

Exploring Reflection and Gold Leafing Woven Fabric

Time: 2 hours including dry time

Difficulty level: Medium

Messy level: High



Olga de Amaral, *Tabla 28 (Slate 28)*, 2012, linen, gesso, acrylic, and gold leaf. Photograph © Diego Amaral

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To view hi-res examples of artworks from the exhibition *Olga de Amaral: To Weave a Rock*, visit the [MFAH website](#).

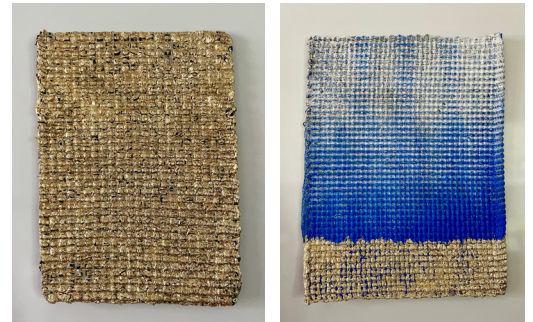
Inspired by the work of Colombian fiber artist Olga de Amaral, this activity will guide you through the process of transforming a simple woven textile into a reflective work of art by covering the surface with gold leaf.

Investigate the Work of Art!

1. Applying gold leaf to weavings to get color, rather than dyeing the fiber, was Olga de Amaral's first major shift away from traditional rules of textiles. What are some natural materials you can identify that have been traditionally used to dye fibers in order to produce color?
2. In addition to gold leaf, Olga de Amaral is known for using other materials, such as paint and clay, to create color and imagery in her art. Why do you think clay, paint, and gold leaf are typically not used for functional textiles?
3. Color and light are very important to Amaral's work. *Alquimia 003 (Alchemy 003)* belongs to her *Alchemy* series, which focuses on the visual qualities of gold, as well as its role in the history of her country, Colombia. Do you think that the way gold reflects light is part of why people are drawn to it? What are other reasons?

Gather These Materials

- Woven placemat or hand towel (cotton or linen)
- Large course paintbrush
- Small soft paintbrush
- Acrylic paint
- Paint tray
- Gold leaf kit
- Scissors
- Gesso
- Optional: Parchment paper



Step-by-Step Artist Instructions

1. Set up your work area on a flat surface.
2. Cut your placemat or towel into halves or quarters so that you have multiple pieces to experiment with.
3. Using a large course paintbrush, apply a thick, even layer of gesso to the surface of your woven textile. This will stiffen the fabric and make it easy to apply paint and gold leaf.
4. Once the gesso is dry, paint your textile.
5. Read the instructions for your gold leaf kit.
6. Evenly apply gold leaf glue to the areas of the textile you would like to be gold.
7. Allow to sit for 30 minutes.
8. Apply gold leaf by carefully placing the gold leaf sheet onto the desired area.
9. Use included paper sheets or parchment paper to place on top of the gold leaf and gently rub.
10. Use a soft paintbrush to brush over the gold leaf, further attaching it to the surface.
11. Optional step: Gently apply a layer of gold leaf fixative to finish the piece.