



PAPEL PICADO II

INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE:

Students will learn about papel picado as contextualized by Día de los Muertos celebrations. In the process, they will produce their own papel picado art using the demonstrated techniques further developing their fine motor skills as they design and create more complex patterns applying knowledge of symmetry, lines, and negative and positive spaces.

BACKGROUND:

Papel picado, loosely translated as “perforated paper,” is a folk art technique practiced in Mexico. Colorful pieces of cut paper are strung to flutter in the wind during many holiday celebrations, including Día de los Muertos, Christmas, Easter, and personal ceremonies such as weddings and christenings. Specific color schemes are tied to each of these holidays. Pink, orange, and purple, for instance, often decorate ofrendas for Día de los Muertos, while red, white, and green (colors of the Mexican flag) are used in commemorating Independence Day or Mexico’s patroness, La Virgen de Guadalupe.

It consists of rectangular pieces of tissue paper which are cut away into intricate, repetitive designs. Simple versions can be constructed by folding and snipping with scissors; more elaborate versions require awls, chisels, and other special tools. The design emerges as the artist manipulates the negative space of the tissue paper. Experts in the craft will handle many layers of paper at once, generating extensive designs that often include motifs such as flowers, birds, skeletons, crosses, and historic figures, among others.

Papel picado decorations are ephemeral, existing only during the celebration. They are typically displayed outside, where their delicate construction will disintegrate naturally in the wind and rain. This transitory existence is repeated in many of the other elements of Día de los Muertos celebrations, such as the fresh food and flowers that adorn many ofrendas at this time.

RECOMMENDED GRADES:

Appropriate for early elementary.

ESTIMATED TIME:

60-90 minutes.



VOCABULARY:

- Papel Picado
- Fold
- Cut
- Line of Symmetry
- Negative Space
- Positive Space
- Contrasting Color
- Color Value

MATERIALS:

- Multi-colored tissue paper or foil paper. Note: You may want to use double-sided paper with contrasting colors or madras tissue paper.
- Scissors
- String
- Glue Stick

PROCEDURE:

Version I, II, and III. The multiple versions here all begin and end with the same steps, but the paper is folded differently to create a different end product.

1. Give each student a 9 x 12 piece of tissue paper. If you are using double sided paper or madras paper discuss the concepts of contrasting colors and color value.
2. Position the paper so the long edges are at the top and bottom. Fold the top edge over about an inch. This is what is called the string fold where the papel picado will be attached to ribbon or string. Do not cut on this fold.
3. Next, fold the paper in half from left to right, bringing the two short edges together.

Version I

4. Then, fold the paper in half from top to bottom.
5. Now students can either begin cutting a design on to the two folded edges (the left and the bottom) or they can draw in a design and then cut. If the design is somewhat complex, students can shade in the region they plan on cutting out. This region is called the negative space. The positive space is the area where the paper remains that has not been cut and removed. Remind students that they are drawing and/or cutting only half of the image—the two folded edges create lines of symmetry. The full image



will appear when the paper is unfolded. Discuss with students the idea of negative and positive space. Remind students not to cut the string fold.

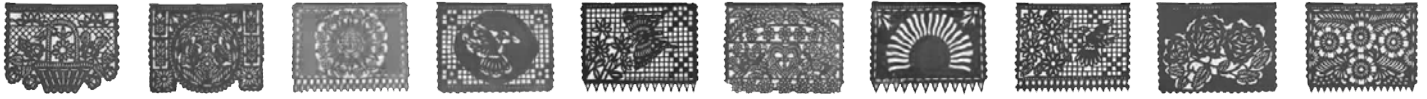
6. When the piece is complete, gently unfold it. Put glue on the back of the string fold and fold it over the string that the banner will be hung with. Press the string fold onto the back of the papel picado so that it is firmly adhered to the string.

Version II

4. Then, fold the paper in half again, from left to right. You should be left with a long and narrow column. This will produce columns of patterns that go from top to bottom
5. Now students can either begin cutting a design on to the two folded edges (the left and the bottom) or they can draw in a design and then cut. If the design is somewhat complex, students can shade in the region they plan on cutting out. This region is called the negative space. The positive space is the area where the paper remains that has not been cut and removed. Remind students that they are drawing and/or cutting only half of the image—the two folded edges create lines of symmetry. The full image will appear when the paper is unfolded. Discuss with students the idea of negative and positive space. Remind students not to cut the string fold.
6. When the piece is complete, gently unfold it. Put glue on the back of the string fold and fold it over the string that the banner will be hung with. Press the string fold onto the back of the papel picado so that it is firmly adhered to the string.

Version III

4. Then, fold the paper in half from top to bottom.
5. Next, make a diagonal fold bringing the bottom right corner to the top left corner.
6. Optional: fold in half diagonally one more time—this will give a very narrow triangle to create a design on.
7. Now students can either begin cutting a design on to the two folded edges (the left and the bottom) or they can draw in a design and then cut. If the design is somewhat complex, students can shade in the region they plan on cutting out. This region is called the negative space. The positive space is the area where the paper remains that has not been cut and removed. Remind students that they are drawing and/or cutting only half of the image—the two folded edges create lines of symmetry. The full image will appear when the paper is unfolded. Discuss with students the idea of negative and positive space. Remind students not to cut the string fold.
8. When the piece is complete, gently unfold it. Put glue on the back of the string fold and fold it over the string that the banner will be hung with. Press the string fold onto the back of the papel picado so that



it is firmly adhered to the string.

STANDARDS & BENCHMARKS

National Standards for Arts Education, Visual Arts Content Standards 1 -5