

REMEMBERING OUR LOVED ONES THROUGH PHOTOS

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Día de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is a cultural tradition based throughout Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Peru and is rooted in indigenous pre-colonial and Spanish Catholic ritual customs.

Through time, this day has fused Indigenous spiritual beliefs with Spanish and Portuguese Roman Catholic traditions. El Día de Los Muertos (The Day of the Dead) is observed on November 1st and ends on November 2nd to honor and commemorate the lives of the dearly departed and welcome their spirits' return.

This celebration has become increasingly popular among the Latinx/e community in the United States. Although the tradition has evolved, it continues to embrace the unity of life and death as the central theme.

The welcoming back of the spirits is observed in households with the creation of an ofrenda (altar). This year's Ofrenda at ITC will highlight this fusion of beliefs by focusing on an element of the ofrenda, the "nichos."



WHAT ARE "NICHOS"?

Nichos are ornate handmade shadowboxes that display photographs, drawings, prints, or even small sculptures. They are a type of Latinx/e folk art that combines the Roman Catholic visual design of a "retablo" with the iconography and patterns found in pre-colonial Mesoamerican indigenous imagery. In the past, nichos were typically hollow spaces carved into marble or stone on the temple walls in catholic churches.

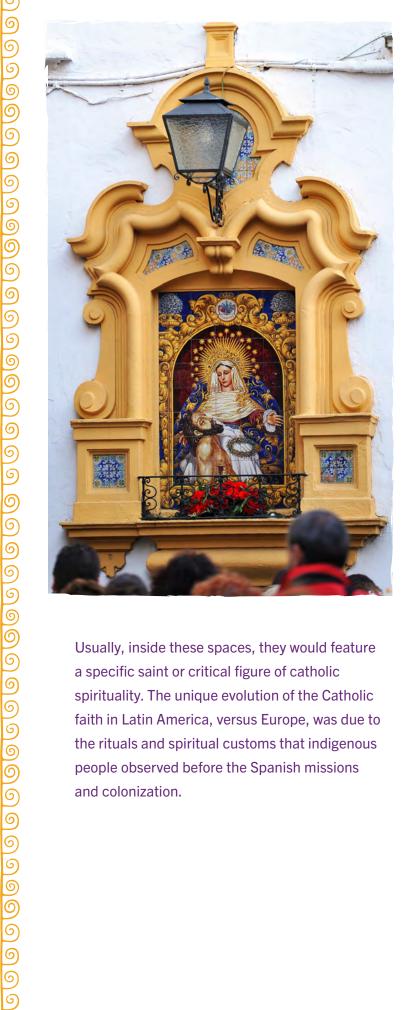




As the Catholic faith spread through Europe and the world, nichos were used as methods of storytelling for converting and explaining religious beliefs to people of other cultures and faiths.

Other "portable" versions of this are known as "retablos." Retablos are a Spanish tradition that began roughly around the 1600s. Small paintings of saints were created to adorn shadow-box-like objects of personal veneration, which people believed provided protection and prosperity. They were initially made from wood and had plates of precious metals such as gold, silver, copper, and even tin hammered onto them. They were sometimes small enough to carry in your hands or big enough to become the centerpiece of cathedrals.

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Usually, inside these spaces, they would feature a specific saint or critical figure of catholic spirituality. The unique evolution of the Catholic faith in Latin America, versus Europe, was due to the rituals and spiritual customs that indigenous people observed before the Spanish missions and colonization.

Nichos made in Latin America fused the structure and function of the retablo with the stylization and iconography of Indigenous American art, such as geometric patterns, flora and fauna motifs, and their deities and loved ones. Over time the images of deities were accompanied by images of loved ones and the stylization has evolved to encompass other icons and symbols relevant to a more global culture, such as hearts, smiley faces, logos, etc.



A LIST OF ITEMS YOU NEED TO MAKE YOUR NICHO.

CARDSTOCK PAPER (ANY COLOR)

To print the Nicho Template with

COLORED PAPER

To make the backdrop of your photo

SMALL CARDBOARD JEWELRY BOX

Approximately 3.5"x3.5"x1"

CRAFT CUTTING TOOLS

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You can use scissors and/or an X-ACTO knife

COLORING SUPPLIES

Markers, pens, crayons and/or colored pencils

SMALL DECORATIONS

Small jewels, beads, stickers, ribbons, etc.

PHOTO OF LOVED ONE OR OBJECT

Must be smaller than 3"x3"

COMMAND STRIP (OPTIONAL)

Best solution to hang on wall and damage-free



NICHO BOX QUICK START GUIDE 04

1. PRINT TEMPLATE

Go to bit.ly/3fGTuyB to download and print our guide template from our website. Make sure to just print the template (page 6) on cardstock. This will give your nicho the needed sturdiness.

2. CUT TEMPLATE

Use scissors to cut out the nicho template along the dashed lines. To cut the inner square, we recommend using an X-ACTO knife for precision. If you prefer to use scissors, softly fold the template in the middle to make a slit. Then use that slit to insert your scissors so you can cut along the dashed lines as an 'x'. Both tools will help create a window opening with flaps.

3. COLOR & DECORATE

The fun now begins! You can color your nicho frame using markers, pens or colored pencils. Better yet, use colored cardstock to give your nicho a clean look. You can also take it to the next level by adorning it with jewels, stickers and beads (try not to over do it, remember we don't want to weigh down or tear the frame). Don't know where to start? Try using your loved one's favorite color, team, food, characters, etc.

4. YOUR PHOTO & BACKDROP

While the decorations dry, cut and make a 3x3 inch square piece of paper. The main purpose of this paper is to adhere your photo/object; it also serves as a backdrop. Try using colored paper or simply decorate it as you wish. Once this backdrop is cut, glue your photo to it.

5. ASSEMBLE TOGETHER

You are now ready to make your nicho box! Try to glue your frame to your box -- this next part can be a little tricky. It might help to reference the how-to video for this part at bit.ly/3fGTuyB. Please make sure your nicho frame is fully dried. With decorations facing you, try to fold your flaps along the inner window you cut in step 1. Then turn the nicho frame over so the decorations are facing down on the table, you should see the flaps you just folded sticking up. The goal is to glue each flap to the inside walls of the box. This will help connect and secure the frame to the box. Make sure you glue each flap along each corresponding inside wall. Try not to put too much glue, you want to be able to stick the flaps but not make a mess. Wait for the glue to dry. Congratulations, you have just built your nicho box.

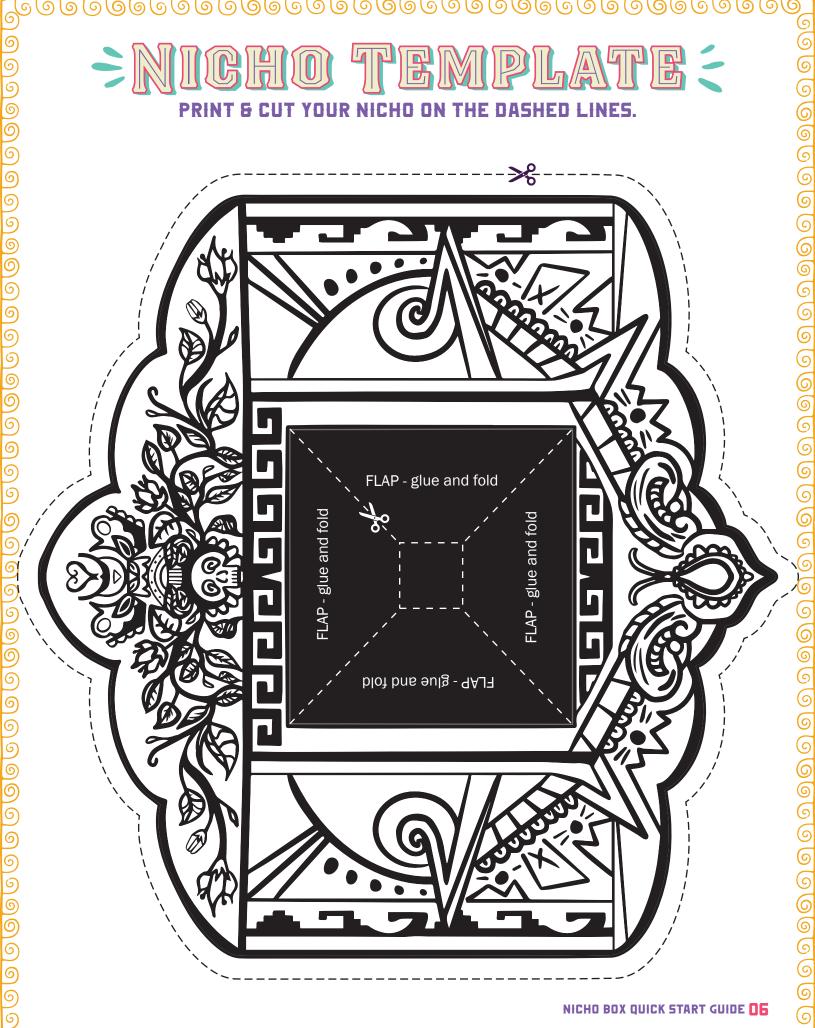
6. DISPLAY & SHARE

Add it to your Day of the Dead altar or hang it on a wall using a Command Strip (this solution is damage-free to your wall surface). Take a photo and post it on your social media. Share and celebrate your departed loved ones.

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NICHO BOX QUICK START GUIDE 05

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