

Isabelle de Borchgrave and Paper Sculpture

Artist Handout: Isabelle de Borchgrave

Artist: Isabelle de Borchgrave

[\[https://isabelledeborchgrave.com/pages/biography\]](https://isabelledeborchgrave.com/pages/biography)

is a Belgian artist who was born in 1946. She is best known for her paper sculptures. She started her art journey at the age of 14! Her career took an exciting turn in 1994 when she started to combine her love for fashion, art, and history all into one.

She started to make elaborate paper sculptures.

Isabelle created many sculptures based on dresses

and attire from those known as Elizabeth I, Marie Antoinette, the Empress Eugenie, the consort of Napoleon III, or the Ottoman kaftans. Though she is best known for her paper sculpture, Borchgrave didn't give up painting or creating other forms of sculpture. Her pieces are on display to do this day all across the world! She now lives and works in Brussels, Belgium.



*“While painting may be a question of technique, it should first and foremost be a source of pleasure. You have to look long and carefully if you are to re-invent; you have to do a lot of drawings before you can master the line. When **technique** has finally been totally absorbed, then and only then, does it leave room for free gesture, for pure creation and ultimately for joy.” –*

Isabelle de Borchgrave

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World and Audience: Borchgrave's work is displayed all over the world; in 2023 alone, she had over 40+ pieces on display. Her exhibitions range from Belgium, Switzerland, France, Japan, Brazil, the U.K. and even to the U.S. Her audience seems to be captivated by her ability to make paper sculpture replicas of historically accurate dresses, as she tends to use paint and paper alone!



Marie de' Medici (1543–1642), 2006

Inspired by a 1595 portrait by Pietro Facchetti (Italian, 1535/1539–1619) in the collection of the Palazzo Lancellotti, Rome

Mixed media, primarily acrylic, ink, metallic powder, and adhesive on paper

Artwork: Borchgrave is fascinated with historical fashion, as well as what paper can allow you to create. She claims it is more resistant to outside properties than fabric, and tends to not limit what she can and cannot do! She paints it, irons it, shrinks it, basically anything you can think of. Isabelle longs to tell a historical story through her paper fashion and

sculpture!

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Mantua, 2011

Based on a court mantua circa 1750 in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Mixed media, primarily acrylic, ink, metallic powder, and adhesive on paper



<https://www.vogue.com/slideshow/for-artist-isabelle-de-borchgrave-the-future-of-fashion-is-in-paper>

Borchgrave creates interesting textures and folds by manipulating the paper to mimic fabric.

“What makes paper precious to de Borchgrave is its simplicity. In line with the tradition of Arte Povera, an art form which seeks to create beauty using everyday objects, she turns a household item as common as paper into admired artworks. Though she has now become re-known in the world of paper design and Belgian art, this admiration grew over many long years of hard work.” - Marie van Boxel from Culture Trip

Subjective Frame:

What is your first impression of the sculptures? Do they look like paper? What gives them a realistic feel?

What do these sculptures remind you of? Any historical figure in particular?

Structural Frame:

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How do the dresses stand out in terms of style?

Can you tell what time period they're from?

Describe what techniques or ways the sculptures may be formed to give the viewer clues as what historical time period they may be from.

Cultural Frame:

What kind of people do you believe would be wearing these kinds of dresses?

What could be the reason Borchgrave is recreating these clothes in the present day?



Vocabulary:

Texture: the feel, appearance, or consistency of a surface or substance.

Folds: bend (something flexible and relatively flat) over on itself so that one part of it covers another.

Technique: a way of carrying out a particular task, especially the execution or performance of an artistic work or a scientific procedure.

Composition: the artistic arrangement of the parts of a picture.

Ideas for Artwork and Research:

Think of your identity and what best represents yourself. Have a piece of clothing you really like? What do you find yourself more interested in?

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Research different types of wearables.

Sketch out your designs and ideas on paper, practice different folding techniques to see which ones you like more!

Experiment with paper - what all can you construct with paper, paint, and glue?

Make a paper wearable to show off your personality and interests.

Francesca Vitali

Onde Bracelet

Recycled Shopping Bag

Francesca Vitali



Francesca is a chemist-turned contemporary jewelry making artist. She creates paper jewelry from multiple different pieces of paper, even

some shopping bags! What sets her apart from Borchgrave is her more abstract, and sculptural approach to designing her jewelry. She tends to create these with multiple purposes as well, with most being made to wear.

[\[https://www.francescavitalipaperjewelry.com/pages/about\]](https://www.francescavitalipaperjewelry.com/pages/about) Francesca even sells some of her work on her own website.

“My aesthetic is minimalist with an emphasis on geometric forms and clean lines, but I don’t shy away from an occasional challenge to create something completely out of my comfort zone. One of the focal points when creating wearable sculptures is color. Some of my most recognizable pieces have the signature black and white color blocking scheme with a touch of red, and some of the newest collections are all about playful colors combined with strokes of

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paint.” - Francesca Vitali



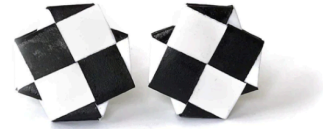
Bittersweet (Chocolate) Brooch
\$130.00

SOLD OUT



Black and White and Yellow Five Circles
Necklace
\$395.00

SOLD OUT



Black and White Bolla Earrings
\$60.00

SOLD OUT

Compare and Contrast:

How are Borchgrave and Vitali’s paper sculptures/wearables the same? How are they different?

What do the different approaches to paper sculpture say about the two artists?

How does Vitali’s approach differ from Borchgrave?

Who might be the audience for Vitali’s work/wearables?