

MOLA



A Guna Tradition

EMORY

MICHAEL C.
CARLOS
MUSEUM

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Mola: A Guna Tradition by Ana Vizurraga and Alyson Vuley.

This Artful Stories book was created in conjunction with the special exhibition: *Threads of Time: Tradition and Change in Indigenous American Textiles* at the Michael C. Carlos Museum, August 19-December 17, 2017, curated by Emory Professor of Art History, and Carlos Museum Curator of the Art of the Americas, Dr. Rebecca Stone.

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Drawings and maps by Ana Vizurraga and Georgia Clark.

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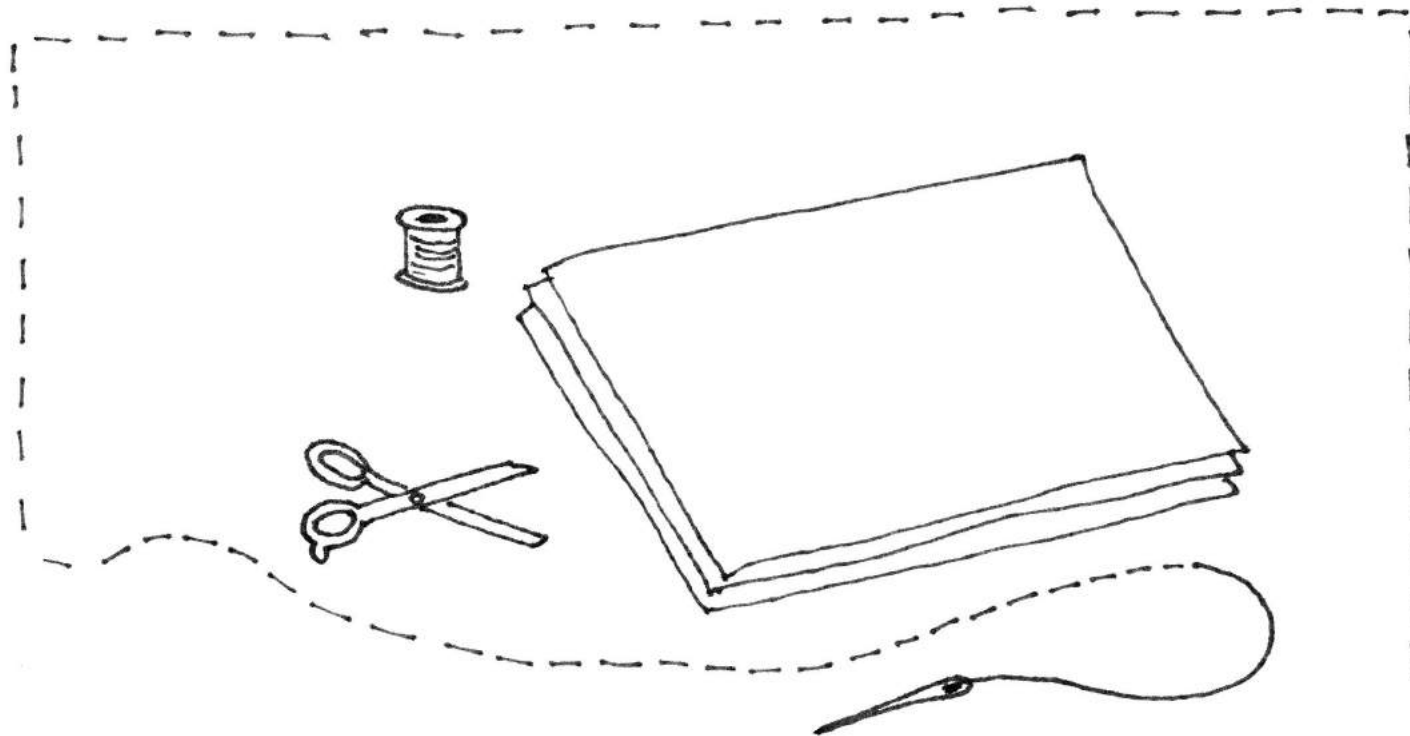
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Artful Stories presents

MOLA

A GUNA TRADITION

This book belongs to:





Nu wedi! Nu wedi!
Hello! Hello!

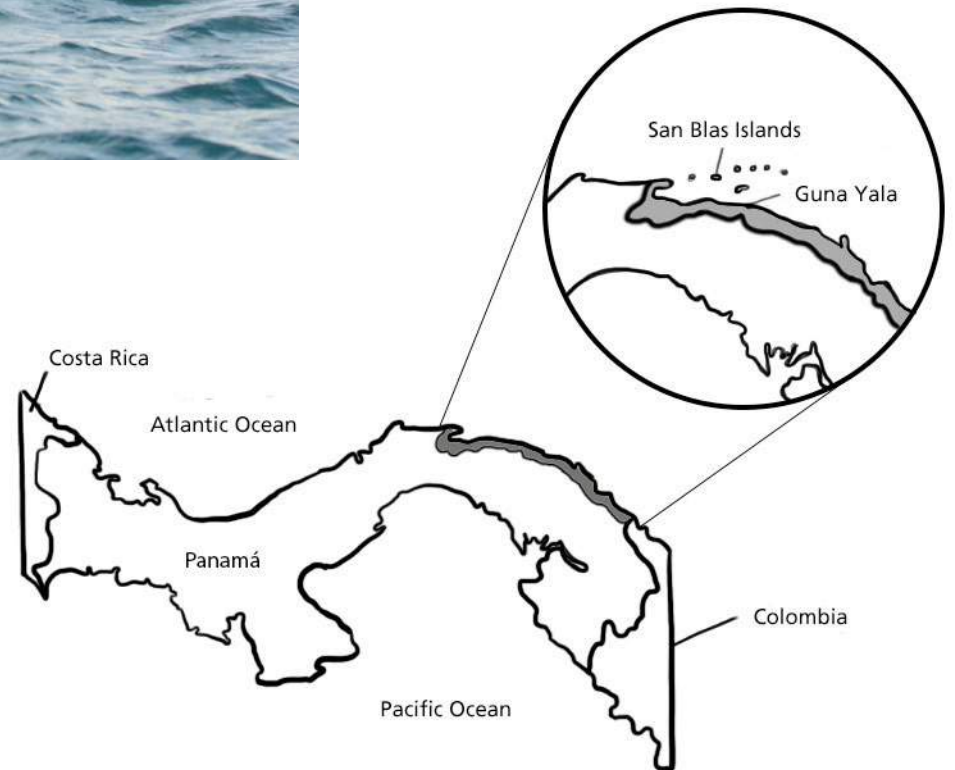
My name is Zulma and I am a
Guna girl.

I live on the north coast of
Panamá in Guna Yala, the land of
the Guna people.





In Guna Yala, there are hundreds of islands and I live on one of them. My island is surrounded by sandy beaches, coral reefs, and beautiful blue waters where we swim, sail, and fish.





Guna women are famous for making *dulemolaguna*, rectangular panels that form the fronts and backs of our shirts. We make the *dulemolaguna*, molas for short, using different colors of fabric layered one on top of the other like a sandwich. We cut through the layers to reveal the shapes and patterns. Then we fold the cut edges under and sew them down.





It takes many hours of careful cutting, folding, and sewing to make a mola.

My grandmother taught my mother to make molas and my mother is teaching me. One day, I will teach my daughter to make molas.

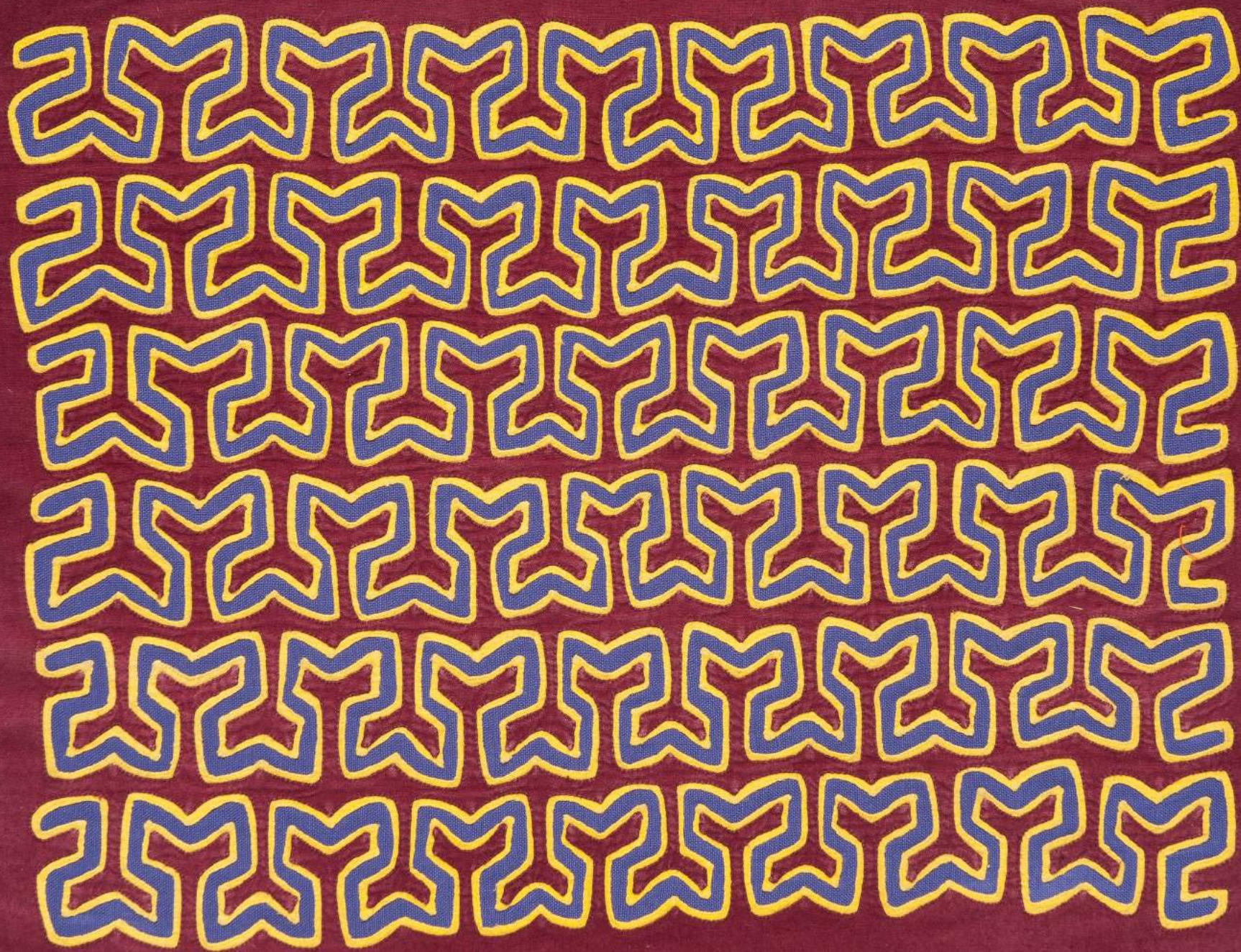




A long time ago, my ancestors painted their faces and bodies with geometric patterns and shapes. The first molas used those same shapes and patterns.

Now, when we make molas with the shapes and patterns just like our ancestors made, we call them “grandmother” molas.





Today, we also get ideas for mola patterns from the world around us.



Spiny lobsters, eels, and many different kinds of fish live and feed among the coral reefs that help protect our islands. My mother loves to make molas with seahorses and round puffer fish!





My favorite molasses have flowers on them like the ones we have growing around our house. Hummingbirds love them, too! They come and drink nectar from the brightly colored tropical flowers.



Some molas we use for our own clothing, but some we make to sell. Sometimes the molas have images that remind us about important things that have happened in our history.





When I make a mola, I get to decide what it will look like. I pick out the colors of cloth to put in the layers and then what shapes and patterns I want to use. I might choose to use a “grandmother” mola design that my ancestors used. I might look around at my island home and use animals or plants or the ocean to get an idea. Or I might make up something completely new!

What would you do?

A large rectangular area defined by a dashed line, intended for a response to the question above. The dashed line is composed of short, horizontal and vertical segments. There is a small, curved mark at the bottom-left corner of the dashed rectangle.

