

Exploring Plastic Reuse and Weaving on a Cardboard Loom

Time: 30 minutes–1 hour

Difficulty level: Medium

Messy level: Low



Olga de Amaral, *Luz blanca (White Light)*, 1969/1992/2010, plastic. 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 Colombian artist Olga de Amaral and her use of plastic in her artistic practice, this activity will guide you through creating a basic cardboard loom and weaving sample.

Investigate the Work of Art!

1. Olga de Amaral's desire to experiment with light, color, and texture led her to seek out and incorporate materials beyond fiber, such as horsehair, gold leaf, clay and plastic. What materials do you think were traditionally used to create wall hangings and tapestries?
2. *Luz blanca (White Light)* was created in 1969 when plastic was a new and exciting material being used in art and design. What are some of the feelings and concerns around the use of plastic in today's world, and how might visitors respond to this artwork now?
3. Olga de Amaral's art is deeply inspired by the natural environment in her hometown of Bogotá, Colombia. Looking at the image of *Luz blanca (White Light)*, what aspects of nature do you think she is trying to portray?

Gather These Materials

- Flat sturdy piece of cardboard (at least 5 x 7 inches)
- Yarn or cooking twine
- Plastic grocery bags
- Plastic cereal bags
- Old clothing
- Scissors
- Heavy-duty tape (packing tape, duct tape, etc.)
- Ruler
- Pencil or Marker
- Fork

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Step-by-Step Artist Instructions

Creating Loom

1. Place ruler on cardboard horizontally, about 1/2 inch from the top.
2. Working left to right, use a marker or pencil to mark every 1/2 inch.
3. Cut along these marks to create slits.
4. Place tape from left to right below the slits to prevent them from ripping further.
5. Repeat steps 1–4 on the bottom of your cardboard.

Threading Loom

6. The warp refers to the lines that you see going up and down in a weaving. Starting at the top left-hand side of loom, slide yarn from front to back so that the tail is on the back.
7. Tape the tail to the back of the loom.
8. Begin threading the yarn through the slits, working from top to bottom and wrapping around the back of the loom. Tip: Make sure that the string is taut, or tight.
9. When you reach the last slit, tape the tail to the back of the loom.

Weaving the Weft

10. The weft refers to the lines that go left to right weaving through the warp. Create materials for your weft by finding and cutting plastic and other materials into strips—produce bags, cereal bags, cracker bags, and old clothing are a few options.
11. Begin on the bottom left portion of your loom. Starting with the first warp thread, slide the material underneath and then up over the next thread, and then back under the third thread, and so on. Tip: When your material runs out, weave to the end of the row and leave a 3-inch tail. Also leave a 3-inch tail when starting the next material. These tails can be taped to the back of the weaving afterward.
12. For the next row, go back the other way by doing the opposite over-under pattern as you did for the first row.
13. Use a fork to pack down the material after each row.
14. Continue doing this until your weaving is the desired size.

Removing Weaving from Loom

15. On the back of the loom, cut the warp threads horizontally through the middle.
16. Gently remove the bottom warp threads from the loom one by one.
17. Each two warp threads can be knotted together at the base of the weft to finish the piece and keep the weaving intact.
18. Repeat steps 15–16 for the top of the weaving.

One last note: To make the most of this weaving sample, explore a variety of materials for your weft. Make notes about the differences between the materials, such as which was the easiest to work with versus which looks the best, as well as the difference between natural materials versus manufactured. Then make another weaving using just the materials you are happiest with.