PROJECT #14

CREATE A POWER ALTAR

To create a power altar, you will need:

Paper

Cardboard or thick paper for the base

Pencil

Glue

Scissors

Writing/drawing materials (pens/pencils/markers)

Any small materials that remind you of someone who inspires you (like pictures from magazines, ribbons, stickers)

(Para traducir este proyecto al español, haga clic en el traductor de idiomas en la esquina superior derecha de su pantalla)

(To translate this project into Spanish or another language, click on the language translator in the upper-right corner of your screen)

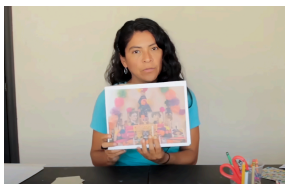
Hello, my name is Patricia Vázquez. I'm an artist originally from Mexico.

This project draws inspiration from the Mexican Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead) altars. We'll be making a two-dimensional altar dedicated to a person who inspires us and represents inner strength.

If you'd prefer to follow this project using my Spanish-language video series instead, click here.

In Mexico, it's traditional to make altars on Día de Muertos (November 1 and 2) to honor loved ones who have passed away but live on in our hearts.

These altars are often colorful and decorated with flowers, candles, sugar skulls, papel picado (a decorative paper with cut-out designs), books, stars, and images of the deceased. People may also place foods and items the person enjoyed, making the altar a celebration of their memory.



Here are a couple of examples to inspire you to create your own.

Creating big altars like this can be a lot of fun, but you don't need candles or cookies to make one!

We're going to make something similar, but with a focus on a person who represents strength and inspiration to us, whether they are still in our lives or have passed on.

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Step 1 of 8

First, take a piece of paper and think about someone in your life, or someone who has passed away, who inspires you—a person who makes (or made) you feel heard and valued, or whose footsteps you'd be proud to follow as you grow.

This should be someone who represents strength and power to you. Power can be the confidence that comes from knowing you'll be OK, even in challenging times.

Take a moment to close your eyes and reflect on who this person might be. For me, I'm thinking of a friend who inspires me with her resilience. Despite facing many challenges in life, she remains positive and generous.

Step 2 of 8

Now, draw a representation of this person on your paper. I like to start with a pencil and then trace over my work with a pen once I'm happy with it.

Your drawing doesn't need to look just like your person—just something simple that reminds you of them. For example, I'm adding a heart next to my friend's name to symbolize her warmth.

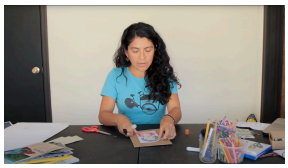
Make sure your drawing is sized to fit on the piece of cardboard or whatever you'll be using as the base for your altar.

Step 3 of 8

Let's start cutting!

Once your picture is ready, use scissors to cut it out. To keep it simple, I'm cutting mine as a rectangle.

For my base, I also have a piece of cardboard that I've cut out specifically for this project. I made sure it's slightly larger than the portrait so there's enough space around the edges to add decorations.



Step 4 of 8

Next, glue your picture to the center of your base.

Framing anything in this way can make it look even more powerful, which is another way to honor your special person.

Step 5 of 8

Now, let's start decorating around your portrait.

Think about the qualities, talents, or hobbies that remind you of this person. For example, my friend loves to cook, so I'm adding a small flame to symbolize fire, which is essential for cooking.

You can include animals, plants, colors, and more to represent the qualities you admire in your person. Feel free to use materials like ribbons, colored paper, magazine clippings, or other items you have on hand.

There's no right or wrong way to do it.

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Step 6 of 8

If you continue to feel inspired, I encourage you to take your time and add more details or decorations.

As you work, remember that you can celebrate the powerful and inspiring qualities of your special person while also recognizing the strength and power you have within yourself.

Step 7 of 8

When you're finished, choose a special place to display your altar.

It could be on top of your dresser, alongside other meaningful objects or pictures of the person who inspires you. Or, it might be in a corner of your room dedicated to things that bring you comfort and strength—like an OK Kit or your own art museum!

Step 8 of 8

Want to inspire others with your art? You can share it in our online gallery by clicking the link below.

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