

CREATIVE ART PROJECTS USING ITEMS FOUND AT HOME

MAKE A POSSIBLE BAG, DECORATIVE FOOTWEAR, LOOP NECKLACE OR BREASTPLATE – SEND US PHOTOS!

The following art projects are inspired by the beauty of Plains Indian art found in the “*To Honor The Plains Nations*” exhibit in the John and Adrienne Mars American Indian Gallery.

Lakota Possible Bag – Wizipan, hide, glass beads, horsehair and metal cones, ca 1885, Edith and Goelet Gallatin Collection

This beautifully decorated ‘possible’ bag made of hide and glass beads would have been kept in a teepee and was used to hold anything possible. This kind of bag is of the soft style and was used to store clothing, in contrast to the painted rawhide parfleche used for meat, the juices of which would penetrate the softer skins of this style bag shown here.



Art Project

Create a possible bag using a variety of materials found at home. Suggestions might include: Paper bags of various shapes, colors and sizes from the store or a simple, brown grocery bag; tote bag; handbag or purse, backpack or other type of soft container.

Paints and markers as well as craft papers or color paper and print fabric cut into geometric shapes can be used to create different patterns. You will need scissors, stencils and rulers as well as craft items such as all-purpose glue or pins. Adults might wish to explore attaching designs by sewing fabric onto fabric. Don't forget about using things like cookie cutters to make designs which represent a theme that expresses something about your likes or things you like to do. Be creative! Yarn, ribbons, strips of fabric and plastic beads all make excellent embellishment. Make this YOUR possible bag.

Explain why you chose the designs used to create your own Possible Bag and tell us about the meanings behind particular colors. This could be as simple as I love red! Or the color blue is for the sky.

Plains Indian Moccasins – Arapaho, Lakota and Cheyenne/Arapaho or Sioux

The three pair of moccasins shown here are made of hide and glass beads and incorporate bead designs representing tribal differences. A common bead stitch of the Central Plains tribes was the Lazy Stitch which used 8 to 10 beads to form a row that was sewn or attached at the ends.



Arapaho, Man's Moccasins, ca 1920 or 1939, TBM Collection



Lakota, Man's Moccasins with beaded soles and dyed chicken feathers, ca 1900, BBM Collection
Moccasins with beaded soles were used for burial but also worn for special occasions.



Identified as Cheyenne/Arapaho or Sioux, Man's Moccasins, BBM Collection

It was not uncommon for Cheyennes to use an odd number of design patterns around the border so that one design always fell on the toe.

For this art project, you will decorate a pair of shoes or boots, old or new, of any style, or possibly a pair of sandals, make it personal to you. Using art materials found in the house, your footwear can be painted – fabric paint or acrylic work best - or use color markers. Your finished piece should not be a

recreation of a Plains Indian moccasin but rather a statement that expresses something about yourself. Materials such as printed fabrics and lace add another dimension to your project. Shoelaces can be replaced (optional) with strips of fabric or ribbon. 3-d objects can be applied such as plastic charms, costume jewelry and discarded board game pieces. Cut out images from cereal boxes and soup can labels make a statement about pop culture today. **Be creative!** All-purpose glue and endless imagination will be required for this project.

Explain what your newly decorated footwear says about you. What did you express about yourself?

Plains Indian Tribes – Loop Necklaces and Hair Pipe Breastplate

Tribal oral tradition indicates that loop necklaces were introduced to the Apsáalooke (Crow) by the Shoshonian People. These were Columbian Basin People and had access to the West Coast tribes, who were the source of the shells using in making necklaces. By the 1880's, loop necklaces with the great moonshell attached to each side were characteristic of Crow formal dress.



Crow Loop Necklace made of bone beads, abalone shell, buffalo and deer hide, Russian Trade beads and glass beads, ca 1880, Edith and Goelet Gallatin Collection



Crow Loop Necklace made of shell, brass button beads, buffalo and deer hide and sacred red ochre, ca 1860, Edith and Goelet Gallatin Collection



(left) Northern Plains Hair Pipe Breastplate, Gift to the Crow, made of cow bone, brass and leather, early 20th century, (right) Crow Loop Necklace, bone, beads, abalone, buffalo and deer leather, Russian trade beads, ca 1880, Edith and Goelet Gallatin Collection

Since the early 1860s, hair pipe breastplates have been prized by Plains Indian men. The Crow adopted them along with the Grass Dance movement that originated among the Northern Plains. As the breastplates grew in popularity among the Crow, they became much longer, sometimes hanging to the mid-calf. Loop necklaces were used as adornment for special occasions.

Art Project

Create a loop necklace or breastplate using found objects in the home. You may also like to incorporate objects found in nature such as sticks, bark and willow. The possibilities of this assignment are endless. Suggested materials to be used in creating a finished piece include: string, twine, cord, nylon cord such as fishing wire, thin wire, heavy thread, yarn, ribbon, leather, buttons, plastic beads, straws (cut to whatever length might be needed), feathers, sticks, bones and shells. Don't forget to look in the tool box for discarded nuts, washers and bolts that can be strung or tied on a cord, for example. Use a flat surface such as a piece of cardboard, foamcore or table top to layout your materials. Straws cut to emulate the use of bone can be strung on a cord, cotton or polyester pipe cleaners work well, string or wire and then attached with thread, cord or thin wire to the vertical side and center panel. Creating the center vertical element first and then attaching the side components will work best. Be Creative! Let your imagination guide you.

We love pictures! Email us pictures of your finished art projects to be posted on our website.