

Transcript

Jacquelyn: Crafting with Dentalia.

Adela: In the Kinship room of the Mead Art Museum's exhibit "Boundless," we were drawn to two life-size screen prints by Sičáŋǵu Lakota artist Dyani White Hawk.

Yasemin: Strips of delicate metal foil cover the prints, which represent capes made of dentalium shells.

Adela: Dentalia are the shells of a marine mollusk, and as we craft with them we hope to honor both our relatives from the ocean, and thousands of years of North American Indigenous trade.

Jacquelyn: Although I recognized the design as an abstraction to familiar natural materials, the exhibit provides no explanation of this traditional craft.

Adela: To provide an enriched understanding of these pieces for the museum's audience, we decided to recreate the practice of crafting with dentalia, by creating two sets of earrings inspired by White Hawk's prints.

Yasemin: Step 1: Preparation.

Jacquelyn: Before we could begin crafting, we prepared our materials. Because shells are naturally imperfect, dentalia come in different shapes and sizes. To use dentalia as beads, we must first file down the jagged edges of the shells, and sort the shells by size.

Yasemin: Next we are preparing the leather for the earrings. We are punching 4 holes into each leather strip to ease the beading process.

Yasemin: Step 2: Threading the Earrings.

Jacquelyn: We are using synthetic sinew as the thread for these earrings. Traditional sinew is made from stretched animal tendons.

Adela: Each earring of four beaded strands is completed in a loop, beginning with the two center strands, and ending with the outer strands.

Yasemin: We chose the color of our beads to match the green of the cape in 'Protect'.

Jacquelyn: Here I am putting on the finishing touches, re-threading the sinew down the earrings knotting off the ends to hide the extra string.

Yasemin: Here we repeat the process for the second earring.

Yasemin: And put the final touches on that earring, too.

Jacquelyn: Here I lay out the design for the second set of earrings, this time choosing to thread four layers of dentalia into each earring.

Yasemin: We chose red beads for this set, to match 'Nurture'.

Adela: Here is our end result: two pairs of dentalia earrings; each paying homage to Dyani White Hawk's beautiful work; each a practice in kinship and the shared experience of creation.

Credits:

Featured artist: Jacquelyn Cabarrubia

Videography: Adela Thompson Page

Edited by: Adela Thompson Page

Voiceover: Jacquelyn Cabarrubia, Yasemin Özden, Adela Thompson Page

Sound: Adela Thompson Page