

How to Make a Wire Creature

by Maria Fox Larsson

I usually use steel wire in two gauges, thicker and thinner (14 and 18 gauge - or similar). You can find that in most home improvement stores. But you can also use recycled electric wire, craft wire from a hobby store or even pipe cleaners: they're wire inside too.



The easiest way to paint wire is with spray paint. Make sure to pick up some white primer if you want to use lighter colors. For darker colors you can spray paint the wire directly.

We'll use paper to protect the surface you're spray painting the wire on. Any kind will do.



You will need:



wire



wire cutters



spray paint



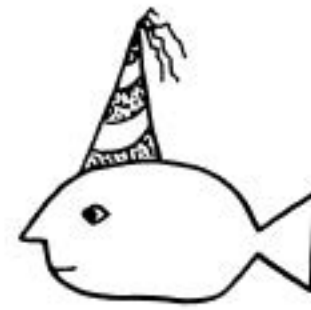
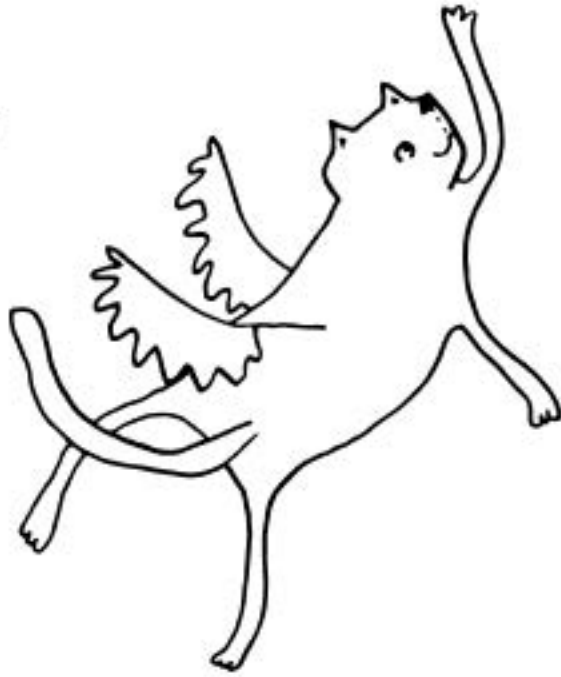
paper



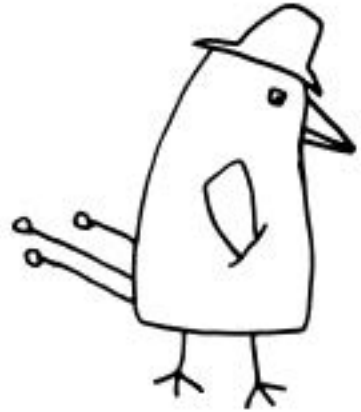
If you don't have wire cutters, you can bend the wire back and forth in the same place 10-15 times, and it will break. For thinner wire you can also use an old pair of scissors.

Choose a Character to Make

I love making birds, dogs and wolves, fish, rabbits and hares. All sorts of creatures.



Choose the character you'll be making out of wire.



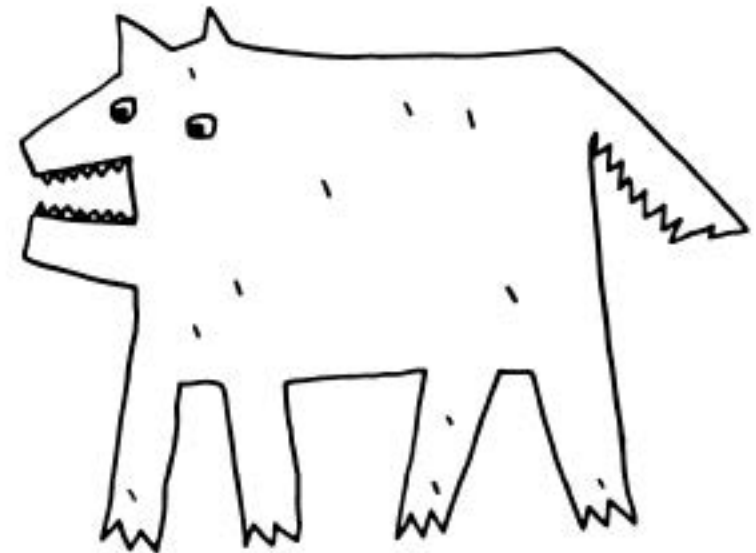
It can be anything: an animal, a bird, a fish, a dinosaur.



It can even be an object, like a teapot or a house.



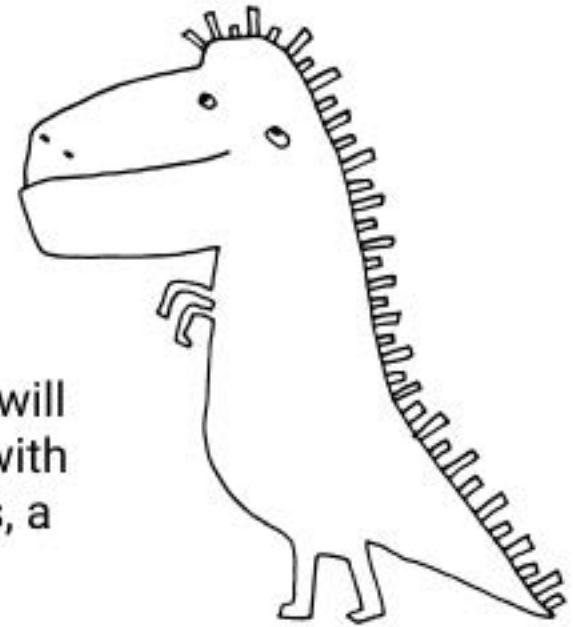
The only thing that matters is that it's something you like and care about.



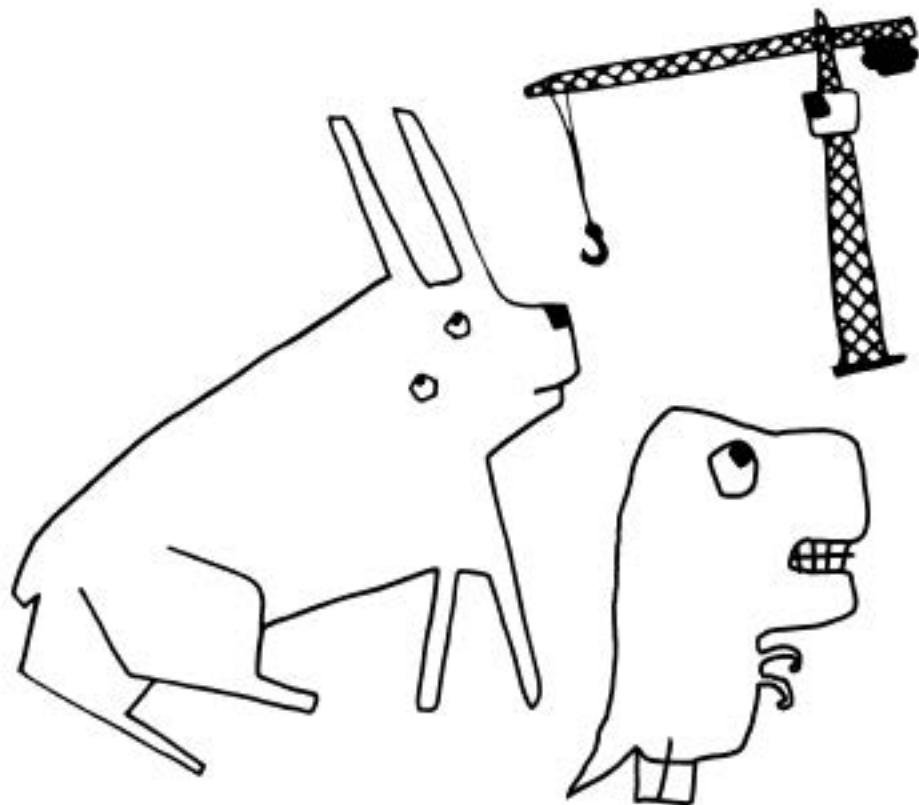
Sketch Your Character

1. I usually make a drawing of my character before I start working.

2. Try not to use too much detail, just enough to make your character recognizable.



3. A standard A4 sheet of paper will be a good size if you're working with wire. If you're using pipe cleaners, a little smaller will be a bit easier.

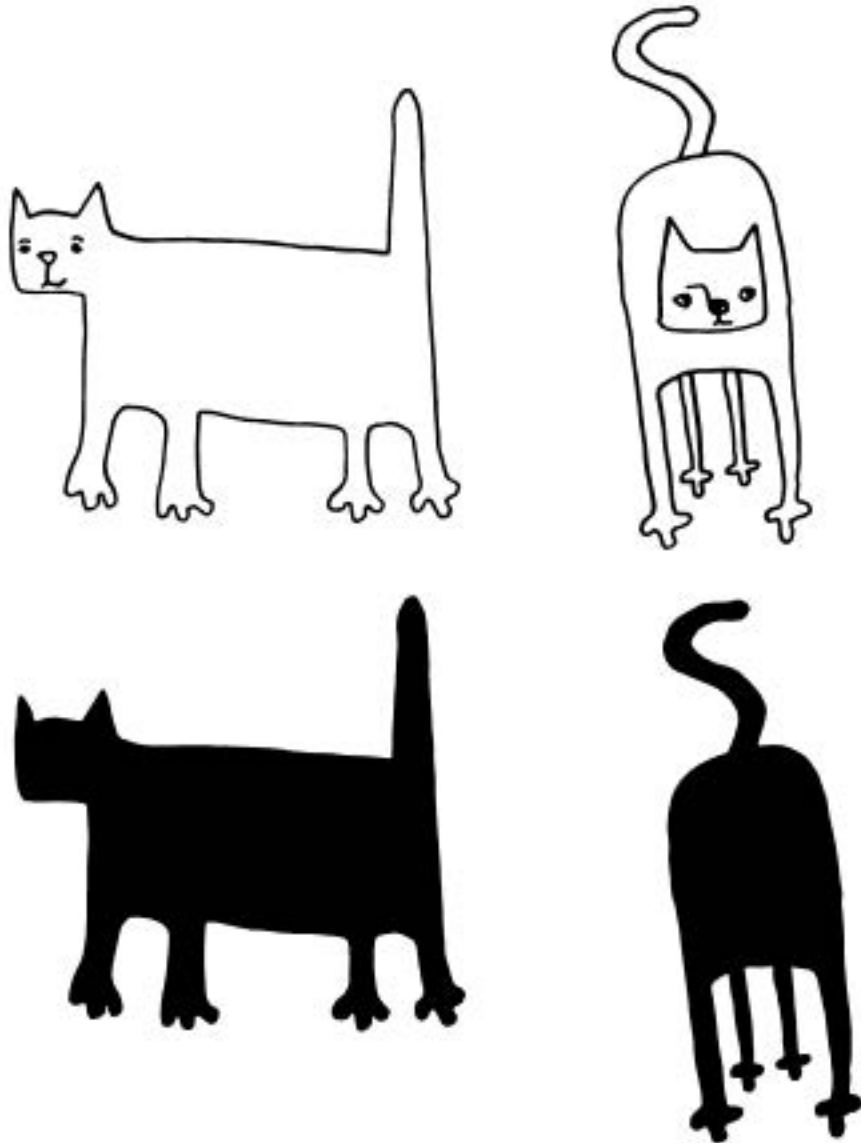


4. One thing I often do to avoid adding too much detail is drawing with my left hand instead of my right (my non-dominant hand). Try it: it's harder, so you end up drawing simpler things.



Silhouette Tips

1. We'll be making your character's silhouette out of wire. A silhouette is basically a filled in outline without inner details (like your shadow).

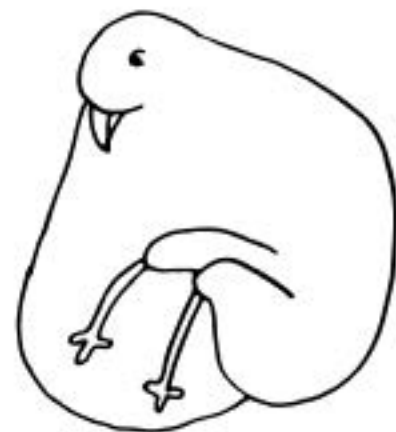
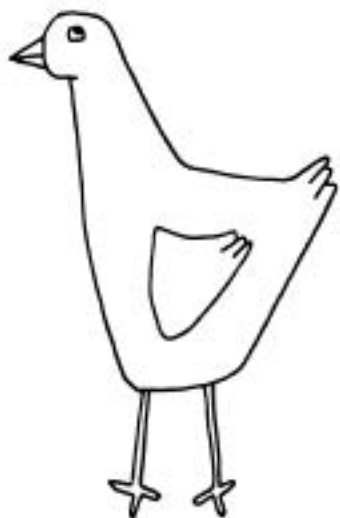


2. Because there's no detail inside, some silhouettes may be more difficult to read than others.

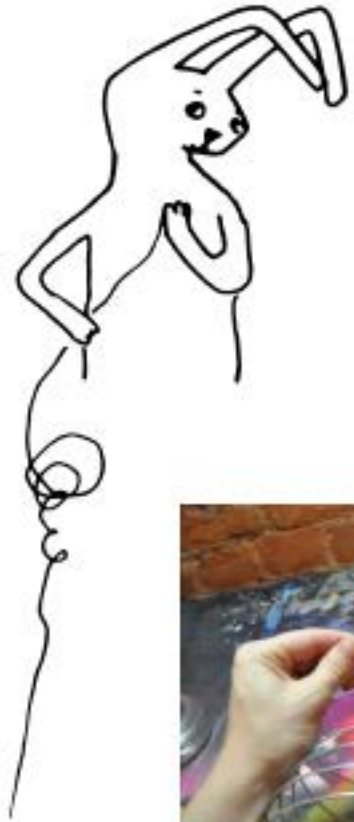


3. Keep that in mind when you decide on the final shape of your character.





Make Your Character's Outline

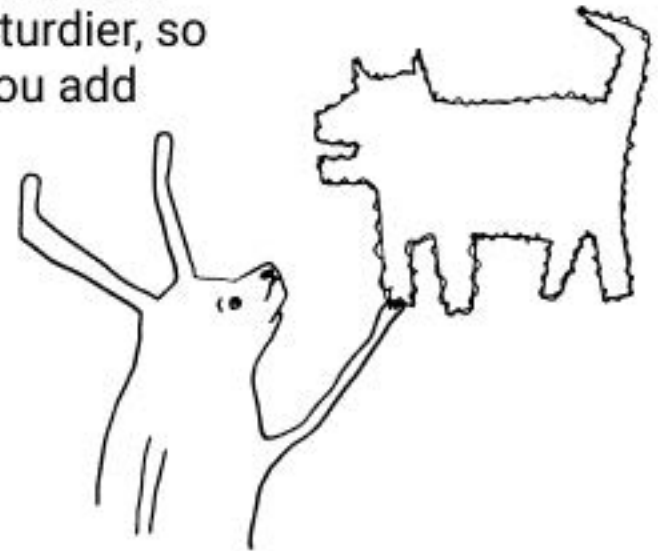


1. We'll start by making your character's outline. We'll be using the thicker wire for this step.

2. Start by bending a single wire into the shape of your character.



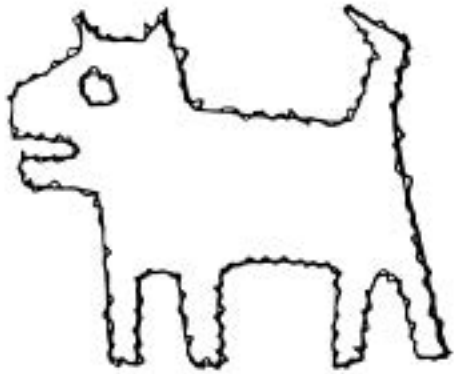
3. Then twist another wire around the first one to make the outline sturdier, so it doesn't lose shape when you add details and texture inside.



4. Remember that it's ok to change things along the way. "Listen" to the wire as you work, and if it suggests to do something differently than you've drawn, check it out, maybe it will be awesome.

Add Details

1. Now that you have your outline, you can add a bit of detail inside, like an eye or a wing. You can skip this step if things seem complicated.



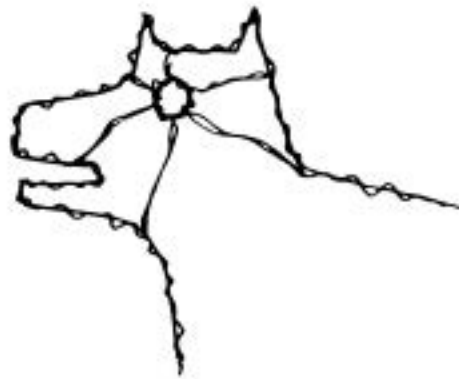
2. Make the shape of your detail piece and attach it with wire to the outline.

3. I usually use thicker wire for the detail shape and thinner wire for attaching it to the outline.



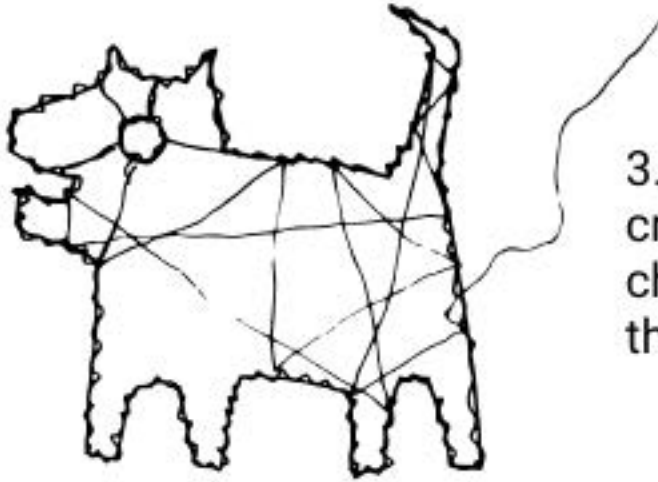
4. Add several more connecting lines, so the piece stays in place well.

5. Try not to add more than two details, one is best. Otherwise it will be a lot harder to add the texture later.



Add Texture

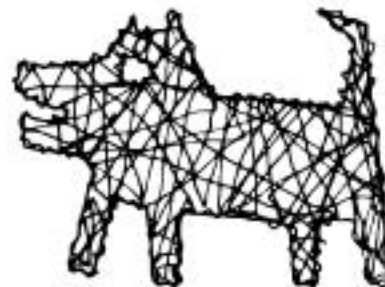
1. Now we will use the thinner wire to create your character's texture.



2. Cut a length of thinner wire. Don't make it too long, two-three feet will be good.

3. Attach the wire to the outline, cross the inside of the character and attach the wire to the other side.

5. Repeat until the texture is as dense as you want it to be. Cut yourself a new length of wire whenever you run out. It will be a lot easier than using one super long piece.



4. You don't need to cut the wire, just keep crossing and attaching (I usually just wrap the wire once around the outline).

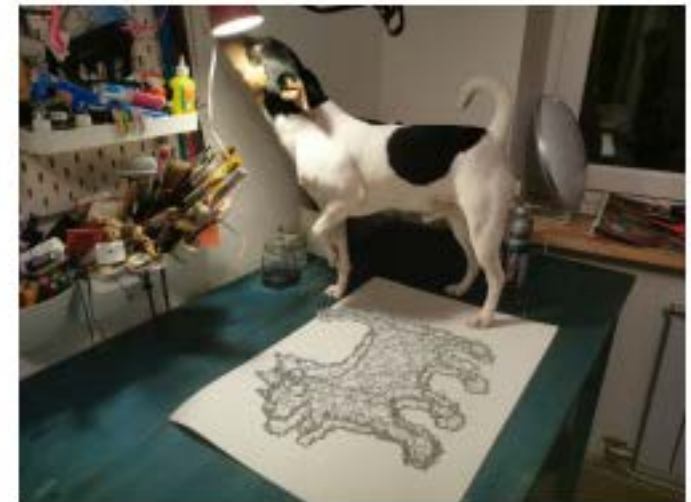


Paint Your Character

1. Now it's finally time to paint your character!

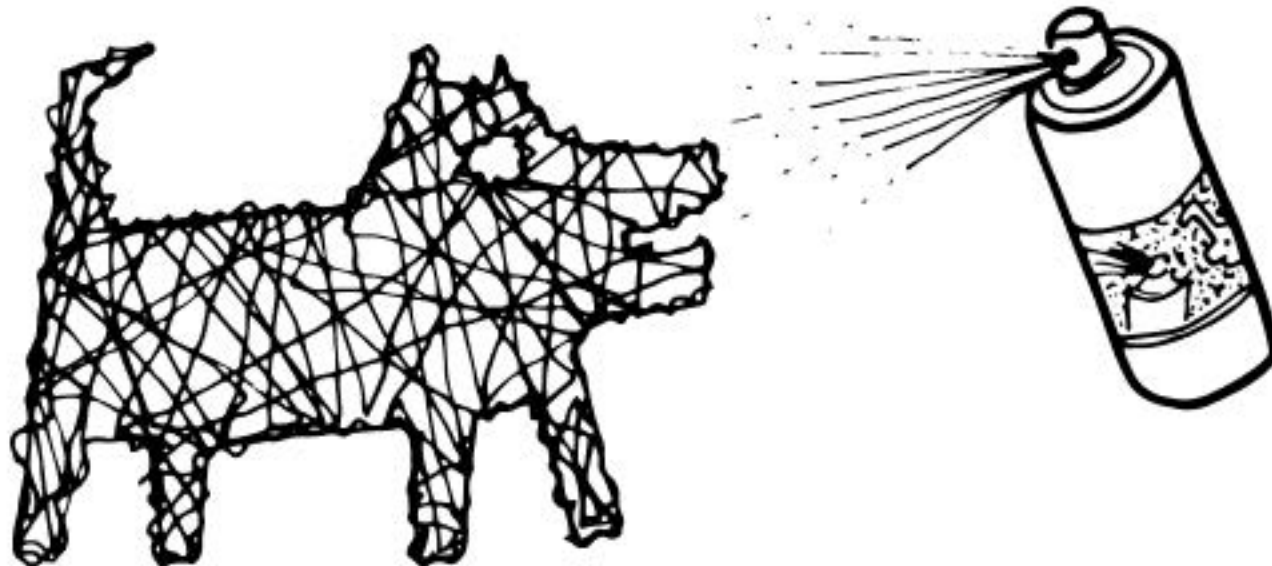


2. The easiest way to paint something with such a complicated structure is to use spray paint. But remember that spray paint vapors are not good for you, so it's best to work outdoors and wear a respirator.



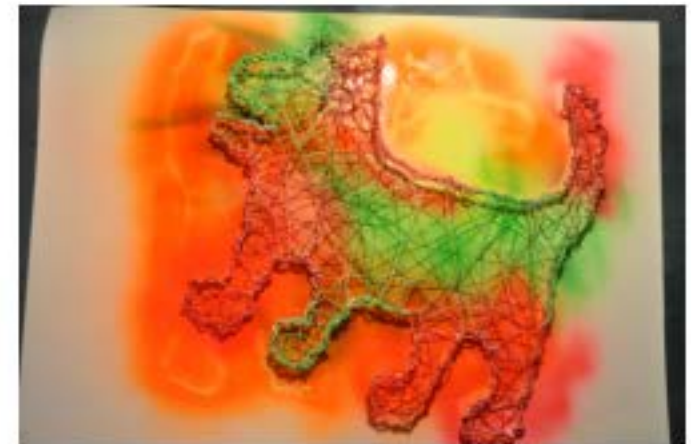
3. Read and follow the instructions on the can.

4. If you're planning to use lighter colors, start with white primer.



5. Cover the surface you're working on with a sheet of paper, so you don't get spray paint all over it. It's very hard to clean off.

6. Spray one side, then wait for it to dry. Then spray the other side.

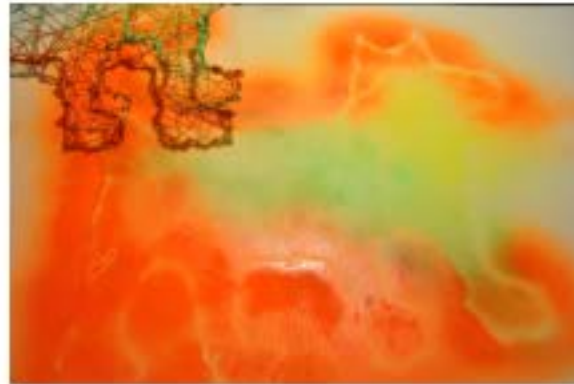


Congrats, you're done!

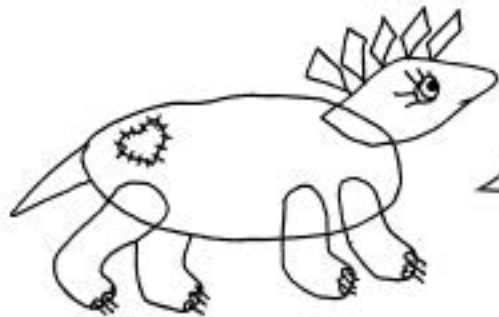


Here's my finished doggo.

And here are a bird and a rabbit I made using the same technique, but with pipe cleaners.

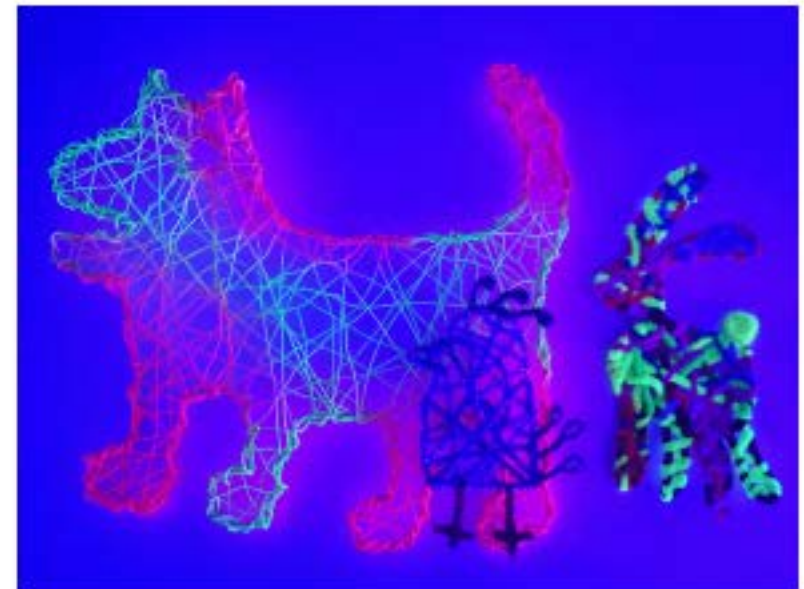


You can use the paper you used when spray painting your character as a background for another project. Maybe draw something on it, or maybe it's beautiful as it is.



How did your creature turn out? Do share and tag me and the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh on Instagram. We are very curious!

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And here are all three under blue light. The rabbit and the doggo are glowing, because the paint and some of the pipecleaners have fluorescent pigment in them.