

# MoNA

Museum of Northwest Art

Age: Kindergarten

Lesson Duration: 1 hour

Subjects: Plant Lifecycles & Science

## Sunflower Sculptures Inspired by Richard Gilkey

A HANDS-ON ART ACTIVITY DESIGNED  
BY MONA EDUCATORS



Above: Student example



Bouquet of Sunflowers by Richard Gilkey

### Description

Students will be introduced to Northwest artist Richard Gilkey and make a small clay sculpture of a sunflower using their knowledge of 3D forms.

### Materials

- Information on Richard Gilkey (included)
- Video: [Life Cycle of a Sunflower](#)
- Clay
- Clay tools
- Cardboard or thick paper for backing

### Vocabulary

- |             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| ✓ Forms     | ✓ Cube       |
| ✓ Sculpture | ✓ Cylinder   |
| ✓ Sphere    | ✓ Still life |

## Instructions

- 1) Ask learners what knowledge they have about sunflowers and the life cycle of plants.
- 2) Watch the Life Cycle of a Sunflower video.
- 3) Introduce artist Richard Gilkey and his sunflower paintings
  - Encourage students to note the details of the sunflowers they see and might like to include in their own artwork.
- 4) After discussion about the artist, transition to art-making activity. Warm up by having students explore making various 3D forms with clay, such as a sphere, cube, and cylinder (see attached sheet).
- 5) Then, ask students to make three equal spheres of clay. One will be for the center of the flower, one will be for the petals, and one will be for the stem and leaves.
- 6) Students will gently press the first sphere flat on their paper or cardboard to make the center of their flower.
- 7) The second sphere will be divided into several smaller spheres. Students will form petals from each small sphere by pressing them flat and gently squeezing the end to create a pointed tip. They can then be pressed around the center of their sunflower.
- 8) The third sphere will be rolled out to create a long cylinder and attached by pressing one end onto the bottom of their flower.
- 9) They can add texture and detail-like sunflower seeds using the clay tools.
- 10) **Optional extension:** Students can paint their flowers once they dry using acrylic paint.



## Artist Inspiration: Richard Gilkey



Richard Gilkey (1925-1997), in his Ballard studio, September 1966 Photo by Mary Randlett, Copyright 2002

**Richard Gilkey** was born in Bellingham, Washington in 1925 and was the fourth generation in the Pacific Northwest. He and his family have ties to La Conner, Ballard, Edison, Anacortes and beyond.

Early in his art-making career Gilkey was shown the artworks of **Skagit Mystic** artists **Guy Anderson**, **Mark Tobey** and **Morris Graves**. Their artworks of the Pacific Northwest inspired Gilkey to paint the landscapes of his home.

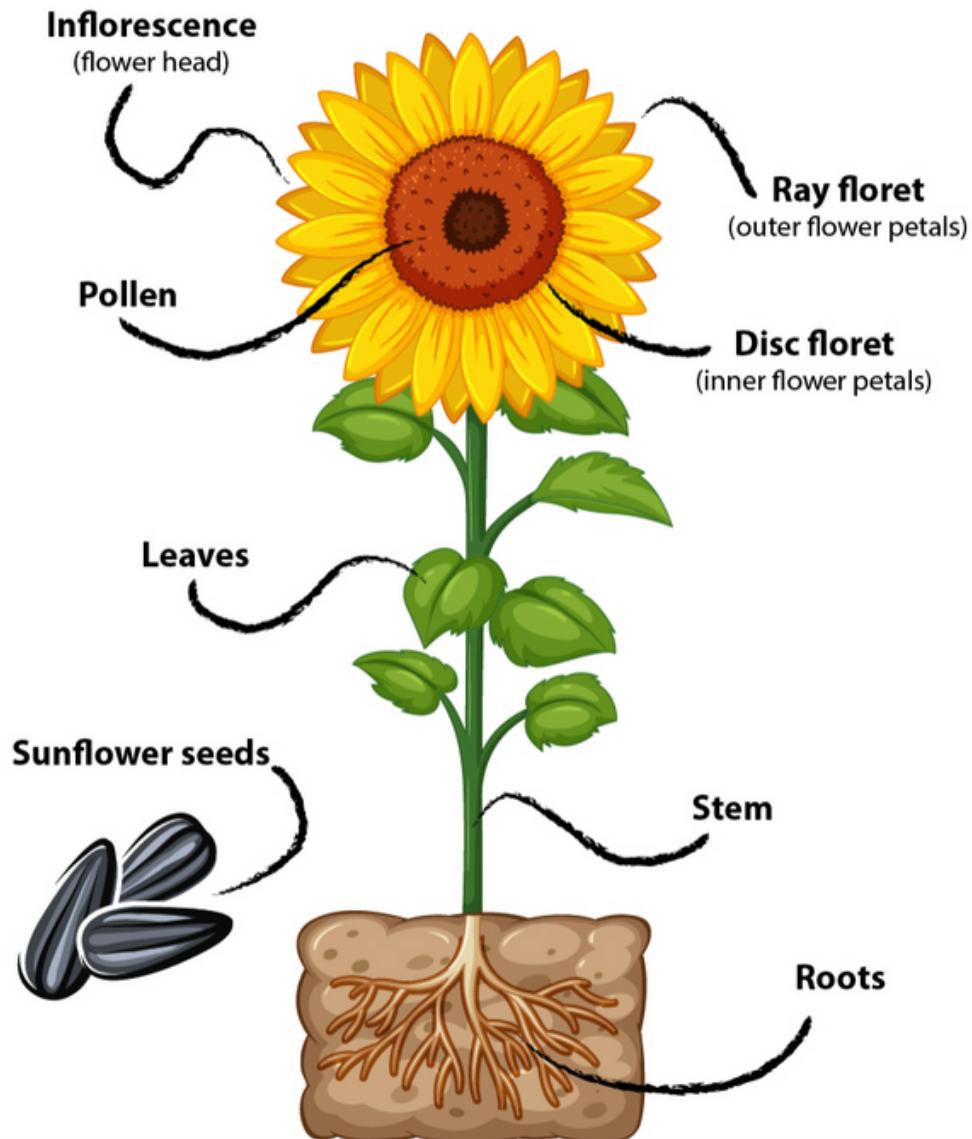
Among the landscapes painted by Gilkey, he often included **sunflowers**. What parts of the sunflower can you see in the paintings? What's missing? How many different phases of the **life cycle** can you spot? Why do you think the artist chose to paint the flowers this way?

To learn more about Richard Gilkey and his artworks click [here](#) and [here](#).



*Skagit River Landscape* by Richard Gilkey

# ANATOMY OF A SUNFLOWER



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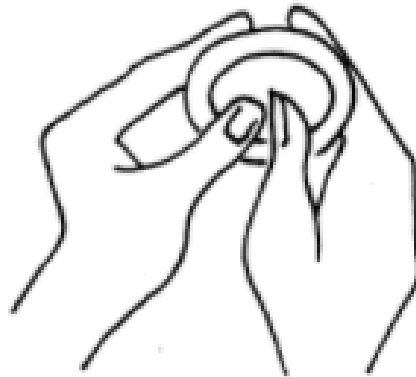
## Learning and State Standards

Fulfills **Washington State Arts Learning Standards:**

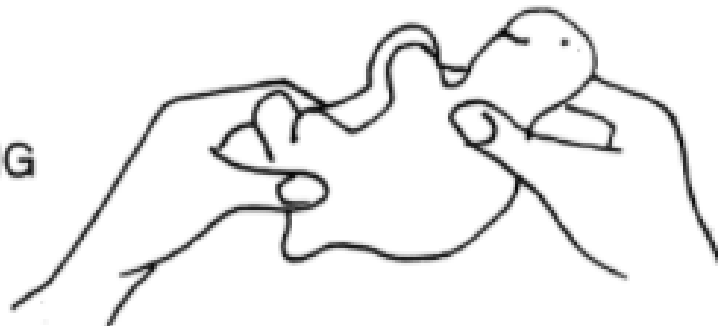
- **VA:Cr2.3.K** (Create art that represents natural and constructed environments)
- **VA:Cr2.1.K** (Through experimentation, build skills in various media and approaches to art-making)

# CLAY BUILDING TECHNIQUES

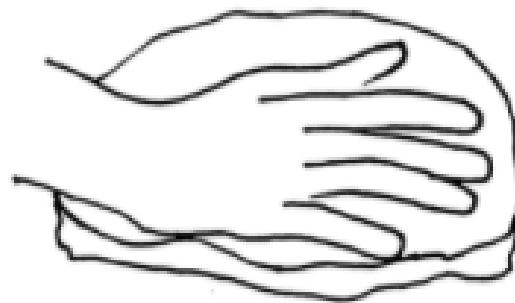
PINCHING



MODELING



SLAB



COILING



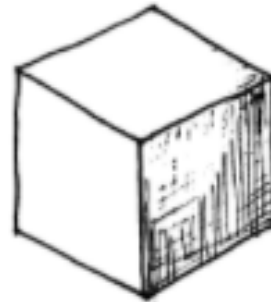
SPHERE



CYLINDER



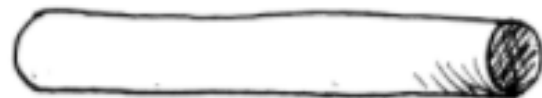
CUBE



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*Bouquet of Sunflowers* by Richard Gilkey





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