Painted Sunflowers

Suggested Grade Level: 2, 3
Time Frame: Three 30-minute art classes
Overview: Students view work of artist Vincent VanGogh and paint a cropped image of a sunflower.

Art Standard:
Creative Expression; Aesthetic Perception; Historical and Cultural Perspective

Arts Benchmark:
CE3: Use art vocabulary and discuss techniques and technologies for visual expression and communication.
AP1: Use elements and principles of design and basic art vocabulary for expressing responses to the work of others.
HP6: Recognize great artists and works of art that have shaped the history of art.

Student Understandings in Art:
Students will develop an understanding of the importance of forming opinions about visual compositions and using the appropriate art vocabulary to communicate them to others.

Reinforceable Grade Level Expectations (GLEs):
English Language Arts: Informal writing, including messages, journals, notes, and poems. (ELA-2-E6)
Mathematics: Identify a reduction or enlargement of a given shape (G-2-E)
Identify and draw horizontal and vertical line segments (G-5-E)

Variations:
The sketching and painting process can be done without the written process guide for lower grade levels. Process guides can include recorded information and opinions about a classmate’s artwork.

Materials:
12” x 15” painting paper
pencils
acrylic/tempera paint
brushes

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Lesson

1. Engage/Explore:

**Teacher and students view** examples of Vincent van Gogh’s work. The artist is well known for a series of sun-flower paintings. Information on Van Gogh and his paintings can be found at: http://www.vangoghgallery.com

**Teacher facilitates** a discussion about the artist with the following questions and information. Vincent van Gogh, 1853-1890, was born in the Netherlands. Sunflowers are the subject of a series of still-life paintings he created. His paintings show sunflowers in all stages of life, from fully in bloom to withering. He painted for many years trying to make money as an artist. He had little success during his lifetime; he sold only one painting. In 1987, Van Gogh’s *Vase with Fifteen Sunflowers* sold for $39,921, but his work set high records in 1990, when his *Portrait of Doctor* sold for $82.5 million dollars at Christie’s Auction House in New York City. 

**Q:** What shapes did Van Gogh use? Organic shapes such as circles and ovals
**Q:** Do you see any texture in the painting? Yes
**Q:** Where? Everywhere, he painted with thick applications of paint on the flowers and background
**Q:** How does Van Gogh make a flat circular shape look like a sunflower? He paints light and dark colors, called values, to create the image of a 3-dimensional form

**Students put** these papers aside and teacher gives each student a 12”x15” piece of painting paper. Teacher instructs the students to sketch a portion, ¼ of a sunflower. Teacher shows sample diagram on the board by drawing a full circle, then a line down the center, then a line across the center. The students identify that the circle now has four even parts, four quarter sections.

**Teacher guides** students through step-by-step drawing process by modeling on board.

**Step 1.** Students draw a quarter circle shape at the bottom right or left of the 12”x15” paper. The quarter circle should be at least as big as the length of their hand reaching out from the corner.

**Step 2.** Students add 3-4 repeat lines, like a rainbow, inside that quarter circle shape.

**Step 3.** Students draw large, flame-like sunflower petals onto the quarter circle extending them out from the quarter circle to the rest of the page. Suggest that some petals can be made to appear behind others by overlapping shapes.

**Teacher passes** out paint and brushes. Students paint sunflower petals two different warm colors (red, orange, yellow) in a pattern such as red, orange, red, orange, etc. Students fill in the striped quarter circle section with a variety of warm colors (red, yellow, orange, brown). Students use a variety of lines and shapes to create visual texture in this center section of the sunflower. Students paint background blue or purple to represent a contrasting cool color.

**Teacher passes** out process guides and students repeat the same steps of recording information, but this time it is about their own work.

**Suggested questions:**
**Q:** What types of lines did you use? Why?
**Q:** What warm colors did you choose to paint with? Why?
**Q:** What cool color did you paint with?
**Q:** What effect did this color have on the picture as a whole?
**Q:** What shapes did you draw in your picture?
**Q:** How did that change the space?

2. Create:

**Teacher gives** students a piece of lined paper and pencil. Students record information, questions and answers, and ideas and responses to Van Gogh’s artwork.

**Students view** Van Gogh’s sunflower paintings and make notes about the elements of art they recognize in the artwork.

**Teacher prompts reflections with questions such as:**
**Q:** Which elements were used, how, and why? All elements are used. Have students describe what they see. Teacher provides examples to stimulate the students’ thinking.
**Q:** What types of lines do you see in Van Gogh’s paintings? Curved, straight, zig-zag
**Q:** What colors were used the most? Yellows, oranges
**Q:** What colors were used the least? Blues
**Q:** Why do you think he chose those colors? Those colors are seen in real sunflowers.

3. Assess:

**Student will**
Identify the elements of art and use art vocabulary to express opinions about a work of art.

View and appreciate the artwork made by others pointing out the elements they see in the works.

Incorporate elements of art and identify them in a painting.