SKIN & BONES II

Skin & Bones II is a project that was originally created using sculptural forms. These sculptures are very delicate, and many have been returned to their creators, so they are presented here on the nearby video monitor instead of "in person." The video shows a whirling 360° view of photographs of each sculpture.

(A video of *Walk the Walk* and *Tracks & Translations* also loops on the same monitor.)

The table below lists each sculpture and logs its visual characteristics, in order to thoroughly define the dinosaurs' morphology. Several graphs collate the table's information.

Over 300 people participated in this project. The vast majority were of elementary school age, but there were several other age groups as well. They included students from Moses Dewitt Elementary School, Erwin Nursery School, Bellevue Elementary School, Edward Smith Elementary School, and McKinley-Brighton Magnet Elementary School (all in Syracuse), as well as visitors to the New York State Fair, the Redhouse art gallery, and the Museum of the Earth.

Chris gave the participants plastic dinosaur skeletons and asked them to cover the skeletons with clay and other materials so that it would look like what they thought their dinosaur would have looked like on the outside. This is yet another way to see what people think dinosaurs looked like--compare it to *Skin & Bones I* and *Dinosaur Duo*.

Clearly, the participants in this project took a few liberties in interpreting the concept (as would be expected, given the young average age), and they tend to look relatively fantastic, although some are skillfully "realistic." This, however, just tends to lend more credence to the idea that dinosaurs are blank slates onto which we feel free to release our imaginations.

While it is possible that the participants might have taken the same decorative liberties with any skeleton, this seems unlikely. If they were given a tiger skeleton, for instance, it seems relatively certain that most participants would have turned out unique, but fairly similar tigers. Different ages would take different liberties; younger children would still have a wide range of uses of color and pattern no matter what the subject. With older kids and adults, however, it seems that dinosaurs are still prime territory for invention; they seem to grasp the inherent subjectivity in the way dinosaurs are represented in our culture. This ultimately points towards the possibility that people really don't care what dinosaurs actually looked like--instead, we are interested in how they can inspire and act out our fantasies.

<u>Characteristics of Note in the Charts</u>

All the colors were widely used, and each individual dinosaur tended to have multiple colors. However, green and red were clearly the most popular. While green may have been popular because the participants were influenced by the color of many modern reptiles, red seems more like a personal choice.

Coloring was usually applied in amorphous patches, although the shape of these patches was often based on the underlying body parts. Solidly-colored dinosaurs were also very popular.

It was unusual for dinosaurs to have more complex patterns, such as stripes or polka dots, although this may be more due to the participants' age and the generally-greater difficulty of creating these patterns in clay rather than, say, a drawing, than their actual ideas of what the skin might look like.

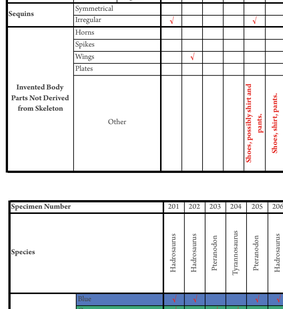
Stones and feathers were by far the most popular materials to add. Stones were used to simulate claws, teeth, plates, and horns. Feathers were used generally as decoration, but also as wings. When used as decoration, they were used in the fashion of birds' plumage. Chris usually discussed the relationship between dinosaurs and birds with the participants, and a sizeable number used the feathers for this reason. Others used them purely as embellishments; stones, on the other hand, almost always functioned as a stand-in for a particular biological characteristic. Chris eventually stopped offering plant material and hair, which contributed to their low numbers.

Many participants added wings and plates, which is to be expected, but there was a surprising amount of extraneous added detail in the form of anthropomorphic items like clothing, as well as things like foot pads and claws. A very large number of participants specifically colored in the eyes.

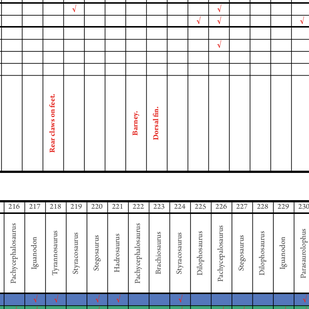
There was an approximately even distribution between symmetry and asymmetry in all context; however, the older the participants, the more symmetrical the dinosaurs became. This seems to speak to a desire to make the dinosaurs look at least somewhat "real" and not totally imaginary, based on their understanding that most animals are, for instance, bilaterally symmetrical–that a sense of order underlies all biology.

Skin & Bones III, a new project which has only a handful of participants so far, may also be seen on the video, but has not been analyzed here.

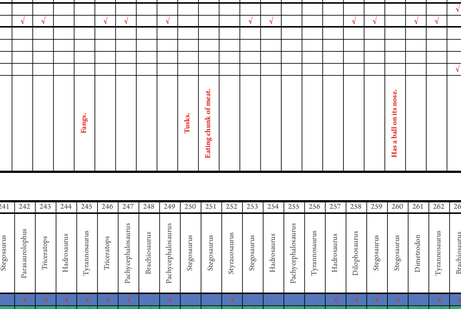
Instead of covering plastic dinosaur skeletons with clay, participants in *Skin & Bones III* painted wooden dinosaur skeletons.



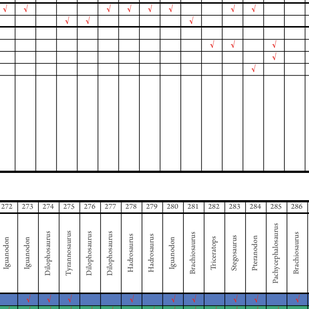
Colors Used



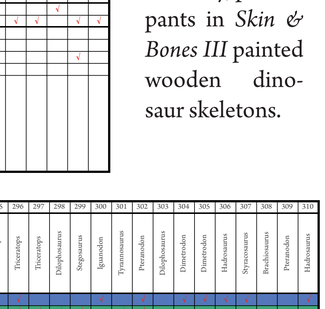
Organization of Colors



Use of Materials



Sequin Distribution



Added Structures