Huichol Yarn Painting

(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 a board with adhesive already applied, so it works quickly and easily! Encourage students to choose a subject matter that has personal meaning to them.

Grade Levels K-8

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. Students think of an event in their own lives that holds meaning for them and draw a scene on newsprint that illustrates that time. It could be a special birthday or holiday, a family vacation, a sporting event or something similar. Designs should be very simple — remember that the final painting will need to be executed in yarn! Plan the placement of the color areas with crayons or markers.

2. Students draw their ideas onto the paper side of the board with a ball point pen. Apply pressure so the line transfers through the paper to the board below.

3. Have the students pull off the paper surface of the board, exposing the adhesive underneath. Cut the paper surface on the pen lines like a jigsaw puzzle. As each piece is cut out, place it back on the board, so the adhesive is covered. Continue until the entire board surface is covered again.

Materials

Collage Sticky™ Boards, (61701-1045), package of 6, size 4-1/2″ x 6-1/2″, need one board per student

Caron 4-Ply Natura Deluxe 100% Acrylic Knitting Yarn, (65226-) choose at least six colors, share across classroom

Tonic Studio® Kid's Scissors (57150-6005), need one per student

Pilot® Better Ball Point Pens, box of 12 (20717-2009), need one pen per student

Process, continued

(This will prevent yarn from sticking in areas it's not supposed to, and adhesive from loosing it's tackiness).

4. Cut a piece of yarn about 12″ long. Start anywhere on the board, pull up one of the pieces of surface paper and lightly lay down the yarn, following the shape of the design. Press it firmly into place and trim off the excess with scissors.

   Peel off the next piece and continue to apply the yarn one area at a time until the board is filled with color.

Options

- Use white glue on cardboard instead of the self-adhesive board and spread evenly on one area at a time

- Apply to a 3-D object, such as a box, using the glue technique (see photo, above)

- Instead of glue, try double-stick tape

Lesson Plan Idea and Artwork submitted by submitted by Todd Johnson, Knoxville, TN

National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

K-4 Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

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 integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

K-4 Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures

5-8 Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures