

Art Activity

Create a Paper Cat Sculpture

Grade Level: All

Collection: Ancient Art

Culture/Region: Ancient Egypt

Subject Area: Fine Arts, Visual Arts

Activity Type: Hands-On Activity

Description: Create your cat sculpture to honor our feline friends!

Why were cats honored in Egypt?

Egypt is the home of one of the world's earliest civilizations! More than five thousand years ago, this great civilization began to take shape in the northeast corner of Africa.



In ancient Egyptian culture, the goddesses Bastet and Sekhmet were two aspects of divine power known as defenders of the innocent, in feline form. They frequently appeared in tomb scenes seated beneath the chairs of their owners or on boats in the Nile. The Egyptian goddess, Bastet is the goddess of domesticity, fertility, and cats; Bastet is said to have protected the home from evil spirits and disease and was known to be as fierce as a mother cat protecting her kittens. She was represented either as a house cat or a woman with the head of a cat, and often had kittens with her. Cats were first domesticated by the Egyptians for their mouse-hunting abilities and, over time became household companions. Cats were believed to symbolize good luck and protection. The cat was the sacred animal of the ancient Egyptians and were so revered that they were mummified when they died. Royal families would even adorn their cats with jewels.

Now it is your turn to honor your feline friends by making your very own paper cat sculpture!

Materials

- Construction Paper
- Crayons or markers
- Sharpie
- Scissors
- Glue
- **Optional:** Cardboard tube (toilet paper or paper towel roll cut in half) and pipe cleaners

Creating your own cat sculpture:

1. Stand a 5-6 inch cardboard tube on a table, or flat surface. Gently pinch the top edges of the tube. After pinching, fold down the center of both curved edges to meet in the middle. You should have two semi-pointy edges--these will be the ears of your cat sculpture.



Step 1--use a cardboard tube

- a. If you do not have a cardboard tube, create a cylinder with a sheet of paper. Start by folding the sheet of paper in half -horizontally (like a hamburger). Tear along the folded line; you will use one of the torn pieces of paper to create your cat sculpture. (**Optional:** If desired, use markers, sharpies, or crayons to draw your cat's features on the paper, before folding. Make sure to keep your paper horizontal when drawing). Next, keep your paper horizontal and bring both side edges together - overlapping about 1 inch. Use tape or glue to secure the edges - this will form a paper cylinder. Continue with the rest of the directions, noted below.



Step 1--create your own cylinder

2. Now that you have the body of your cat sculpture, consider the different features of a cat: eyes, nose, whiskers, tail. Also think about different patterns you may see on clothing or jewelry. Be inspired by the sculpture **Bastet** in VMFA's Ancient Egyptian collection

3. Use a sharpie and/or crayons to add features, colors, and designs to your cat sculpture.

4. Using construction paper – cut out two eyes for your cat. Use a dot of glue to attach the eyes onto your cat sculpture. If you do not have construction paper, consider using markers or crayons to draw the eyes onto your sculpture.

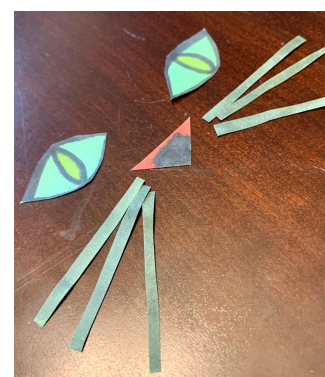
5. Make the whiskers: Cut 4–6 strips of construction paper –. Place a dot of glue at the end of each strip of paper and attach them below the eyes of your cat.

Optional: Make your cat’s whiskers out of pipe cleaners. First, cut pipe cleaners in half, or to the length you prefer. Next attach the pipe cleaner pieces. You can either glue them on, or you can make small holes in the cardboard and then insert the pipe cleaners.

6. Make the nose: Use construction paper to cut out a nose; Make the nose big enough to overlap and cover part of the whiskers. Attach the nose with glue. If you do not have construction paper, consider using a crayon or marker to draw on the nose.

7. Make the tail: Cut a strip of construction paper. This can be any size or shape! Use a dot of glue to attach the tail to the lower back of your cat.

Optional: Use a pipe cleaner as the tail – twist to the desired shape and attach them with glue, or you can make small holes in the cardboard and then insert the pipe cleaners.



Sample using construction paper

Sample using cardboard roll

Be Inspired by Works in VMFA's collection!



Bastet, 644 - 525 BC
Unknown Artist
Egyptian
Bronze (copper alloy)

57.21

Information: Small bronzes like these may have been given as offerings to the goddess Bastet to give thanks or to ask for favors, or they could have been ornaments for coffins containing cat mummies; In ancient Egyptian, the word for cat was miu.



Figure of a Cat, 664-525 BC
Unknown Artist
Egyptian
Hollow-cast bronze (copper alloy)

2002.540

Information: These cat statuettes may have been freestanding sculptures or ornaments for coffins containing cat mummies; both were offered to Bastet, who protected the home and the young, at a number of localities throughout Egypt. In ancient Egyptian, the word for cat was miu.