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Molas

Printable templates for 10 different designs from the Guna people of Panama

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Molas

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PRINT SETTINGS

Please use Acrobat Reader to print and make sure that the settings 'Actual size' and 'Auto portrait/landscape' are selected.

SAVE PAPER & TONER

Only print out the pages you need.

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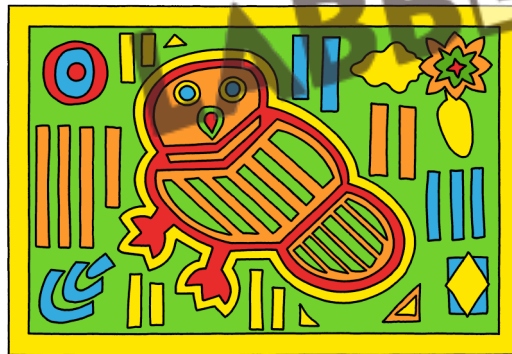
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INTRODUCTION

Molas

Molas are the traditional textile artform of the indigenous Guna people. The Guna live on coral islands off the coast of Panama. Before the arrival of the European colonizers, they painted their upper bodies with protective symbols to ward off disease, evil spirits, and demons. They got the colors for their paints from various fruits, plants, and minerals. When the European missionaries forced them to cover their naked upper bodies, they sewed these symbols onto their clothing instead.

This time-consuming technique involves sewing colored fabrics of different shapes and sizes on top of one another. The more layers of fabric that are used, the more valuable the mola. Particularly finely crafted molas can take hundreds of hours to make!



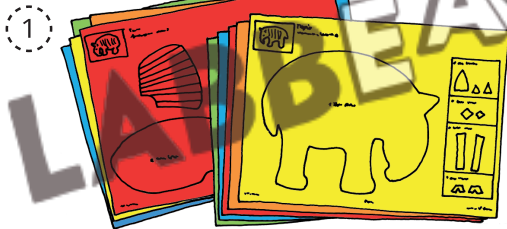
Molas have characteristically bright colors, which can be traced back to the same colors that were used in pre-colonial times. The motifs include traditional geometric ornamentation and realistic or abstract representations of plants, animals, and people.

All Guna people can sew - especially men and children. Kids start off with 'molitas', which are little molas that have simple patterns and only a few layers of fabric. Our mola templates are 'paper molitas'. They're printed on colored paper, cut out and glued together to create pictures.

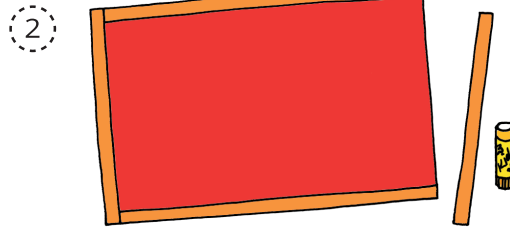
Micha Labbé

HOW TO DO IT

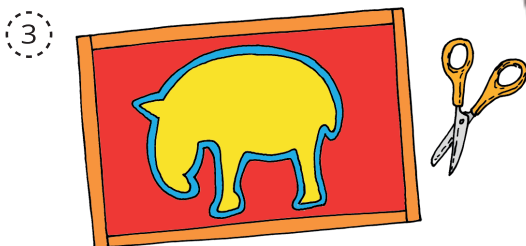
Molas



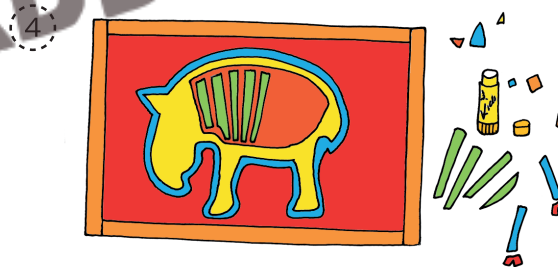
Choose a motif and print out the corresponding sheets. Each of these sheets should be printed in 3-5 colors. If you like, you can color in the templates in the colors of your choice beforehand, which then makes it easier to glue the mola pictures together.



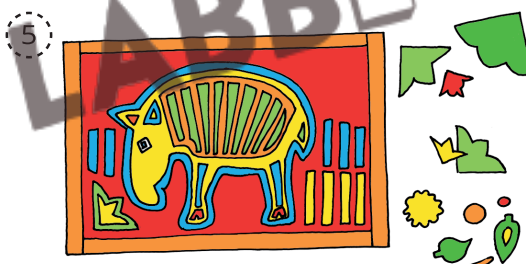
Choose a sheet of colored paper for your background and then glue on a frame from the 4 thick strips on the ornamentation sheet: Using a glue stick, coat the printed sides with glue and then stick the strips to the outer edges of your background sheet.



Cut out part 1 (body) from a different color, coat the patterned side with glue and stick it to the center of your background. Cut out part 2 (body) from another color and stick it on the middle of part 1 so that the resulting border is same size all around.



Then glue on the remaining parts layer by layer. If there are cutting lines on a body part, cut it up accordingly and stick on the individual pieces leaving a small gap between them as shown on the template.



Finally, decorate the blank areas around the main motif. On the ornament sheets you'll find a variety of motifs. Striped patterns are especially typical for mola pictures. For these, cut out strips in the desired color, cut them down to the desired length with scissors and then glue them on. Flowers and leaf motifs can be layered on top of each other.

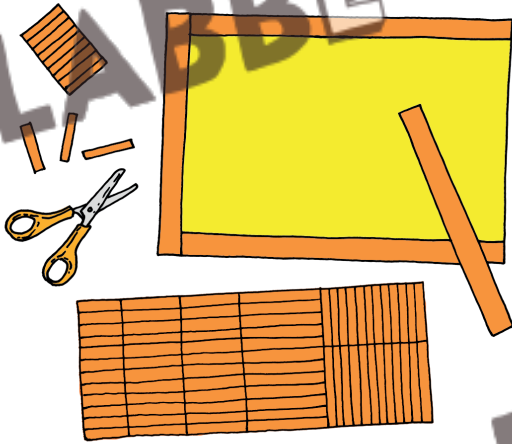


Molas are particularly suitable for group work. If several children work on the same motif, they can swap different-colored body parts. That's why the small parts of the motif are shown in frames, so that they don't get lost after they've been cut out. For example: Out of 2 'Tapir' sheets in 5 different colors, you get 5 different colored tapir.

HOW TO DO IT

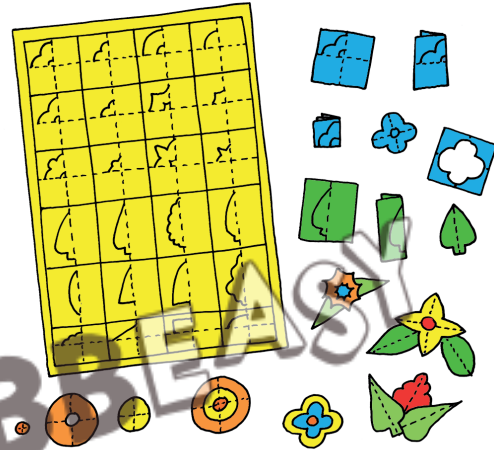
Molas

ORNAMENTAL STRIPS



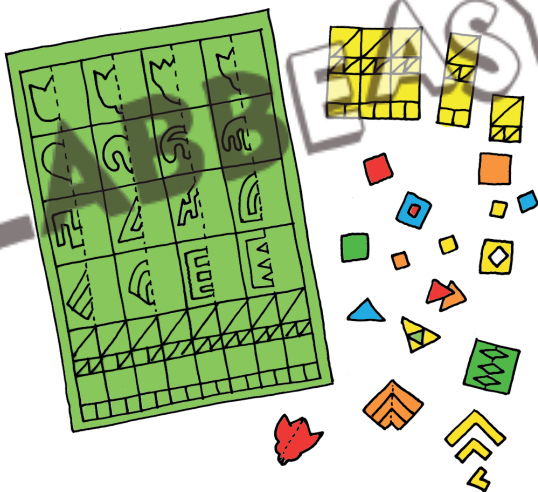
Cut out the strips along the solid lines. The 4 thick strips serve as a frame. If you like, you can also make the frame from different-colored strips. You can make typical mola stripe patterns using the thin strips. Choose the desired size and, if the strip is too long, simply cut a bit off!

ORNAMENT PATTERNS



The motifs on the sheet 'Ornament Patterns 1' should first be cut out following the solid grid lines. The individual leaves are then folded once or twice along the dotted lines and cut out following the solid line. If you glue them on top of each other, you can make pretty floral patterns.

ORNAMENT PATTERNS 2



The folding motifs on the sheet 'Ornament Patterns 2' are only folded once and then cut out. If there are still cutting lines on the motif, cut these bits out and glue them onto the picture with a small gap between them. The triangles and squares at the bottom of the sheet can be glued on top of each other or individually.

ORNAMENTS FOR SCISSOR-WIZARDS!



The patterns on the sheet 'Ornaments for scissor-wizards' are complicated, but they're typical mola patterns. They are best cut out with silhouette scissors and carefully glued on. They're quite a challenge but give you an impressive result!