

MoNA

Museum of Northwest Art

Clay Family Portraits Inspired by Lillian Pitt

A HANDS-ON ART ACTIVITY
DESIGNED BY MONA
EDUCATORS

Age: First Grade

Lesson Duration: 1 hour

Subject: Family



Image Source: MoNA Educator

Description

Students will make a series of clay sculptures that resemble their family members. In the process, they will learn names of 3D forms, which will be used as the basis for the faces and bodies. This lesson is inspired by the clay masks of Lillian Pitt, a Pacific Northwest Native artist.

Materials

- Air-dry clay
- Clay tools
- Cardboard bases or paper plates
- Form video
- Biography & Images of Lillian Pitt's work
- Optional book: *The Great Big Book of Families* by Mary Hoffman (read-aloud video here).

Relevant Vocabulary

- Sphere
- Cube
- Rectangular prism
- Cylinder
- Form
- Portrait

Instructions

- 1) Start by watching this [form video](#) and discuss what students noticed and wondered.
- 2) Introduce Lillian Pitt as the inspiration for making clay family portraits. Her masks show how students might make faces out of clay. Biography information on the artist and images of her work are included at the end of this lesson.
- 3) This is a good time to mention that there are all kinds of families and make sure students feel supported in sharing about their own family. You may want to read *The Great Big Book of Families* by Mary Hoffman.
- 4) Pass out clay and guide the students to make each 3D form together as a class while you discuss vocabulary (see Clay Building technique and Common Forms pages at the end of this lesson for support).
- 5) Students will use these 3D forms to make their families' faces out of clay and share them with the class (see Clay Masks instructions at the end of this lesson).
- 6) They can put their finished pieces on the bases or plates to dry.

Learning and State Standards

Fulfills [Washington State Arts Learning Standards](#):

- **VA:Cr1.2.1** (Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art)
- **VA:Cr2.1.1** (Explore uses of materials and tools to create works of art or design)
- **VA:Cr2.2.1** (Demonstrate safe and proper procedures for using materials, tools, and equipment while making art)

COMMON FORMS

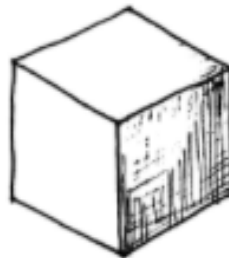
SPHERE



CYLINDER



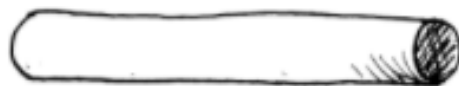
CUBE



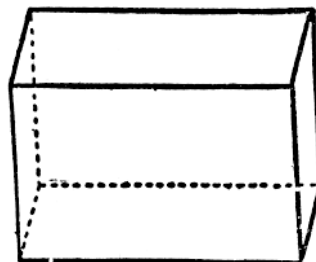
SLAB



COIL



RECTANGULAR
PRISM



About the Artist



Portrait of Lillian Pitt
Image Source: NMAI Magazine

Lillian Pitt is a Pacific Northwest Native American artist whose ancestors lived in and near the Columbia River Gorge. She creates many forms of art that both honor the history of her ancestors and instill joy in art lovers of all walks of life. She makes jewelry, glass art, clay masks and sculptures, bronze sculptures, prints, tapestries, and more. Today, we will be focusing on her clay masks.

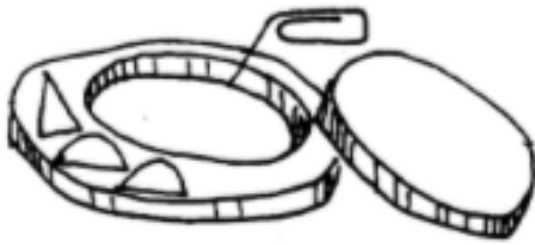


Images (above and right) source:
<https://lillianpitt.com/clay-masks-and-sculptures-depicting-native-american-symbols/>

Clay masks "were used during ceremonies, given as gifts, and each one was handcrafted. Native American masks were usually created in the image of an animal. These animals represented certain Native American ideas such as spirits, status, and characteristics."

- Elizabeth Thomson

CLAY MASKS



Start with a slab of clay 1/2" thick. Use unbent paper clip to draw then cut out oval shape.



Visually divide oval into thirds. Impress thumbs where eyes and mouth will be.



Model extra clay to form cone for nose and semi-circles for ears (optional!)

* Lift mask to contour cheeks and chin.

Model shapes for eyes, eyelids, eyebrows, and lips. Score and weld in place.



Decorate and add texture with clay tools.

Smooth seams.

Write name and code on the inside.



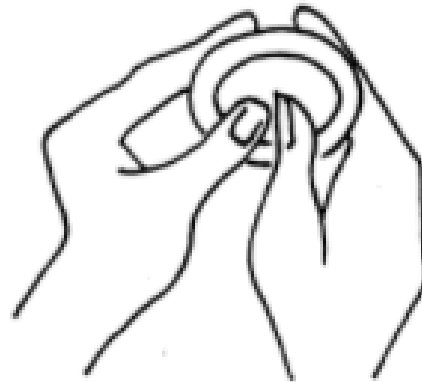
Add holes with straw for hanging.



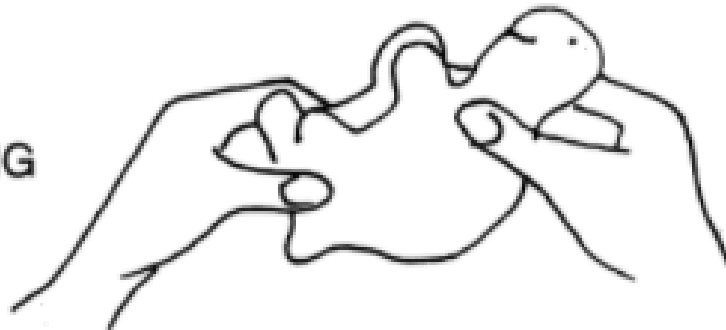
* Wad paper under mask to shape as it dries.

CLAY BUILDING TECHNIQUES

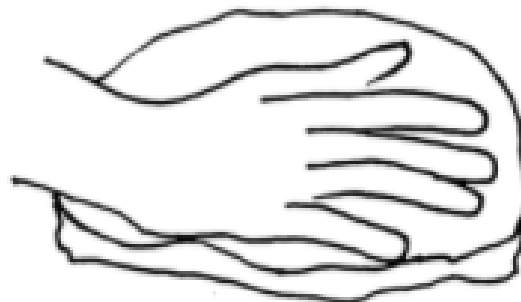
PINCHING



MODELING



SLAB



COILING





***Raku* by Lillian Pitt**

Image credit: Lillianpitt.com



***Anagama* by Lillian Pitt**

Image credit: Lillianpitt.com



***Raku 3* by Lillian Pitt**

Image credit: Lillianpitt.com



***Whistler* by Lillian Pitt**

Image credit: Lillianpitt.com