

## Artistic Movement

Grade level 6–8

### Curricular Connections

Visual Arts, Science, Technology, and Engineering

### Artist

George Rickey  
(American, 1907–2002)

### Artwork

*Three Lines*, 1964, Stainless steel, 18' high, Gift of the Artist



George Rickey pioneered kinetic sculpture with Alexander Calder during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Born in Indiana in 1907, Rickey was shortly relocated to Scotland, where he spent his childhood growing up on the River Clyde. His childhood experiences heavily influenced his work later in life; in particular, he recollected sailing on his father's yacht. This provided Rickey with a deep understanding of natural forces. Rickey also learned the science of mechanics during his summer stints at the Singer sewing machine factory, where his father managed. Rickey began his college education at Trinity College, studied modern history at Balliol College, and later went on to the Ruskin School of Drawing, where he discovered his passion for art. For a short time Rickey studied in Paris, however, through an art commission by the US Treasury Department, he eventually landed back in America. After several years of teaching art and struggling to find his way as a painter Rickey discovered the mobile sculptures of Alexander Calder and drew on his childhood experiences in Scotland to begin exploring kinetic sculpture.

*Three Lines* was constructed towards the beginning of his career as a kinetic sculptor. However, the sleek lines of metal gliding in the wind embody characteristics of his later work. According to the artist, "...the lines were an attempt to reduce the design to essentials. The line was tapered to allow for a counterweight and fulcrum near one end, with the remainder of the line sweeping in a wide, slow arc. I was aware of the precedent of a tapered line in engraving and pen strokes. I often thought of my moving lines as a limited yet indeterminate drawing in space." The motion of the lines also calls to mind the poetic notion of blades of grass in the wind.

### Goals

1. Students will learn about kinetic sculpture.
2. Students will learn different construction methods to create movement in 3D objects.
3. Students will have the opportunity to create their own kinetic sculptures.

### **Vocabulary**

**Kinetic:** Pertaining to motion

**Balance:** Equal distribution of weight, amount etc.

**Mobile:** Capable of moving.

**Movement:** The act of moving or relocating.

### **Looking Questions**

- What do you see?
- What makes this sculpture unique?
- What do you think this sculpture is made of?
- How do you think this sculpture moves?
- What keeps the “lines” pointed up toward the sky rather than immediately falling to the ground?

### **Discussion Questions**

- Is the material of the sculpture important? Why or why not?
- How does the sculpture interact with its surroundings? Is this important to the piece?
- What if the sculpture was of three circles and not three lines?

### **Activity: Artistic Movement**

Students will be able to recognize qualities that make kinetic sculpture unique and will be able to create their own kinetic sculpture.

### **Materials**

- Sculpture images (link to Sculpture Park images as other examples of sculpture)
- Pencil
- Paper
- Collection of 3D materials, some malleable (Ex. wire, rattan, rubber, string)

### **Directions**

- Instructor will show visual examples of various sculptures including Rickey's *Three Lines*
- Through brainstorming students will create lists or maps defining the parameters of sculpture and kinetic sculpture in order to examine the similarities and differences between them.

- Using pencil and paper, students will begin to design their own interpretation of kinetic sculpture. Though students will be encouraged to be inventive, their focus will serve as a blueprint for their fabrication of a model kinetic sculpture.
- Remind students of their discussion based on the looking and discussion questions listed above for the George Rickey and other kinetic sculpture images they have seen. Begin exploring how kinetic sculptures can move.
- Using the accumulated knowledge from above exercises, students will create working drawings that will serve as the plan for their construction method. These plans may be refinements from their original ideas, but they now need to incorporate the realities of kinetics.
- Using the working drawings as a plan, and the collection of 3D materials, students will create their own working kinetic sculptures.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why do you think the artist chose "lines" for this sculpture?
2. Why do you think the artist chose to use three instead of two, four or five lines for this sculpture?
3. How is kinetic sculpture a unique form of sculpture?