

# Stretching the Definition of Sculpture

## A Self-Guided Tour of the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden

Age: Grades 9–12

Print out a copy of the tour for each student. Let them know in advance of your visit that the tour offers optional writing exercises and opportunities to take photos of what they see, so students can bring pencils and cameras if they're interested. Instruct the chaperones to float from group to group engaging the students in conversation.

Once you're back in the classroom, consider looking up the works covered in this self-guided tour as a group on [artsconnected.org](http://artsconnected.org). Ask the students to share notes from their visit as you view each sculpture.

Overview: Students will encounter works that stretch traditional concepts of sculpture through the use of unexpected materials and subject matter.

Note: A hand icon next to a tour stop indicates a work that can be touched. Please refer to the map for the location of the stops on this self-guided tour.

*Have you ever made a sculpture? What was it made of? Did it represent something in the physical world or an idea? On this self-guided tour, you'll come across sculptures that are made from skyscraper scraps, can be entered like a room, and are buried in the ground. The works are meant to stretch your idea of what a sculpture can be made of and what it can be about. The tour stops will take you to various locations in the Garden and across the street to the Walker's greenspace, also known as Open Field, where two additional sculptures reside. Talk about what you see with classmates and friends and take notes and pictures to share with your teacher or post to the Walker's Flickr page: [flickr.com/photos/walkerart](http://flickr.com/photos/walkerart)*

### Getting Started

1. Find the artwork listed.
2. Look closely at the artwork, walk around it, and see it from many angles. Think about how your body relates to the object in space.
3. Draw, photograph, write about, or discuss what you see.
4. Read the bits of information about the artwork and consider the questions posed. Listen to the Art on Call stop for the work when available. How does having a little background on a piece change or enhance your perception of it?

#### Stop #1:

Traditional material (granite)/untraditional subject (lines from the news)

#### Jenny Holzer, Selections from *The Living Series* (1989)

 Art on Call: 612.374.8200, code 1049

In Area 4 you will find a sculpture composed of white granite benches engraved with 28 of Jenny Holzer's statements from a group of works she calls *The Living Series*. Pick a bench and read the statement to yourself. Invite a classmate to read one that you find particularly interesting.

The statements you see on the benches are taken from newspaper stories and from the artist's own observations about daily life. She first presented the ideas on bronze plaques and hand-painted signs, and later had them engraved on the benches. She says, "I realized that people don't like to stand and read in galleries, and I thought they should be able to sit down."

*Why do you think Holzer had the words carved into granite instead of another material? Where else in your life have you seen words carved in granite? How does this work stretch your definition of sculpture?*

👉 **Stop #2:**

Untraditional material (I-beams)/  
traditional subject (figure from nature)

**Mark di Suvero, *Arikidea* (1977–1982)**

📞 Art on Call: 612.374.8200, code 1051

Let's transition from a sculpture that engages with language to one that engages the body. Make your way to Area 3 of the Garden and take a seat on the wooden swing suspended from Mark di Suvero's *Arikidea*. Look up at the three tons of steel gently swaying high above you. The gigantic beams are balanced so carefully that a delicate touch or breeze moves this material used in skyscrapers. The artist says, "Everything has a center of gravity, and I have to find it, find the balance."

The title of this work comes from the Greek word arachnid, meaning "spider." The artist admires spiders because of the ways they gracefully sculpt and suspend their webs in space. *How is this sculpture like a spider? Can you look beyond the steel and imagine a natural creature? How does this work stretch your definition of sculpture?*

**Stop #3:**

Mix of traditional (bronze) and untraditional  
(twigs) materials/traditional subject (animal)

**Deborah Butterfield, *Woodrow* (1987)**

📞 Art on Call: 612.374.8200, code 1044

We'll now move from spiders to stallions and head to the walkway situated between Areas 1 and 2 to find Deborah Butterfield's larger-than-life-size horse. Butterfield, a "horse girl" all her life, was torn between studying veterinary medicine and art when she entered college, but she eventually took art classes and became a sculptor. She moved to Montana after college, where she began making horse sculptures from materials she found on her ranch in Bozeman.

To create *Woodrow*, the artist collected sticks, tree branches, and bark she found near her home. These wooden pieces were sent to a foundry and cast in bronze. She then built the sculpture piece by piece, carefully fitting and welding each one together. The separate elements of the sculpture then were coated with different chemical solutions that interacted with the bronze, forming a fine greenish-blue film that accents the grain and surface imperfections of the original wooden sections.

*What's surprising about the artist's process?  
Besides his size, what makes Woodrow look like a horse?  
How does this work stretch your definition of sculpture?*

**Stop #4:**

Untraditional material (cinder blocks)/  
untraditional subject (an idea)

**Sol LeWitt, *X with Columns* (1996)**

📞 Art on Call: 612.374.8200, code 1489

We'll now leave Butterfield's horse for a sculpture that doesn't represent something found in nature. Make your way to Area 5 and seek out Sol LeWitt's sculpture made of cinder blocks.

Reflecting on his use of the block form, he said, "It suddenly dawned on me that I could also have the concrete block as a module. Concrete blocks were even more ubiquitous than brick, and an even more basic building material. Everything is built of concrete blocks. I preferred the larger module."

LeWitt used mathematical equations and minimal geometric shapes, especially the cube, to make drawings, paintings, and sculptures, which he referred to as "structures." Even though we see a physical object here, LeWitt proposed that ideas or concepts are the basic materials of art-making, and he is thus seen as a major force in the 1960s artistic movement known as Conceptualism.

*Where do you typically expect to see cinder blocks? Can you guess what the idea behind X with Columns might be? When you make something, are you more interested in the process or the product? How does this work stretch your definition of sculpture?*

**Stop #5:**

Untraditional material (human skeleton)/  
untraditional subject (an idea)

**Kris Martin, *Anonymous II* (2009)**

📞 Art on Call: 612.374.8200, code 1379

Moving from one idea to the next, let's cross Vineland Place and go to the Walker's Open Field/Area 6. Kris Martin's *Anonymous II* was buried on April 20, 2009, as part of the exhibition *The Quick and the Dead*. This object is an adult human skeleton previously used for medical study. In the documentation for the acquisition of *Anonymous II*, the work's medium is classified as "sculpture," though the only tangible part of the piece is a certificate denoting the GPS coordinates of the skeleton's burial site. (The certificate is not on display.) If you feel like sleuthing, the coordinates are N44°58.122'; W093°17.396'; elevation 823 feet.

Exhibition curator Peter Eleey says of *Anonymous II*, "In both this anonymity and the uncertainty of its location, the skeleton assumes a vast but invisible presence, becoming a metonymic figure for death itself."

*Do you think Martin's sculpture represents death?  
What's your gut reaction? What other ideas might be behind Anonymous II? How does this work stretch your definition of sculpture?*

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👆 **Stop #6:**

Untraditional material (color, light, sky)  
traditional subject (element of nature: sky)

**James Turrell, *Sky Peshier*, 2005 (2005)**

🔊 Art on Call: 612.374.8200, code 1038

The final stop on your tour is above ground and just up the hill in Area 6. You've reached the work that can be entered like a room. Situated half underground, similar to a bunker, this space invites you in by offering a path that slopes downward into a square chamber. Before entering, explore the piece from the outside. It's meant to resemble a spare, minimalist cube resting on the landscape, which may remind you of the LeWitt sculpture you saw earlier in the tour.

Now, enter the chamber. Take a seat and gaze for a minute or two at the sky through the 16-square-foot opening cut from the curving white ceiling. Turrell describes *Sky Peshier*, 2005 as a metaphor for introspection and meditation. The word "peshier" means "commentary." Thus the piece offers an account of the sky, or according to the artist, "a book of the sky."

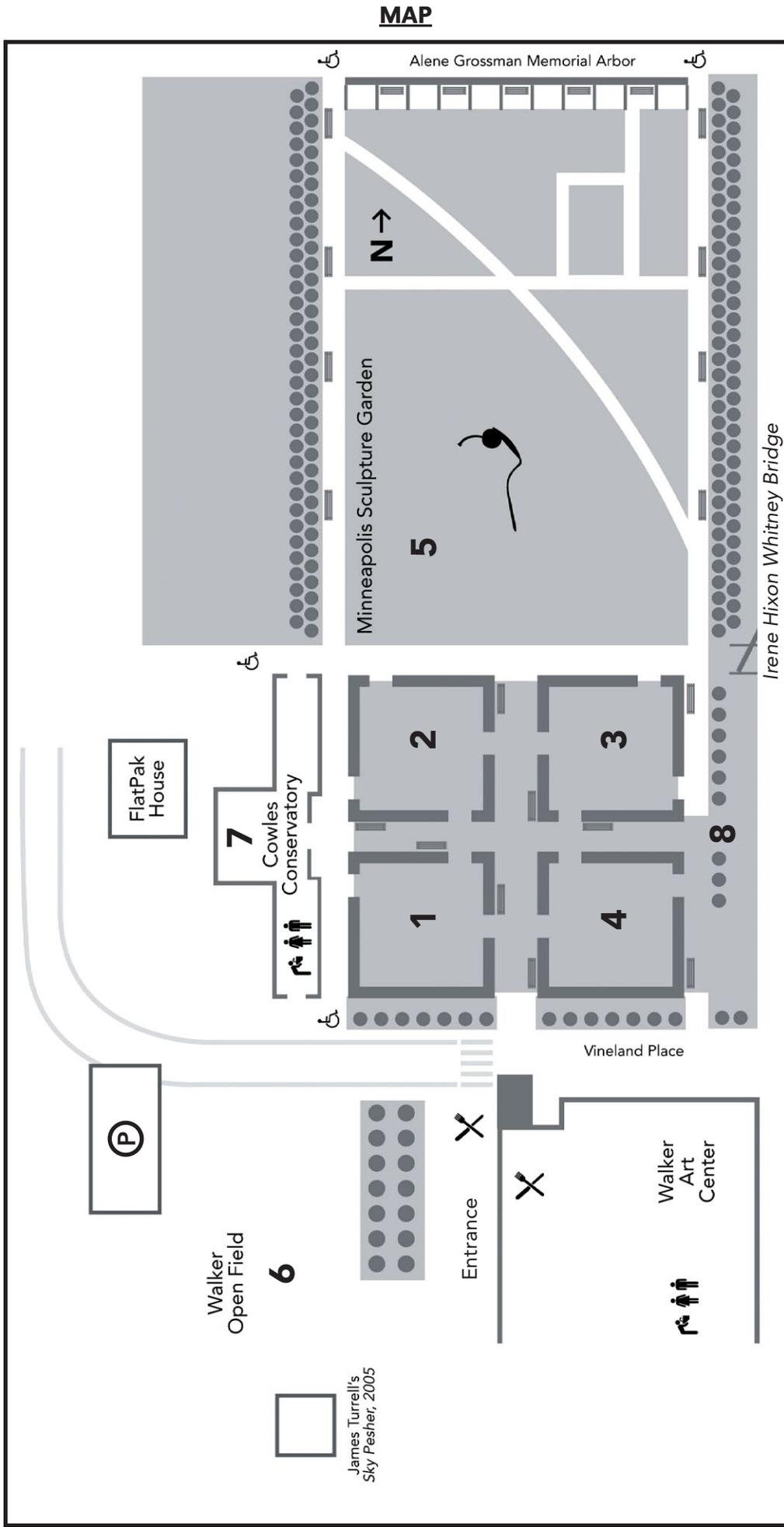
What's the "book of the sky" saying right now? *Look up and talk about what you see with classmates, or take some time to write about what you see—how the light changes, passing clouds, the occasional bird. How does this work stretch your definition of sculpture?*

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**Closure:** With your newly informed perspective, continue wandering through the Garden and select a few more works that strike you as challenging or untraditional. Keep asking yourself: How does this work stretch my definition of sculpture?

# STRETCHING THE DEFINITION OF SCULPTURE

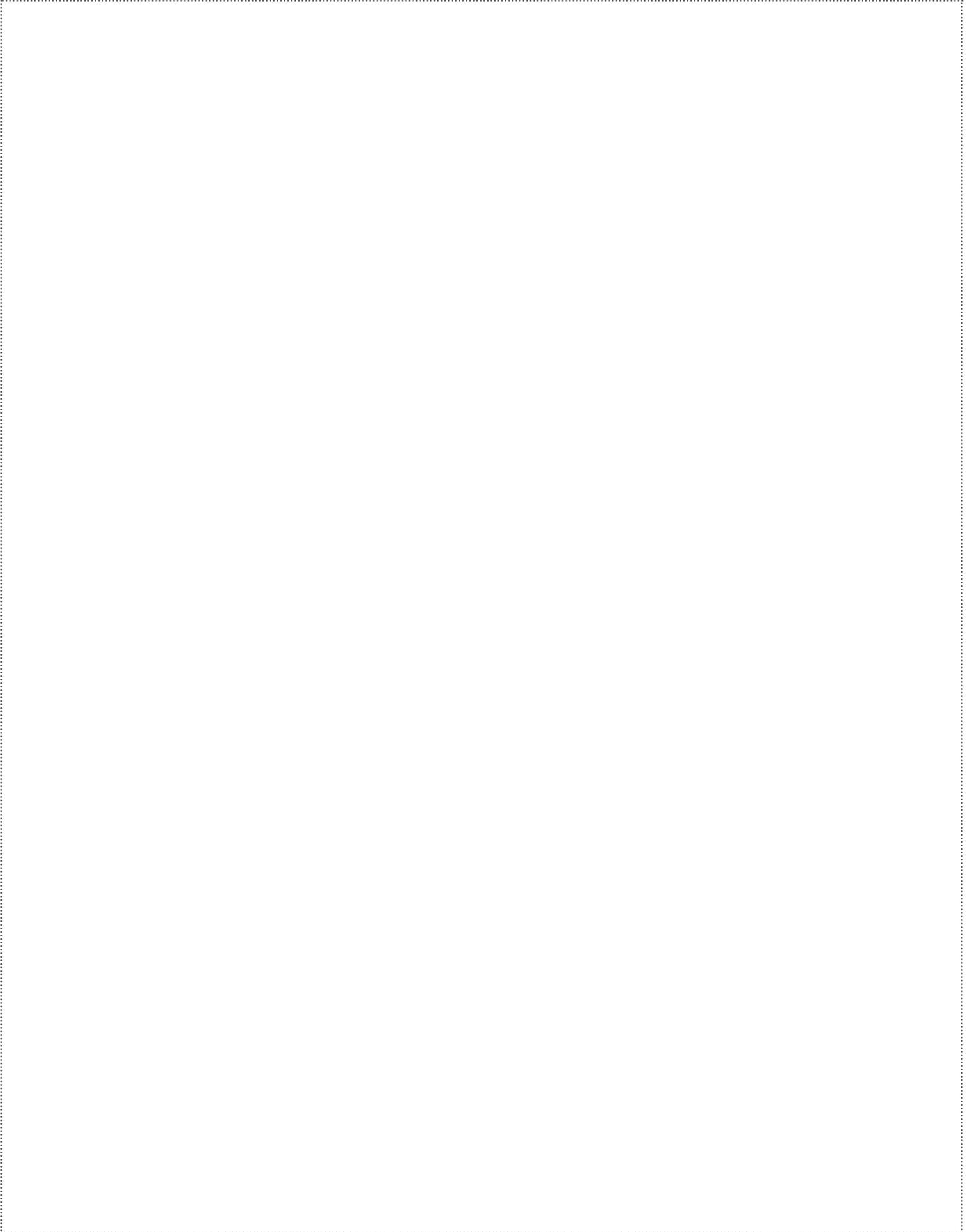
## Map of the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden







**DRAWING SPACE**



**DRAWING SPACE**

