

Huichol Painting in Clay

(art + history; art + social studies)

The Huichol (pronounced Wee-chol) people inhabit the most remote parts of north central Mexico. These once nomadic descendents of the Aztecs.

Originally intended as ceremonial offerings to the Spirits to insure a bountiful harvest, yarn paintings are created by the Huichol today as colorful icons of their religious and cultural beliefs.

Each color, every line and symbol, no matter how abstract, has a meaning. The original artists used beeswax and resin on a board to adhere pieces of colorful yarn. Modern Huichol artists use glue or spray adhesives.

This lesson plan uses intensely colorful, easy-to-use Model Magic air-dry clay in place of yarn. Students create “strings” of clay and press them together on a rigid surface to create symbolic images and designs.

Grade Levels 3-8

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Objectives

- Students will learn about the Huichol people, their culture and the importance they place upon their art
- Students will create a design based upon a cultural symbol and be able to share it's significance as they perceive it
- Students will execute a dimensional painting that mimics an ancient, traditional art form, using contemporary materials

Preparation

1. View examples of yarn paintings created by the Huichol people of the past and present. Discuss the stories, events, myths and history expressed in their imagery.

Process

1. Have students draw their designs on the board with the pencil. Students may use symbols and colors that represent the Huichol culture or use any design they desire to express.



Materials

Crayola® Model Magic®, assorted Neon Colors (33214-1102), share one bucket across the classroom

Crayola® Model Magic®, White, 2-lb bucket (33214-1002), share one bucket across the classroom

Crayola® Model Magic®, Black, (33214-2004), share five 4-oz packages across the classroom

Railroad Board, 6-ply Black, (13105-2102), 22" x 28" sheets, cut to 5-1/4" x 7" pieces for 16 per sheet, need 1 piece per student

Acme™ Kleenkut Kid's Scissors (57027-1109), set of twelve, need one per student

Blick Multi-Purpose White Glue (57027-1109), 8-oz bottle, share one bottle between two students

Blick Economy Graphite Pencils box of 12, (20302-2009), need one per student

Process, continued

2. Have students roll the black Model Magic into several long strings, no bigger than 1/8" in diameter.
3. Students then trace the pencil lines with glue and place the black strings of Model Magic over the glue lines. This will give the student an outlined image to fill in later.
4. Once outlined, students select colors of Neon Model Magic and begin to roll strings.
5. Selecting an area to begin working, students fill with a light coat of glue, then start applying the "yarn strings" of Model Magic. If the strings are too long, the student may cut them with scissors or just pull to end the string.
6. Neon Model Magic colors may be mixed to create new or twisted colors.
7. The finished painting may be framed with a twisted or braided Model Magic border.

Hints:

- Do not use too much glue, it will make the string slide around
- Model Magic will stick to itself, but will shrink as it dries, leaving gaps. Using glue is highly recommended for a successful project
- Have students pack the strings tightly together

National Standards

Content Standard #3 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas

- **K-4** Students select and use subject matter, symbols and ideas to communicate meaning.

- **5-8** Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artwork.

Content Standard #4 —

Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

- **K-4** Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times and places.

- **5-8** Students know and compare the characteristics or artworks in various eras and cultures.