

# Studio Saturdays: American Sign Language Poster

Rollins  
Museum  
of Art

## *Abstinecia (Libertad)* by Yoan Capote

Yoan Capote

*Abstinecia (Libertad)*

2014

Cast bronze and engraving and  
drypoint



## LIST OF MATERIALS

- 4 sheets of colored paper
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Glue
- Poster board

Yoan Capote is a Cuban artist who was born in 1977 in Havana, Cuba. Capote uses sculpture, painting, photography, videos, and other ways of artmaking to create his artwork, which focuses on themes of politics and immigration. Immigration is what happens when a person or group of people moves from one country to another. Sometimes people immigrate to another country just because they want to live in a new place, but other times people immigrate to escape bad things in their home country such as war. Many people have immigrated to the United States from Cuba in the past century, and Capote's art is influenced by this history of his country.

In this artwork from 2014, titled *Abstinencia (Libertad)*, Capote casts the hands of factory workers in New York who immigrated from Latin American countries in bronze. Their hands spell out in American Sign Language, a language that uses hand signals and movement to represent letters and words, the Spanish word "Libertad", which means liberty in English. Liberty is another word for freedom. The engraving to the right shows drawings of the American Sign Language alphabet, with the letters of *Libertad* highlighted. Capote uses sign language in *Abstinencia (Libertad)* to show symbolically that many people who have immigrated to the United States do not have a "voice" in how our country is run, even though they are now a part of our country. He uses the word "Liberty" to represent this larger social idea that is important to him.

**For today's activity, we will be focusing on the American Sign Language alphabet to create a one-word poster inspired by Yoan Capote's *Libertad* sculpture. You will be tracing and cutting out your own handprint, then folding the fingers to create the different Sign Language letters. You can reference this image of the American Sign Language alphabet throughout the project to make sure you spell your word out correctly. Feel free to pause now if you want to take a closer look! Just as Yoan Capote used different people's hands to make his sculpture, you can trace the hands of friends and family members to make your poster. You can also use a word in a different language for your poster, like how Capote used the Spanish word *Libertad* in his artwork.**

## THINK LIKE AN ARTIST

- 1) What big idea, like "Libertad", or "Liberty", is important to you?
- 2) What one word can you use to sum up or symbolize that idea?

# INSTRUCTIONS

1. Think of a big idea that is important to you, like “Libertad” - liberty. After you have chosen your word, write it down – then count out how many letters are in that word.
2. Spread your hand out on a piece of colored paper and use a pencil to trace it. Ask friends and family to join in and trace their hands to give a variety of shapes and sizes. About two hands should be able to fit on each paper. Trace as many hands as there are letters in your chosen word.
3. Use scissors to cut along the hand outlines.
4. Look at the American Sign Language alphabet and find the hand motions that represent each letter of your chosen word.
5. Bend the fingers of the cut-out hands to create knuckles. Reference the ASL chart and glue the fingers in place to make the sign. Repeat for each letter of the word.
6. After all letters are made hang your ASL word somewhere for all to see, like on the wall or on a poster.

# AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE ALPHABET

