

Museum of Craft and Design

2021 SPIRIT TOTEM



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Join MCD and our featured artist, [Dolores Gray](#), as we explore Native American concepts of “total use” and spirit totems. Inspired by her Blackfoot Plains Indian and Iriquois heritage, Dolores has created work based around resourcefulness and hybridity—often working with assemblage and found materials that have been discarded by others. In the spirit of the new year, sustainability, and goal-setting, Dolores presents a favorite project designed to reflect on self and tradition.



From the artist: Native American tradition teaches that each individual is connected with nine different animals that will accompany them through life, acting as guides. Different animal guides come in and out of our lives depending on the direction that we are headed and the tasks that need to be completed along our journeys.

While animal guides will traditionally choose the individual, for the purpose of this art project, participants will select an animal that they feel represents their current spirit/personality/aspirations. A totem can be the symbol of a tribe, clan, family or individual, and we replace the traditional buffalo hide painting surface of the Plains Indians with a recycled paper bag—representing total use in a contemporary context!

MATERIALS

- [Totem animals list](#)
- Acrylic paint (brown, black, white, red, etc.)
- Paintbrushes
- Recycled brown paper (grocery bag, construction paper, butcher paper etc.)
- Pencil
- Eraser



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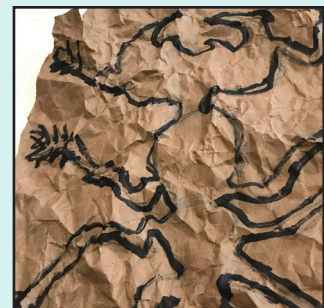
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RECOMMENDED AGE/SKILL LEVEL:

Recommended for ages 5 and up with adult supervision.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Pick an animal [from the list](#) that you feel represents you, your family, or your goals and ideas.
 - *TIP:* Try not to just pick your favorite animal—instead consider the attributes that most reflect your personality and goals.
 - For an added step, you might write the animal names on different slips of paper, then draw one out of a hat.
 - OR, alternatively, cover the animal names on the list and then read the attributes, choosing the one that most exemplifies the strength you need right now. Then reveal the animal name!
- Use a pencil to draw your animal on the brown paper.
 - Attempt to use as much of the page as possible.
- When you are finished sketching the outline of your animal, take your paper and crumple it up.
 - When you are done crumpling it, open it back up and repeat the crumpling once more.
 - This will add the “animal hide” effect to your painting.
- Repeat this step until you are happy with the texture of your page.
- You will now outline your sketch in black paint.
- Once you have finished your outline, feel free to add detail and color inside the black lines.
 - Details may include: fur, patterns, smaller body parts, face, etc.



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- To complete your painting, create a pattern around the paper border.
 - Consider using: dots, lines, simple shapes, etc.
- When finished, set paper aside and allow for it to dry.
- Rinse off all brushes with water and soap and allow for them to dry, too.
- As we move through the year, use your painting as a reminder of the spirit and goals that guide you!



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CONNECT SOCIALLY AND LEARN MORE

Facebook & Instagram: @MuseumofCraftandDesign

Twitter @SF_MCD

Share your project! Post and tag #MCDatHome

Related materials: Take a contemporary look at the close relationship between Indigenous people and the land with the [Wiyot tribe of present-day Humboldt County](#). Learn more about animal spirit traditions in various cultures, as well as the importance of cultural sensitivity via [Partnership with Native Americans](#).