

BAM | BOISE ART MUSEUM

MAKE-IT ACTIVITY: Mexican Masks

Introduction

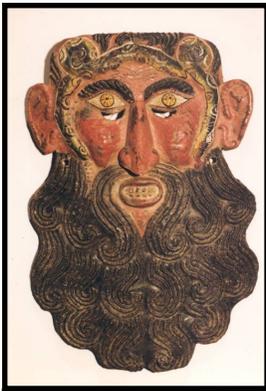
The Museum's collection of Mexican masks includes carved and painted wood masks as well as hammered copper and silver face masks and wall decorations which are embossed, painted and ornamented with pendants. These masks would have been worn in ceremonies and dances that taught community values, history and religion and allowed people to participate in the community and identify with it.

Design your own mask inspired by colorful Mexican masks in Boise Art Museum's Permanent Collection.

- What do you notice about the colors in these masks?
- Why do you think the people who made these masks might have wanted to use such bright colors?
- Which mask would you rather wear?
- Why do people wear masks?

Masks are found in cultures throughout the world and are represented across disciplines. They have been used by ancient societies and are still present in popular culture today.

- How can you incorporate mask making, identity, disguise and masquerade into your field or institution?



Many of the masks depict bearded men, often with snakes on their cheeks and foreheads. In Mexico, the serpent is a symbol of strength and leadership and is involved in bringing rain and other goods.

Mask, Human face (Borbon with Serpents), circa 1980
unknown artist, Guerrero, Mexico, painted copper, 23 x 1/2" x 16"



The jaguar also became a symbol for Mexican rulers (because of its association with power). Leaders and rulers carried and wore jaguar masks for special ceremonies.

Tigre (Jaguar) Mask, Mexico, circa 1980
carved and painted wood, animal teeth, painted leather, 13" x 8 1/2"

Materials

Paper mask
Thread
Yarn
Sharpie markers
Chenille stems

Paper scraps
Scissors
Glue Sticks
Hole punches
Needles

Instructions

1. To begin, choose a colorful background pattern.
2. Cut or change the shape of the mask with scissors.
3. Use markers to add designs and patterns.
4. Attach cut paper with glue sticks to add detail.
5. Chenille stems and yarn can be tied areas that are hole punched.
6. To finish, stitch the top and bottom of the mask to make it rounded using needles and colored thread.



In ancient Mexican cultures, the bat was a symbol for death and rebirth and represented the guardian of the underworld. It was an important symbol because it had both good and evil (light and dark) qualities.

Mask (Bat), Guerrero, Mexico, circa 1910
painted copper, 6" x 6"