the galleries or garden, ask students to select a work of art that incorporates a human or human-like figure. Students should write a short paragraph or list of observations they can make about this person just by looking at him/her without interjecting their own opinions (for instance, “this person is frowning” rather than “this person is angry”). Looking at their list, students should consider which of the details they have noticed might suggest something about the figure’s personality or situation. Using these details, have students create a short story using their own interpretation of who this person is and why they appear as they do.

All the World’s a Stage

Bring students to the sculpture *Rush Hour* by George Segal, and ask them to walk slowly around the sculpture, observing details about each figure. Ask students to consider this sculpture as a moment in a story or a play. Where and when do they think the story takes place? Who do they think these figures could be? What is their relationship? What is happening? Divide students into groups of six and tell them that they are to create a play based on the scene they see in the artwork. Students should create a small script, giving each character at least one line of dialogue to act out. Encourage students to rehearse their lines together as a group, and to take the positions and gestures of the figures in the sculpture. Have each group act out the scene they created.

Art/Space Dialogue

Discuss with students how architect Renzo Piano designed the Nasher Sculpture Center building with features that enhance the display of sculpture. (For more information on the building, visit www.nashersculpturecenter.org.) Ask students to imagine what would happen if the building and the works of art in it could have a conversation. Individually or in small groups, ask students to write a short story or play based on the dialogue between building and art, giving each “character” its own personality and ideas. Share the resulting products with the group and discuss what aspects of the building or artworks led the students to give these characters the qualities they did.

Reflect and Record

In the Nasher galleries, have each student select a sculpture to study closely for two minutes. Students should examine the work from all angles and take note of as many details as possible without writing anything down. After two minutes, students should go to a location where they are unable to see the artwork, and write a detailed description of it. It might help to have them imagine that they are describing it to someone who cannot see it. Ask students to break into partners and have each try to find the artwork the other has chosen based on the written description. Partners should discuss which portions of their writings were clear and helpful and which parts could be improved. Next, repeat the process of observing for two minutes with a different artwork. This time, instead of writing about it immediately, have students wait until they return to the classroom. Compare the two descriptions. Which one was more accurate or richly detailed? Why do they think that is?

TEKS

English

- Describe how meanings are communicated through elements of design such as shape, line, color, and texture
- Write in a variety of forms using effective word choice, structure, and sentence forms with emphasis on organizing logical arguments with clearly related definitions, theses, and evidence; write persuasively; write to report and describe; and write poems, plays, and stories
- Write in a voice and style appropriate to audience and purpose
- Organize ideas in writing to ensure coherence, logical progression, and support for ideas
- Analyze relationships, ideas, and cultures as represented in various media

Creative Writing

- Write expressive, informative, and persuasive literary texts effectively
- Elaborate by using concrete images, figurative language, sensory observation, dialogue, and other rhetorical devices to enhance meaning
- Employ various points of view to communicate effectively
- Use word choice, sentence structure, and repetition to create tone

Entitlement

Titles are sometimes the only words associated with visual art forms such as sculpture. The relationship between these words and the objects they represent can be a rich source of inspiration for writing and thinking about art.

Retitling

Have each student select an artwork from the Nasher galleries and, without reading the label, create a one-word title for the work. Next, ask students to create a different title for the same work using a simile or metaphor. Finally, have students check the label and write down the artist's title for the work. Each student should share their three titles with the group. For each artwork, discuss how the different titles affect the way one interprets the object. Which was most descriptive? Most powerful?

Meaning and Abstraction

Discuss with students the difference between abstract and representational art. Divide students into small groups and assign each group to an abstract work of art with a title (rather than an untitled work). Each group should read the title and brainstorm how what they see in the artwork might relate to the title. Next, each group should write a short paragraph imagining why the artist created this sculpture and why he/she gave it this title. Share these paragraphs with the class and discuss which works have titles that may relate to their appearance and which have titles that seem to be about other ideas.

Examples of Titled Abstract Works in the Nasher Collection:

David Smith, *The Forest*

Tony Cragg, *Solid States*

James Turrell, *Tending, (Blue)*

Alexander Calder, *Spider*

Antony Gormley, *Quantum Cloud XX (tornado)*

Barnett Newman, *Here III*

Mark di Suvero, *Eviva Amore*

Richard Serra, *My Curves are Not Mad*

Willem de Kooning, *Hostess (Bar Girl)*

TEKS

English

- Write in a variety of forms using effective word choice, structure, and sentence forms with emphasis on organizing logical arguments with clearly related definitions, theses, and evidence; write persuasively; write to report and describe; and write poems, plays, and stories
- Write in a voice and style appropriate to audience and purpose
- Organize ideas in writing to ensure coherence, logical progression, and support for ideas
- Use prewriting strategies to generate ideas, develop voice, and plan
- Describe how meanings are communicated through elements of design, including shape, line, color, and texture
- Analyze relationships, ideas, and cultures as represented in various media

Creative Writing

- Write expressive, informative, and persuasive literary texts effectively
- Elaborate by using concrete images, figurative language, sensory observation, dialogue, and other rhetorical devices to enhance meaning
- Organize ideas in writing to ensure coherence, logical progression, and support for ideas

Appendix: Silhouettes for Concrete Poetry

Willem de Kooning, *Seated Woman*

Alberto Giacometti, *Spoon Woman*

Barbara Hepworth, *Squares with Two Circles (Monolith)*

Menashe Kadishman, *Segments*

Henri Matisse, *Large Seated Nude*

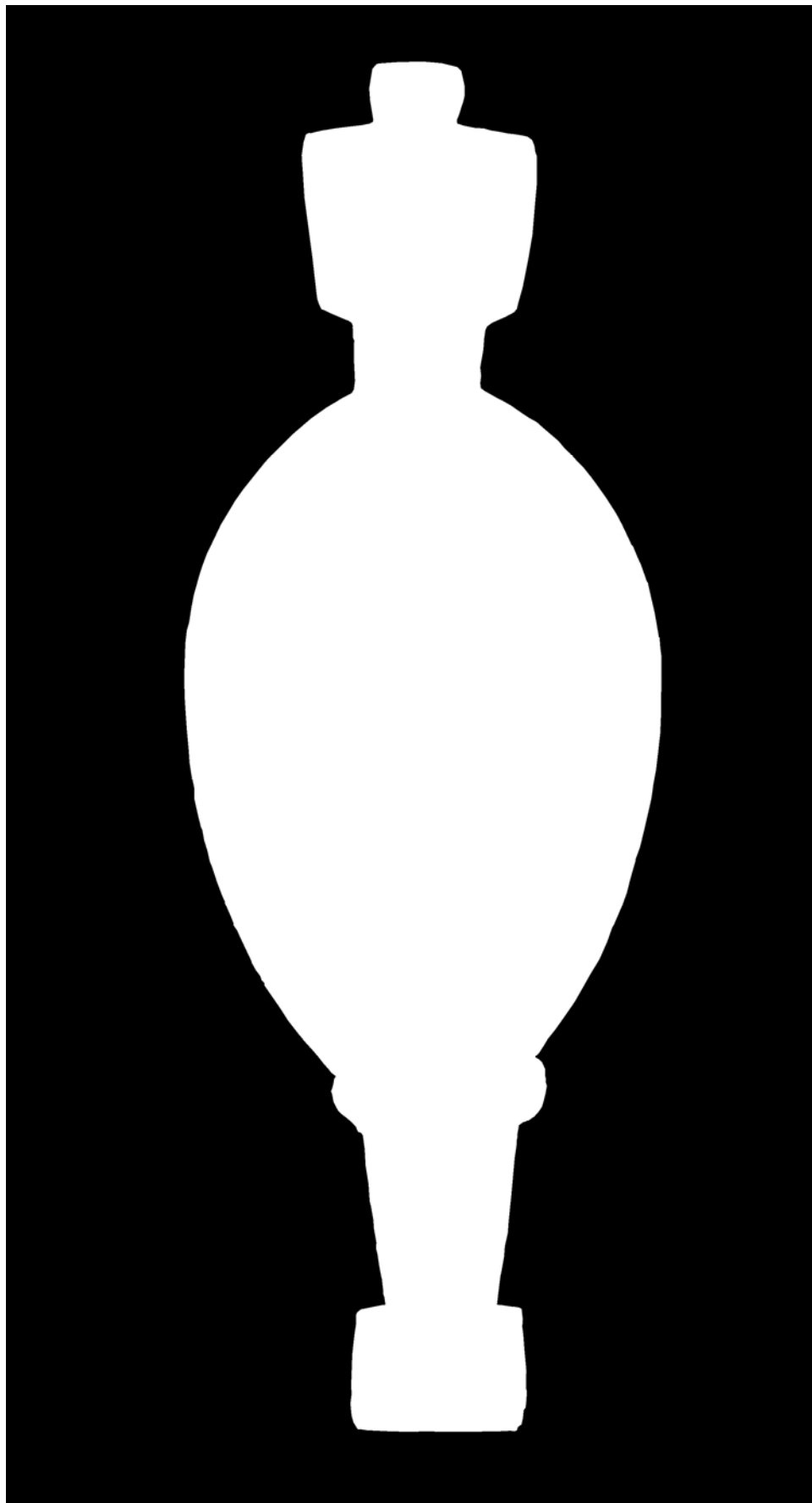
Henri Matisse, *Madeleine I*

David Smith, *Voltri VI*

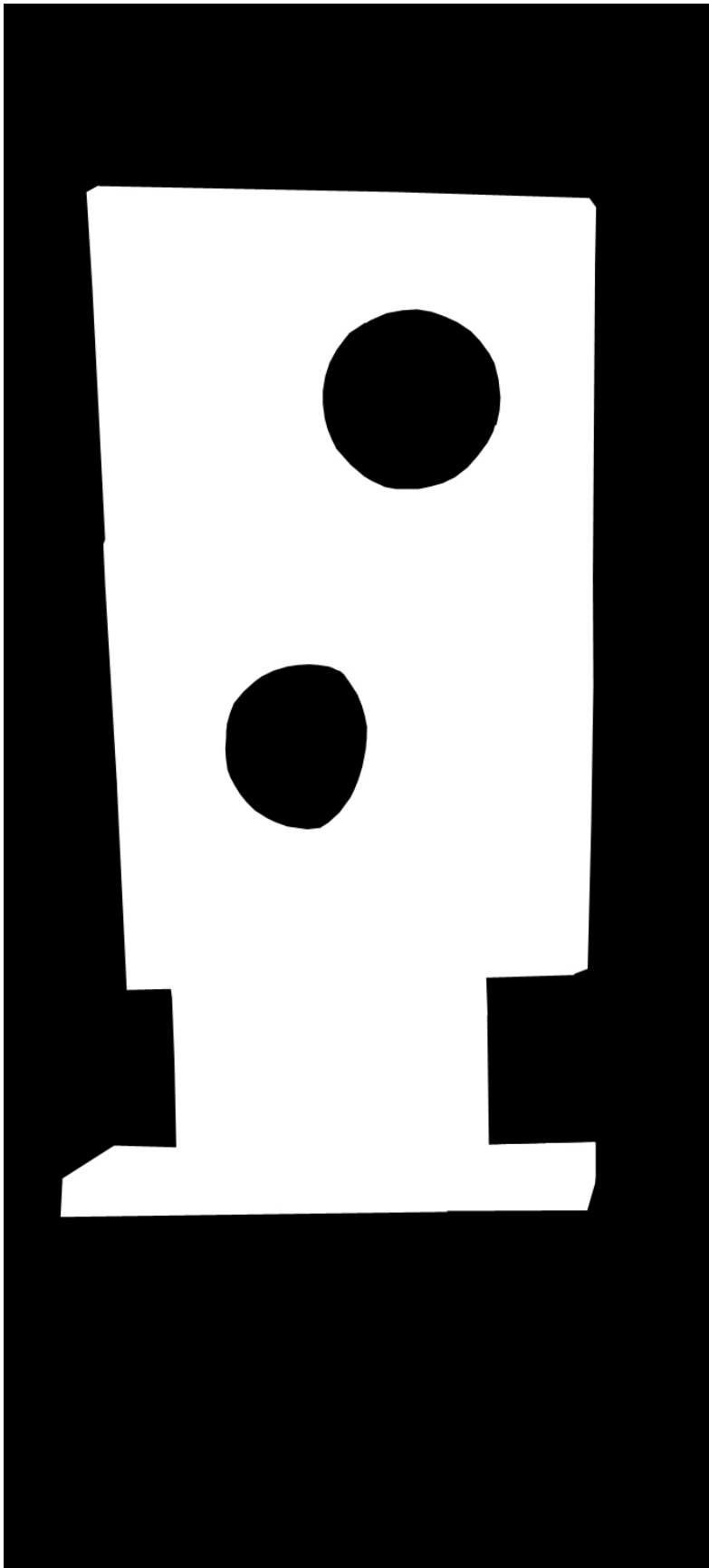


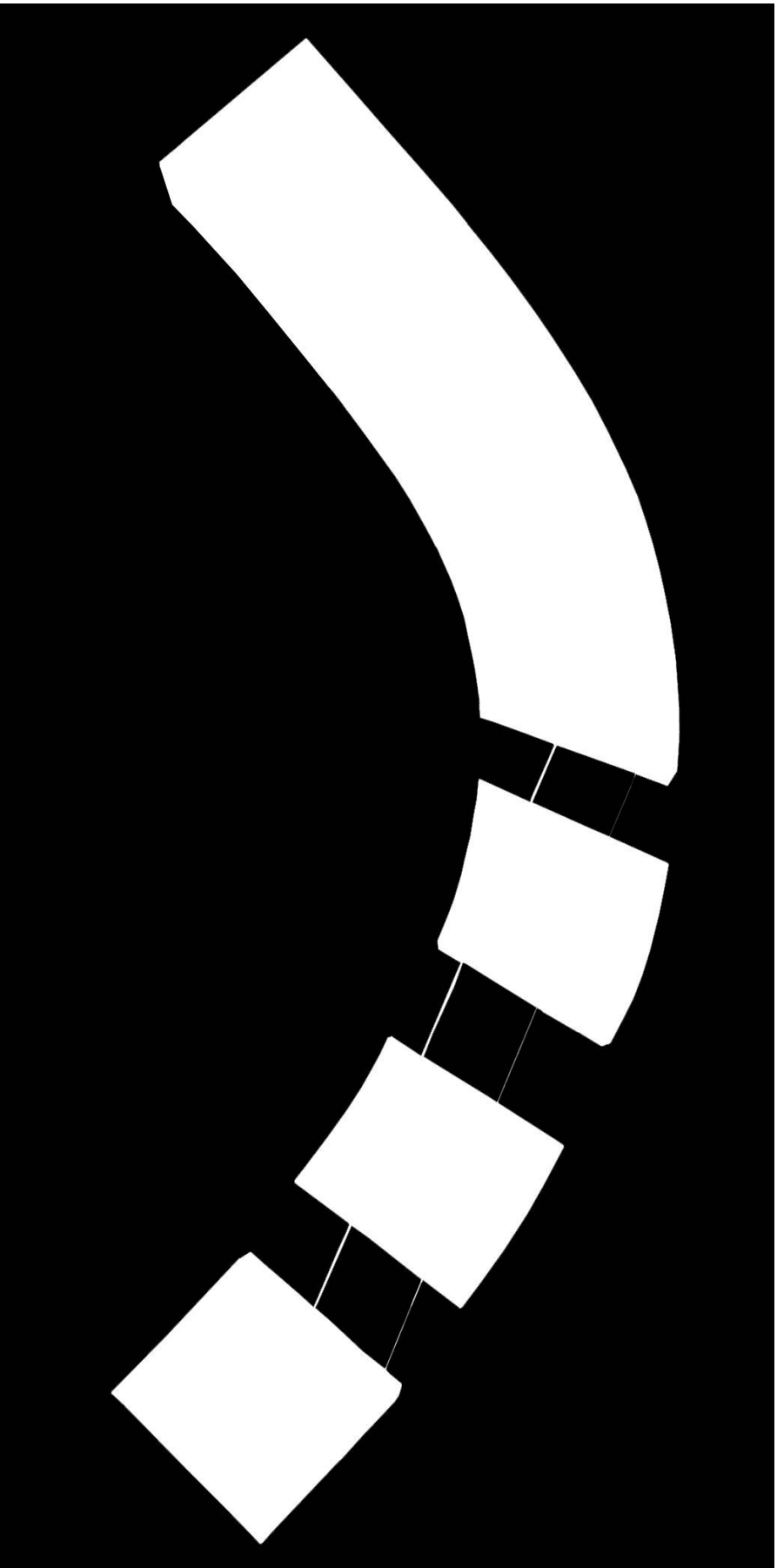
Willem de Kooning, American, born The Netherlands, 1904-1997, **Seated Woman**, 1969 (cast 1980), Bronze, 113 x 147 x 94 in. (287 x 373.4 x 238.8 cm.), Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, Dallas, Texas

Alberto Giacometti, Swiss, 1901-1966, **Spoon Woman (Femme cuillère)**, 1926 (cast 1954), Bronze, 56 3/4 x 20 x 9 in. (144.1 x 50.8 x 22.9 cm.), Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, Dallas, Texas



Barbara Hepworth, British, 1903-1975, **Squares with Two Circles (Monolith)**, 1963 (cast 1964), Bronze, 124 x 65 x 30 in. (315 x 165.1 x 76.2 cm.), Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, Dallas, Texas



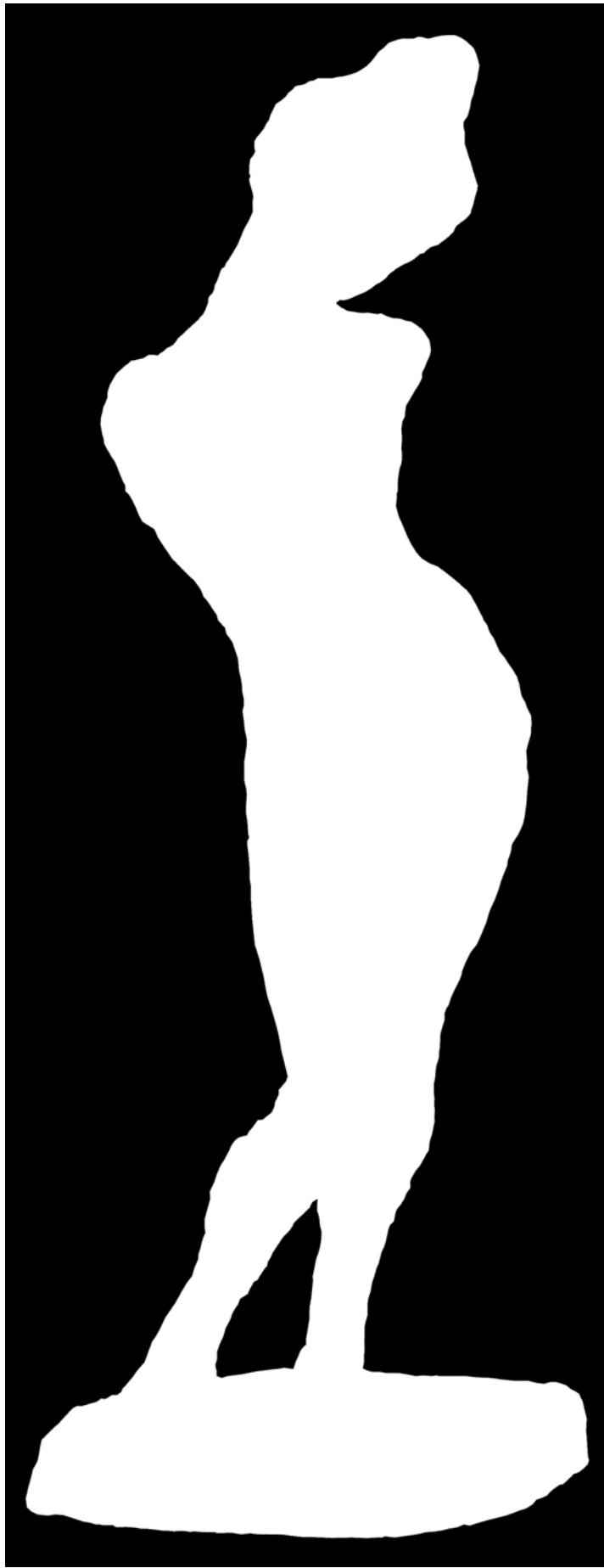


Menashe Kadishman, Israeli, born 1932, **Segments**, 1968, Enamel, aluminum and glass, 59 x 170 1/4 x 12 in. (149.9 x 432.4 x 30.5 cm.), Nasher Sculpture Center, Gift of the Stanley Pearle Family in memory of our beloved Eisie Pearle



Henri Matisse, French, 1869-1954, **Large Seated Nude (Grand Nu assis)**, 1922-29 (cast 1952), Bronze, 30 1/2 x 31 5/8 x 13 5/8 in. (77.5 x 80.3 x 34.6 cm.), Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, Dallas, Texas

Henri Matisse, French, 1869-1954, **Madeleine I**, 1901 (cast 1903), Painted plaster, 23 3/4 x 9 1/2 x 7 1/2 in. (60.3 x 24.1 x 19.1 cm.), Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, Dallas, Texas





David Smith, American, 1906-1965, **Voltri VI**, 1962, Steel, 98 7/8 x 102 1/4 x 24 in. (251.1 x 259.7 x 61 cm.), Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, Dallas, Texas