

About Huichol Yarn Painting



The Huichol people are indigenous to the west Mexican states of Jalisco, Nayarit, Durango, and Zacatecas. They also live in parts of the southern United States, including California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

Who are the Huichol people? The Huichol are an Indigenous people of Mexico and the United States living in the Sierra Madre Occidental range in the states of Nayarit, Jalisco, Zacatecas, and Durango, and in the states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. They are best known to the larger world as the Huichol, although they refer to themselves as Wixáritari, which translates to "the people" in their native Huichol language.

What are yarn paintings? Yarn paintings are a type of fiber art that involves pressing colorful yarn into a surface to create a design. The Huichol people are credited with the origins of yarn painting.

Initially, the Huichol people created three-dimensional craft objects with beads pressed into a surface coated with beeswax that allowed the beads to stick. These items were created as a religious offering, also called *nierikas*. In the 1960s, Huichol artists began translating their imagery to a flat surface decorated with yarn. These yarn



paintings became very popular among tourists. There are several notable modern yarn painters, one being Ramón Medina Silva. Silva's work was exhibited widely and was partly responsible for popularizing yarn paintings globally.

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How are yarn paintings made? To make yarn paintings, an artist spreads a mixture of tree resin and beeswax onto a wooden board. Working in the sun to keep the surface warm, pliable, brightly colored yarns are pressed into the wax and allowed to harden when done.

What subject matter were the Huichol people drawn to? The yarn paintings express the Huichol peoples' profound spiritual beliefs. The Huichol people make yarn paintings as a means to pray to their gods and communicate with the spirit world. Originally, after creating their offering, they were left in sacred places like temples, springs, or caves.

Yarn paintings were also used to tell their stories and myths, record their people's sacred visions, and share their daily activities. The yarn paintings portray the Huichol people believe that people are connected to nature and all living things. The Huichols people believe it is their duty to care for the earth because they depend on it for survival.

What is the economic importance of yarn painting?

Yarn paintings have shifted from being not only a religious offering but providing the Huichol people with income. Sales of yarn paintings to tourists allow Huichol artists and their families an economical means to preserve their traditional way of life.

Examples of Huichol Yarn Paintings:

The first one below is **The Sacred Place of Shadows** by David Gonzalez Sanchez

The second one below is **The Birth of Corn** by Maximino Renteria de la Cruz

To the left, bottom is **The Sacred Paths of the First World** by José Benitez Sanchez.

