



## Let's Create Shapes and Forms Using Salt Dough

A project inspired by the figurative sculptures of Mary Frank

### What is Figurative Art?

**Figurative** describes any form of art that retains strong references to the real world, particularly to the human figure.

Figurative forms can be **organic**, which are realistic representations of the natural world and/or living things, or **geometric**, which are more mechanical and are usually made by humans.



### Activity

Young artists will use a technique known as **hand building** to pinch, coil, roll and slab forms to create a work of art. This is similar to the technique that Mary Frank uses to create her sculptures in clay.

### Materials

#### Dough

Salt, flour and water

#### Equipment

An oven, bowl and baking sheet

#### Supplies

Aluminum foil, parchment paper (to bake and cover your work surface), and a paintbrush

#### Optional

A rolling pin and tools to cut (such as a table knife, pizza wheel, and simple shape cookie cutters such as rounds or squares).



Before we get started with the project, let's look for similarities in the figurative forms that were created a long time ago and the work that Mary Frank has created during her career:



## Pre-Historic Cave Paintings

Discovered in 1940 at Lascaux in the South of France, the cave contains nearly 6,000 figures in three main categories: animals, human figures, and abstract signs. The drawings are estimated at around 17,000 years old.



## Original Charcoal and Watercolor by Mary Frank

Circa 1970. Charcoal on paper.



## Venus of Laussel Goddess or Femme à la Corne (Woman of the Horn)

This prehistoric Mother Goddess was carved in stone-age France between 20,000-30,000 years ago.



## Woman with Snake by Mary Frank

1980, Clay, 23 x 7 x 13 in., Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Bette Ziegler, 1991.111.2a-b. © artist or artist's estate



Untitled by Mary Frank  
circa 1979, earthenware,  
24½ h x 18½ w x 8¼ d in  
62 x 47 x 21 cm



## Winged Victory of Samothrace (the Greek goddess of victory)

Created around the Second Century BC during the Hellenistic Period. Carved from a single piece of marble, this figure displays the illusion of a flowing piece of fabric clinging to the legs and torso, demonstrating not just movement but softness to a hard form. Also known as the Nike of Samothrace, the sculpture can be viewed at the Louvre in Paris France. It is celebrated as one of the greatest masterpieces in sculpture.



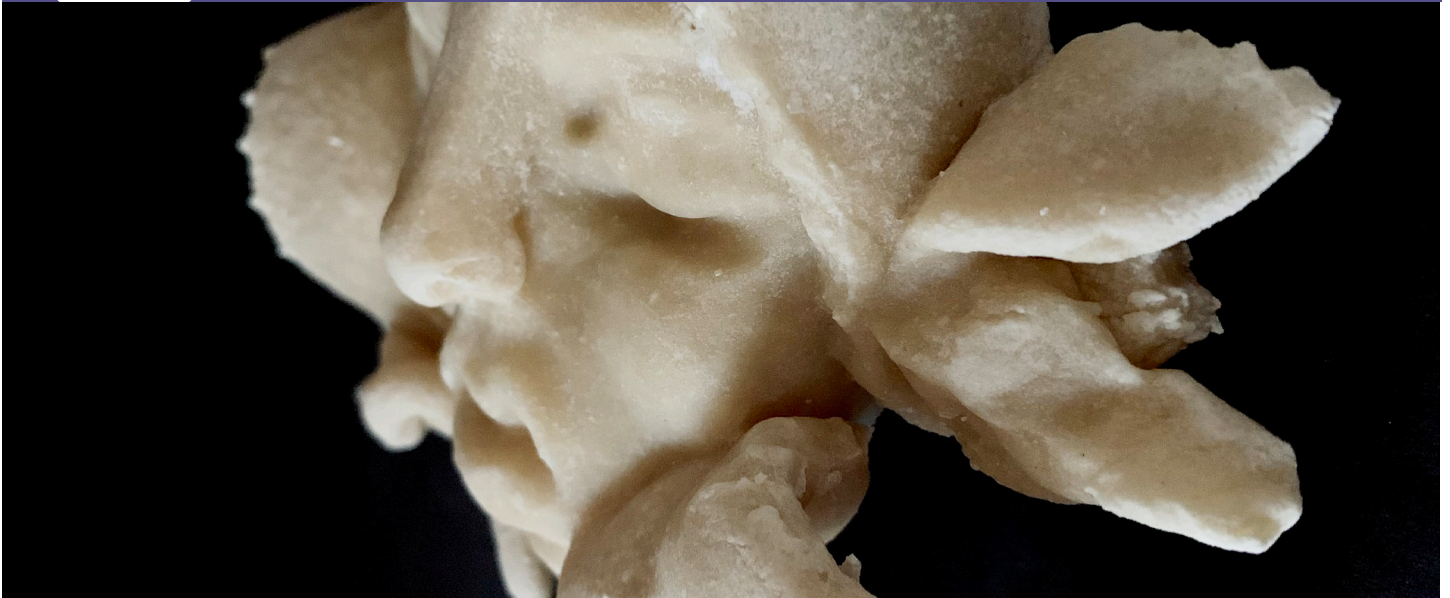
## Moving Woman II by Mary Frank

1976, Ceramic, 42 x 24 x 28 inches  
This figurative ceramic form is one of the larger works by Mary Franks in the Neuberger Museum or Art's collection. You can see the outline of a woman emerging in a standing position. Elements of the legs, torso, shoulders and face are all placed in its proper biological order, but abstractions were added, suggesting movement, seeming to almost take flight even from its solid, heavy form and the base softens as it meets the floor.





# Let's Create Shapes and Forms Using Salt Dough



## Step 1: Make your salt dough.

### Recipe ingredients

1 cup flour

½ cup salt

½ cup water



### Directions

Mix all ingredients together until you have a sticky dough ball. Turn out into a clean work surface and continue to knead for up to ten minutes or until dough is pliable and smooth. Kneading is a technique used in ceramics as well. Also known as wedging, this process is used to eliminate any trapped air in the dough or clay. Once finished, cover the dough and allow it to rest for 20 minutes.

## Step 2: Gather your supplies and brainstorm.

While you are waiting for your dough to dry, gather all your supplies and tools. Remember to cover your work surface with parchment paper or some other type of cover that will help to keep everything clean!



Now is also the time to brainstorm about the forms you are going to create.

When the dough is ready, separate the big ball into smaller pieces that will be easier for you to shape.





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## Step 3: Cut, mold and shape.

To achieve a face, use a portion of the dough and create an oval shape. To add volume, take the aluminum foil and use it as a base to build upon. Map out the facial features; create creases for the eyes and framed lines to follow as a guide for the nose and mouth.



## Step 4: Begin adding details.

Next start building upon that guide. Add the nose, cheeks, chin, eyes, mouth and brow by using small portions of your reserved dough that have been rolled into balls and ropes.



## Step 5: Shape the details.

Once you have the volume of your face in place, use a clean paint brush and small amounts of water to manipulate the dough, smooth out lines, and add greater detail. You can also use the back of your brush, like a pencil, to add small details such as creases to the nose, nostrils and shape to the mouth.





## Step 6: Frame your work.

Next, frame your work by adding organic shapes with rolled out slabs of your dough. To connect the pieces, use a small amount of water as glue as well as to soften the lines where your forms meet. You can also use additional pieces of foil to create structure to the curves of your sculpture and hold it while baking. (After the piece is "fired," or baked, the piece will be hard and the foil can be removed.)



## Step 7: Bake.

When you have finished creating your art, carefully transfer to a parchment lined baking sheet.

**Bake pieces in a preheated oven set to 250 degrees.**

Bake until hardened, up to two hours depending on the thickness of the piece.  
You will see that the dough will become noticeably pail as the moisture evaporates.  
Once the dough is dry and firm, allow pieces to cool before handling.  
Gently remove any foil that was used.



## Step 8: Photograph your work.

We would love to see your art!  
Have a grownup post your photo to social media and be sure to tag #NeutoDoKids when you share.

We can't wait to see your creations!





**Mary Frank**—a sculptor, painter, photographer and ceramic artist—was born on February 4th, 1933 in London as the only child of Eleanore and Edward Lockspeiser. In 1940, she moved to the United States to live with her maternal grandparents in Brooklyn, New York.

She attended the High School of Music & Art and later transferred to the Children's Professional School where she majored in dance. While still in high school, Mary met her first husband Robert Frank, a Swiss-American photographer and documentary filmmaker. They married in 1950; a son, Pablo (named after Picasso), was born in 1951 and a daughter, Andrea, in 1953.

Frank studied wood carving at Alfred van Loen's studio and drawing at the Brooklyn Museum Art School. She first exhibited her drawings in 1958 at the Poindexter Gallery in New York City. It wasn't until 1969 that she began working in clay. After her children had grown and following the separation from her husband, Frank purchased a summer home in Lake Hill, New York where she built her first kiln, an oven for baking clay, in 1973. She is largely self-taught and never had any formal training as a sculptor.

For much of her work, Frank's process begins with some form of abstraction from which she teases out what she describes as a pre-existing time and atmosphere where events can take place. Figures are a repetitive depiction across her mediums. A face and torso emerging from its base, body parts that are disconnected, but attached through negative space. Her recurring imagery demonstrate hard form with soft lines that seem endless, with elements of movement and reconstruction. Emotionally, her work conveys feelings of love, sorrow and euphoria.

Mary Frank's career spans five decades. She has been the subject of numerous museum exhibitions, including a retrospective organized by the Neuberger Museum of Art in 1978. Today, her works are included in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, the Art Institute of Chicago, New York's Whitney Museum, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, and the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, to name a few.



Mary Frank's *Untitled (Wall Pieces #1- #19)* is part of the permanent collection at the Neuberger Museum of Art. It is comprised of 19 ceramic pieces of variable dimensions. In these works, Frank explores shapes and biomorphic forms. Sometimes illustrated in paint or glaze and/or carving. Each work shows movement in a figurative nature. Details above (top to bottom):  
Wall Piece #1, 3 Faces  
Wall Piece #7, Reclining Figures  
Wall Piece #16, Landscape with Animals