

Collection Close-up

Juan Carrillo De La Cruz (b. 1935)

Mosaic #62, 1983

beads and beeswax

Richmond Art Gallery Permanent Collection

Donated to Richmond Art Gallery by Arthur Richardson in 1994, this work by Jalisco artist Juan Carrillo de la Cruz exemplifies the rich artistic tradition of the Huichol or Wixárika community in Northwestern Mexico. For the Huichols, the realm of spirituality is intricately woven into the fabric of daily life, and their art is a vivid expression of this very present relationship with the cosmos. The imagery and colour palette in Huichol art brim with symbolism.

Mosaic #62 is square and compact, with an abstract depiction of the peyote cactus at its centre, rendered in intense hues of red, yellow, green and orange. An integral part of the Huichol people's daily life, the peyote is considered sacred—"a bridge between worldly and supernatural knowledge," wrote curator Amir Ali Alibhai who presented works by Huichol artists in the exhibition *Art and Spirit I: Visions* (1994). Surrounding the peyote are multicoloured stars, celestial objects that symbolize the spiritual universe to the Huichols. The deer also holds a revered role in the Huichol's pantheon of gods, alongside the sacred cactus.

The recurring use of brightly colored, high-contrast images against a dark background, arranged concentrically around the peyote, creates a kaleidoscopic effect that evokes cosmic experience. While these formal elements may explain aspects of the culture to outsiders, for the Huichol people, the colors reinforce their deep connection to the spiritual realm. Red, an intense and formidable hue, is often associated with the sacred peyote; black with life, the ocean, and the goddess Tatéi Aramara, mother of the sea; purple with humanity and earthly existence; and blue with water, rain, and the god Rapawiyene.

- Maria Filipina Palad

Collection Close-up is an ongoing initiative where we highlight a Permanent Collection work, which has a formal or thematic link to the Gallery's featured exhibition, in our Art Lounge. *Mosaic #62* was selected for its resonance with the themes of the exhibition *The Chromophiliacs*.