

Family Activity: Fantastic Animal Masks

Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Introduction

Masks like this one are worn in masquerades that take place at funerals to honor important people. The materials and animal features combined on the mask are associated with status and leadership. The shells were once used as money and represent wealth. The beard-like ruff of the large colobus monkey refers to power of the forest. A trunk projecting upward and over the front of the mask represents the elephant, the supreme symbol of leadership.

Discussion Questions

Use the close-up view to look carefully at the Kuba mask

- Describe the texture of each material and how it would feel if you touched it.
- Look at the surface patterns formed by these materials.
- Describe the repeating patterns that you see.
- What might make you think that this object is important?

Activity

Make your own animal mask!

Materials Needed:

- Printout of mask activity sheet
- Pencil Paper plate
- Tongue depressor
- Marker
- Glue
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Tape
- Fabric scraps, feathers, foil, yarn, or any other interesting materials you can find

Steps:

1. First, plan your mask by drawing it using the mask activity sheet.
2. Cut eye holes in your paper plate for seeing.
3. Make animal features out of the materials you have found. Glue or tape the features to the mask.
4. Glue the tongue depressor to the back of your plate.

Glossary:

colobus monkey (*n*)

ferocious long-tailed African monkey able to leap great distances from tree to tree

Create Your Own IMAGINARY Animal

for a mask or sculpture

The designs used for African masks and sculptures are often based on a combination of features of different animals. Look closely at pictures of a variety of animals and think about which physical characteristics most appeal to you. Choose five from different animals and draw them in the small boxes below. In the large box, create a design for a mask or sculpture (head or entire body) based on those drawings. Feel free to add other shapes, lines, or textures to make your picture more interesting. **Anything goes!!**

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