



# Huichol Yarn Art



The Huichol people of Mexico's Sierra Madre live in small communities and make yarn paintings as gifts to the gods. These yarn pictures often depict the "faces" of the wind, ripe corn, or other important symbols. *Nierika* with yarn designs of serpents, waves, or water gourds express a wish for rain. Pictures of corn and the Sun are offered in hopes of a good harvest.

The [Huichol yarn paintings of today](#) are done on wooden boards coated with a layer of smooth beeswax. Designs are scratched into the surface of sun-softened wax with a sharp tool. Outlines are laid down in yarn, and then all spaces are filled in. It's somewhat like a yarn mosaic.

## Materials

Lots of different colors of yarn  
Glue  
Heavy paper or cardstock  
Sample images  
Pencils and erasers  
Black markers  
Toothpicks  
Wax paper

## How to:

- 1. Choose a design** - Coloring book images make good outlines, or draw your own shape. Copy or draw the pattern on poster board or other solid surface with a black permanent marker. **Note:** The largest symbols are the easiest to make if you are new to yarn painting.
- 2. Outline in Yarn** - Apply a thin bead of glue on the outline of your symbol/picture and work in sections. Using black or other dark colored yarn, lay the yarn in the glue bead. If you are right-handed, place the yarn ball or skein on the right side of the cut symbol. Guide the yarn with your left hand, and press the yarn into the glue with the toothpick in your right hand. Reverse this if you are left-handed. Rotate the symbol as you work, so the yarn doesn't drape over the wet glue. Try to work cleanly, or you'll have a mess in no time! Cut the yarn when the outline is complete. Go around the outline and use the toothpick to push the yarn into place. **Tip:** If you can set the yarn painting aside and let the glue dry for at least one hour or overnight. It's much easier to do the next step if the outline yarn is firmly in place.
- 3. Fill in with Yarn** - Using a variety of brightly colored yarns, fill the outlined symbol with yarn. Start from the outside, drawing a line of glue and laying the yarn in it. Go around as often as needed to fill the entire symbol. Change colors of yarn as you like.  
As you work, periodically stop to press the yarn in place as before. Once the symbol is completely filled with rows of yarn, place a new sheet of wax paper on top and weigh down the project with a book. After 5 or 10 minutes, check to be sure that the wax paper isn't sticking to the yarn painting. If it is, change the wax paper. Leave the yarn painting with the book on top to dry. It will take several hours or overnight.
- 4. Mount Yarn Painting** - To make a plaque to hang on the wall, cut a larger square or rectangle of heavy cardboard to fit your yarn painting. Cover the cardboard with coordinating paper. Trim the yarn-filled symbol to the edges of the yarn outline, then glue the symbol on the cardboard. Press with a book until the glue is dry. That's it! Try some designs of your own creation!

