

Punch and Loop Tapestry



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Inspired by the work of Sophie Taeuber-Arp, create a tapestry without a traditional loom or weaving techniques.

Sophie Taeuber-Arp was born in 1889 in Switzerland. She attended the School of Applied Arts in St. Gallen in Munich before moving to Zurich in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I. She worked as a multidisciplinary artist, creating textile design, installation, sculpture, photography, stained glass, dance, costume design, and interior design. She even made a foray into architecture, designing and building a home for her and her husband, the artist Jean (Hans) Arp. She was greatly admired by her contemporaries in the arts but overlooked by critics. After her death, Taeuber-Arp was relegated to the footnotes of art history, and even then, the focus was on her role as wife to her artist husband. But without a doubt, she was a strong creative influence on her contemporaries, specifically those in the Dada movement.



Now Taeuber-Arp has received the recognition she deserves, with an explosion of retrospectives showing her work all over the world. Her textile works have received the most attention, the color, pattern, proportion, and linework are nothing short of extraordinary, and clearly served as the basis for all her art practice. Wassily Kandinsky said of her, “[she] expressed herself by means of the colored relief...their sobriety, their silence, their way of being sufficient unto themselves, invite the hand, if it is skillful, to use the language that is suitable to it and which is often only a whisper; but often too the whisper is more expressive, more convincing, more persuasive, than the ‘loud voice’ that here and there lets itself burst out.” Unlike her contemporaries, she did not shy away from creating decorative art. She was interested in geometry and color alone, writing that the “intrinsic decorative urge should not be eradicated...it is one of humankind’s deep-rooted, primordial urges.”

In this lesson, students will sketch their designs in opaque watercolor onto Roylco Paper Mesh, which will serve as the perfect foundation for this piece. Then, using a punch needle tool that they have assembled, students will “punch” loops of yarn into the paper mesh, creating loops with the yarn. The loops can be made to be quite tight, or loose like a shag carpet. The process allows for greater textural variation than traditional weaving. And, once you get the hang of the process, it moves along much more quickly than weaving.

Note: Instructions and materials are based on a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Materials (required)

For the Punch Needle Tool

Blunt Tapestry Needle #13, 2 3/4" Pkg of 12, (65104-1009); need one needle per student.

Bic Round Stic Grip Pen, Pkg of 12, (22523-2012); share two packages across class.

Mini Long-Nose Pliers and Mini Wire Cutters, 5", (33083-1010); share one between two students.

Blick Artist Tape, White pH Neutral, 3/4" x 60 Yds, (24143-3460); share one roll between 6 students.

For the Tapestry:

Roylco Paper Mesh, 7" x 10", Pkg of 24 Sheets, (01391-1001); need one sheet per student.

Value Pre-Cut Mats, White, 9" x 12", 6" x 9" opening, Pkg of 50 (17205-1003); need one mat per student.

Richeson Opaque Watercolor Pans, Set of 22, (00380-0229); share one set between 4 students.

Royal & Langnickel Big Kids' Choice Lil' Grippers Brushes, Variety, Set of 15, (06082-1509); share two sets across class.

Suggestions for Weaving Material:

DMC Cotton Embroidery Floss, Popular, 8 3/4" yds, Pkg of 36, (62474-1005); share one set across class.

Lily Sugar 'N Cream Yarn, 2 1/2 oz, (65236-); share a selection of colors across class.

Classroom Yarn Assortment, All Colors, 5 lb (65208-1005); share one assortment across class.

Trait-Tex Econ-O-Yarn Assortment, 10 lb, (65216-1009); share one set across class.

Preparation

1. With tape, secure a sheet of Roylco Paper Mesh to the backside of a pre-cut mat. Use tape on the full perimeter of the paper mesh sheet, and burnish lightly with a finger or side of a pencil.
2. Using the grid of the mesh paper as a guide, create a geometric design with Richeson Opaque Watercolors. It is best to place a sheet of scratch paper underneath when painting to catch any excess watercolor that may escape through the openings of the mesh.
3. Select weaving materials that match the colors of the painting as closely as possible. The materials can be different weights and textures, from thin embroidery floss to chunky rug yarn. If a yarn is too chunky to fit through the pen tube and eye of the needle, it can be thinned by un-twisting and pulling the individual strands apart.

Process

1. To begin, you will need to create a punch needle tool. Disassemble a Bic Stic Pen by pulling at the nib until the ball point nib and ink reservoir come out. This can be done by hand, but it helps to have needle nose pliers on hand.
2. Pop the tube endcap off by pushing the handle of a thin round brush through the tube.
3. Discard the pen cap, nib, ink reservoir, and tube endcap. Only the hollow plastic tube will be needed.



4. The positioning of the needle is important to the functionality of the tool. The needle should be placed upside-down so that the blunt needle point lays against the outside of the pen tube. The eye of the needle should extend approximately 1 1/2" past the tube. The eye hole of the needle should be parallel to the tube.
5. Use Blick Artist Tape to firmly secure the Blunt Tapestry Needle to the outside of the pen tube.
6. Thread the punch needle from the top, down toward the eye of the needle. Thread the eye so that the yarn tail can be pulled to the backside (away from the pen tube).
7. Choose an area to begin punch needle weaving. Unlike traditional weaving, the piece can be started anywhere because sections are independent of each other. Additionally, sections can be left open, revealing the watercolor below. Thread the punch needle following the instructions in step six.
8. Hold the punch needle tool in your right hand, gripping near the base of the tube, with the taped needle side facing the left. The yarn tail should be threaded so that it is also facing the left.



Step 1: Create a geometric design with Richeson Opaque Watercolors.



Step 2: With tape, secure a sheet of Roylco Paper Mesh to the backside of a pre-cut mat.



Step 3: Make a punch needle tool by taping a blunt needle upside down, onto a disassembled hollow pen tube.

9. For the first punch, push the needle all the way through the mesh hole so that the base of the tube is touching the paper mesh surface. With your left hand, grab the tail of the yarn, pulling it all the way through, and tie a knot. Hold the yarn tail against the backside of the paper mesh. Pull the needle back up with your right hand. At this point the yarn will look like a single line coming out of the mesh surface.
10. Punch the needle again, moving to a mesh hole to the right of the last punch. The base of the pen tube should be flush with the surface of the paper mesh. This time do not pull the yarn; simply grab the loop with your left hand from the left side and hold. Pull the tool up, leaving the loop on the backside.
11. Continue along the section, working right to left until the end of the section. Then move a row down, rotate the whole piece upside down, and continue punching left to right.
12. The length of the loop is dependent on how much slack there is in the yarn. For a tighter loop, only lift the punch needle tool up enough for the needle to be released from the paper mesh. For looser, shag-like loops, pull the tool further away from the paper mesh. It is not necessary to use the opening directly next to the prior stitch. Spaces along the paper mesh can be skipped to create longer loop stitches. Additionally, try flipping the piece over to punch from the backside to vary the loop result.
13. When a section is complete, cut the yarn and tie a knot.
14. Leave the piece on the mat board to display. To lock in the stitches, an additional, solid piece of matboard or chipboard measuring 6 1/2" x 9 1/2" can be attached to the back with artist tape. To provide even more security, apply a generous layer of matte medium to the surface of the matboard or chipboard before attaching it to the back side.



Step 4: Create a geometric design with Richeson Opaque Watercolors.



Options

- The mat board frame can be decorated with paint, marker, or colored pencil before or after attaching the paper mesh and punch weaving.
- Long loops can be cut, creating a more open waterfall effect.
- Sew in beadwork using a thin bead needle.
- Traditional embroidery stitches can be applied using a blunt needle

National Core Arts Standards -Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Responding

Anchor Standard 8: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Ready to order materials?

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