

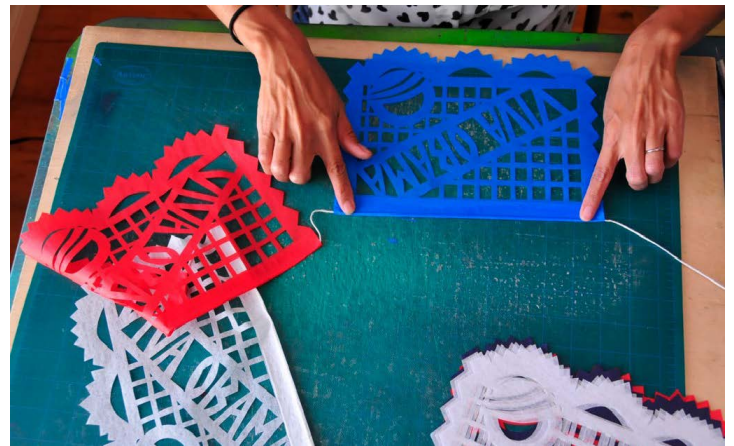
About Papel Picado



Papel picado is a traditional Mexican decorative craft originating from a blend of ancient Aztec bark paper traditions and Spanish-introduced tissue paper, with its modern form officially recognized as originating in the town of San Salvador Huixcolotla, Puebla, Mexico.

What is papel picado? Papel picado (which translates literally from Spanish to English as "perforated paper" or "punched paper") is a traditional Mexican decorative craft made by hand-cutting intricate, elaborate designs into stacks of colorful tissue paper. In towns, villages, and cities across Mexico, you can find these festive, symbolic banners or flags displayed during major seasonal, religious, and civic holidays, as well as for life milestones. You will find them on Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) altars, at weddings, quinceañeras, birthdays, baptisms, Christmas, Easter, and Mexican Independence Day (Fiestas Patrias).

What is the significance of the designs? The designs are visual narratives that reflect the events Mexicans celebrate. Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) themes often involve skeletons, marigolds, and crosses; all ways the Mexican people remember and honor their deceased ancestors. Nature and wildlife are other themes, expressed through imagery like flowers, hearts, leaves, etc. Spiritual and religious icons also abound, including crosses, angels, and religious figures like the Virgin of Guadalupe. Celebrations and milestones are another theme and can include celebrants' names and important dates. A wedding papel picado might feature hearts and doves; a Quinceañera might feature the number 15 and tiaras, etc.



The color choices also carry deep cultural, emotional, and spiritual meanings.

- Purple: Represents mourning, grief, and Catholic liturgical spirituality (especially during Día de los Muertos).
- Pink: Celebrates joy, life, parties, and the happiness of remembering loved ones.
- Yellow and Orange: Symbolize the sun, light, hope, and life, and directly echo the vibrant color of cempasúchil (marigolds) used to guide visiting spirits.
- White: Stands for purity, hope, and remembrance.
- Red: Signifies love, passion, and the blood of life.
- Black: Acknowledges the reality and cycle of death without fear.
- Green and Blue: Represent nature, the earth, peace, and the open sky.



About Papel Picado cont.

Traditional papel picado is made by hand using a stack of colored tissue paper (papel de China), specialized chisels (fierritos), and a small mallet. Once the design is chosen, the artisan stacks and clamps the paper. Using a small wooden mallet and a collection of hand-forged metal chisels in hundreds of shapes and sizes (half-circles, zigzags, stars, and floral motifs), the artisan strikes through the entire stack at once.

You can watch **How Mexico's Iconic Papel Picado is Made** on YouTube to see Mexican artisans in action.
Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3uFHa9gkjg>



Vocabulary

Día de los Muertos- translates to “Day of the Dead” and is a Mexican holiday where families welcome back the souls of their deceased relatives for a brief reunion that includes food, drink and celebration.

El cincel y el mazo- Chisel and small mallet or hammer used by artisans to punch designs through stacked sheets.

Fierritos- (a diminutive of fierros, meaning "little irons" in Spanish) are small, specialized hand chisels or punches used by traditional Mexican artisans to craft papel picado.

Fiestas Patrias- Means "Patriotic Holidays" or "National Holidays" in Spanish. It is a collective term for the annual independence and national pride celebrations held across Mexico and Latin America.

Papel de China- Lightweight tissue paper traditionally used to make the banners.

Papel picado- Literally "perforated" or "punched paper"; decorative cut-tissue paper banners.

Quinceañeras- A traditional Latin American coming-of-age celebration for a girl's 15th birthday, marking her transition from childhood to young womanhood. Derived from the Spanish words “quince” (fifteen) and “años” (years).

Papel Picado Artists

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