

The J. Paul Getty Museum

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4 Basic Sculpture Techniques

Sculptors primarily use four basic techniques. The processes are either subtractive (material is removed or carved out) or additive (material is added).

Carving: Carving involves cutting or chipping away a shape from a mass of stone, wood, or other hard material. Carving is a subtractive process whereby material is systematically eliminated from the outside in.

Casting: Sculptures that are cast are made from a material that is melted down—usually a metal—that is then poured into a mold. The mold is allowed to cool, thereby hardening the metal, usually bronze. Casting is an additive process.

Modeling: Modeled sculptures are created when a soft or malleable material (such as clay) is built up (sometimes over an armature) and shaped to create a form. Modeling is an additive process.

Assembling: Sculptors gather and join different materials to create an assembled sculpture. Assembling is an additive process. An example of assemblage is Martin Puryear's *That Profile*, above.



Martin Puryear most [+ Enlarge](#) often crafts his sculptures from wood, but in the case of *That Profile*, he created a network of welded and sandblasted stainless steel tubes whose joints are bound together by strands of silver-patinated bronze. © Martin Puryear