



# Duane Hanson

January 17, 1925 - January 6, 1996  
Photorealist Sculptor

Duane Hanson is known for his life-sized statues of ordinary people. This great American sculptor grew up in Minnesota, studied art in Michigan, and settled in Florida to teach and work. Hanson developed his life-casting techniques in the 1960s, using newly invented latex rubber and fiberglass materials. He would begin a statue by covering parts of a living person with latex goo that quickly hardened into a solid layer. When the rubber layers were peeled away, he used them to create a mold of the model. Liquid fiberglass, poured into the hollow mold, would harden into the exact shape of the original person, right down to fingerprints and tiny wrinkles. Hanson's sculptures were carefully painted and dressed to look so realistic that they seemed alive, often fooling museum workers and gallery visitors who would walk over to ask the statue a question. His work celebrated common, everyday characters, such as a tired janitor, a tourist family, and a very large lady sunbathing on a plastic lounge chair with potato chips and a movie magazine. Hanson gave these people a special place in art history.



portrait sketch by Silver Tragessor, 9

Celebrate the art of Duane Hanson by creating a plaster hand sculpture. The hand sculpture is then painted, dressed, and displayed in a realistic setting that might fool viewers.

## Photorealist Hand Sculpture



### Materials

plaster of Paris (1 lb. for each hand sculpture)  
 container for mixing plaster  
 water for mixing  
 latex glove, from a hardware store or doctor's office  
 acrylic paints and paintbrushes, rag, water  
 box with crumpled newspaper for drying area  
 old shirt (the sleeve and cuff will be used)  
 choices of props and decorations -  
 jewelry ring bracelet  
 watch jelly-band bracelet  
 suggestions of props (or other ideas) -  
 box tray  
 fabric or scarf video game  
 pen plastic fruit  
 spoon small toy  
 kitchen utensil shop tool  
 crayon paintbrush  
 scissors hanky or Kleenex  
 CD cookie

### Process

1. An adult should help mix and pour plaster of Paris into a latex glove. To do this, mix the plaster with water until it is the texture of a milkshake. Stir slowly to keep dust down. Notes: Do not breathe plaster dust. Dispose of leftover plaster in the trash. Do not place in the sink or a clog may occur.
2. Hold the latex glove open and support it for several minutes as the plaster begins to harden. During this time, the fingers of the glove can be gently bent a bit and held in place until the plaster sets. Bent fingers make a more interesting realistic hand. Once the plaster begins to harden, set the glove aside to dry, propped in a box of crumpled newspaper for several days.
3. When dry, peel away the glove to reveal the plaster hand. The hand sculpture will always be somewhat fragile, so handle it carefully.
4. Mix acrylic paint to create the color of skin, and paint the plaster hand. Use a darker shade of the color to paint fingernails, the wrinkles of knuckles and the lines on the palm of the hand. Make the plaster hand as realistic as possible.
5. Cut the sleeve off an old shirt and use it to "dress" the plaster hand. Add jewelry, props, or an old watch if desired.
6. Place the plaster hand in a realistic setting. First, set the hand sculpture in a box or on a tray. Next, add a choice of props, such as:
  - a pen for writing a letter
  - holding a scarf
  - covered with flour and dough holding a spoon
  - smeared with grease working with tools.
 The more realistic the final sculpture and setting appear, the closer the project is to Hanson's ultra-realism style.

### YOUNG CHILD Colorful Hands

- An adult helps trace the child's hand.
- Then the child decorates the hand shape with markers or paints, filling the shape with any choice of colors and designs.

