

# Joel Shapiro

## Teacher's Introduction

### About this resource

This classroom resource is designed to connect Art 1 level students with primary source texts that offer opportunities for critical thinking and interdisciplinary connections with works in the Nasher collection. We suggest you invite students to first read the text and then discuss what they read in pairs or small groups before completing the interactive component. **The information on this page is provided to offer teachers a broader context to guide student discussion. The following pages may be printed and given directly to students.**

### About Joel Shapiro

For over thirty years Joel Shapiro has challenged his minimalist predecessors by creating work that is at once serious and relaxed, figurative and abstract. Infused with humor and art historical references, Shapiro's playful sculptures seem to have no sense of gravity due to the artist's "top-down" approach to making sculpture. Working with a limited set of shapes and forms, Shapiro ties, nails, and glues pieces of wood together to create small maquettes (or models) from his large scale sculptures.

### Additional Resources

Pace Gallery <http://www.pacegallery.com/artists/434/joel-shapiro>

*BOMB Magazine* Full Interview <http://bombmagazine.org/article/3332/joel-shapiro>

National Art Awards 2013: Joel Shapiro <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFb7Mim3kBA>

Joel Shapiro, *untitled (end of summer)* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PU\\_gG7M7hIE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PU_gG7M7hIE)

### Suggested Curriculum Connections (TEKS)

Fine Arts: Foundations, Creative Expression | §117.302. Art, Level I (c) (1) and (2)

Mathematics: Mathematical Process Standards | §111.41. Geometry (c) (1)

English: Reading Comprehension of Literary Nonfiction | §110.31. English I (b) (6)

### Learn More at the Nasher

You can learn more about Shapiro's work and see what's currently on view by visiting the "Art" section of the Nasher website. Discover more resources and lessons in the "Learn" section, or book a guided or self-guided tour in the "Visit" section. [www.nashersculpturecenter.org](http://www.nashersculpturecenter.org)



Joel Shapiro, *Untitled*, 1996-99.  
Bronze, 288 x 171 x 137 1/2 in.  
Raymond and Patsy Nasher  
Collection, Nasher Sculpture Center,  
Dallas, Texas.

# Joel Shapiro

## Read

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Read the following statements made by Joel Shapiro in an interview with *BOMB Magazine*.

“I wanted to make work that stood on its own, and wasn’t limited by architecture and by the ground and the wall and right angles. I wanted the work to differentiate. It was about an experience that was not architectural or using the [picture] plane as a means of organization.”

“I’m not going to invent some new shape. I’ve not been terribly interested in the repositioning of found objects. I was more interested in the reconfiguration of and repositioning of relatively known, simple geometric forms. As long as the work was bound up by architecture or predicated on architecture, you know, it would only have limited possibility. I wanted to overcome that. I found that if I made a sculpture and inverted the sculpture, or moved it, flipped it upside down, its meaning was entirely different.”

Excerpted from: Joel Shapiro by Michèle Gerber Klein, *BOMB Magazine*, BOMB 109, Fall 2009

## Discuss

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What do you think it means for a sculpture to be “bound by architecture”?

Look at objects in your classroom such as desks and chairs. How are they built or arranged to suit the architecture of the room?

Look at the images of Shapiro’s work on the next page. How do these sculptures express a “top down” approach to artmaking?

## Create

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Working in pairs or small groups, create a sculpture that rests on the ground from wood shapes and wire or string. Document your sculpture from several angles with a camera.

Next, using the same materials, create a sculpture that hangs from a tabletop or doorknob and grows towards the floor. Take photos of this sculpture as well.

Compare images of both sculptures. What words would you use to describe the sculpture built from the ground up? What words would you use to describe the top-down sculpture?

# Joel Shapiro

## Images

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Joel Shapiro, *Untitled*, 1996-99. Bronze, 288 x 171 x 137 1/2 in. Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, Texas.



Joel Shapiro, *Untitled*, 2002. Wood and wire, 21" x 16 1/2" x 10". Pace Gallery.



Joel Shapiro, *Untitled*, 2014. Wood and casein, 48 x 42 x 22 in. Almine Rech Gallery.



Joel Shapiro, *Untitled*, 1986. Painted wood, 62 x 55 x 62 in. Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, Texas.



Joel Shapiro, *Untitled*, 2013. Wood and casein, base: 109 x 76 3/4 x 48 in. L.A. Louver Gallery.

**Nasher Sculpture Center**