

Create a Mexican Inspired Yarn Picture

The Huichol Indians, or Wixaritari, of the remote Sierra Madre Occidental areas in Mexico are famous for their brightly colored and elaborate yarn paintings. These works of art reflect this community's religious and cultural beliefs. The process involves melting a layer of beeswax or pine resin to use as glue to adhere yarn to a square or circular wooden base. Here, your young child can imitate this process using glue in lieu of beeswax. This fun and colorful cultural craft will help your child build his fine motor skills and open his eyes to a new world of art making.

What You Need:

- Square or circular piece of cardboard or wood; heavy construction paper will work, too
- Yarn in assorted colors
- Glue
- Toothpick
- Pictures of Huichol symbols and yarn paintings (you can go to the library to find books with these kinds of images or go on-line)
- Scissors

What You Do:

1. Help your child find library books or Internet resources that illustrate Huichol sacred symbols and their meanings, and show examples of yarn paintings. Often, birds such as eagles and hummingbirds are depicted in Huichol art, as well as the sun, earth, water, air, fire, shaman's wand, prayer arrow, peyote cactus, sacred deer, and portals between worlds, just to name a few.
2. In pencil, ask your child to draw his picture onto the cardboard. He should select one or two key Huichol symbols to showcase in his artwork and build upon those. Encourage him to use a multitude of images to fill the empty space. Let him be creative and see what he comes up with!
3. Before he begins gluing on the yarn to color in his "painting," have him think about what colors he wants where, so that he can get a sense of where the yarn will go.
4. Now have your child work in small sections at a time to trace the pencil outlines in yarn, filling them in with bold colors. First, have your child spread glue in the selected area and then, using a toothpick or his fingertips, gently press the yarn into place. Your child can coil one continuous piece of yarn or cut it into smaller pieces, whichever he finds easier. Keep a damp cloth or paper towel handy to wipe dried glue off of sticky fingers.
5. The more vibrant the colors, the better!

If your child is feeling ambitious, he can fill in the background completely so that there is no white space, making it more similar to an authentic Huichol yarn painting. This activity is a unique way to inspire creativity in your child as he celebrates Mexican history and culture and explores his inner artist.

