

## Reductive Weaving inspired by Lenore Tawney



Copyright © 2024  
Dick Blick Holdings, Inc  
All rights reserved

Reverse the weaving process!

Selected strands are removed to create negative spaces as important as the fibers themselves.

Lenore Tawney was a groundbreaking, mid-century artist who departed from traditional weaving processes and developed an abstract, sculptural approach to working with fibers.

After learning to weave on a loom and producing solid pieces with flat edges and limited dimension, Tawney explored alternative methods and developed an "open loom" process. These pieces were designed with areas of negative space and widely-spaced weave that were as important to the overall artwork as the fibers themselves. These tapestries had an expressive, almost painterly quality, pushing the boundaries of shape and dimension. They were hung away from the wall, like a piece of sculpture - unconfined to flat and rectangular spaces. They appeared to float on air.

Inspired by this unconventional, open approach to weaving, this lesson is about re-thinking and re-designing a solid piece of burlap. Fluid acrylic colors or clear glue can fill and secure fibers in areas where solid shapes are desired. Between these positive spaces, fibers are reduced, removed, and manipulated. The process of deconstruction can be used to create areas of texture, line, and form.

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

### Preparation

1. Cut burlap into pieces. Sizes may vary, but 11" x 14" may be a good standard size. Need one piece per student.

### Process

1. On paper, plan a design with a balance of basic shapes. For best results, start very simply. A few geometric shapes, lines, or curves are all that is needed. Avoid objective shapes, tight curves, and fine details.



### Materials (required)

**Brightly Colored Burlap**, choice of colors, 46" x 1-yd (63202-); share three yards across class

**Blick Artists' Fluid Acrylics**, choice of colors, 6.76 oz (09422-); share 2-3 bottles across class

**Blick Scholastic Golden Taklon Brushes**, Flat Wash 1/4" (05859-4014); need one per student

**Fiskars Premier No. 5 Micro -Tip Scissors** (57013-1005); need on per student

**Delta Sobo Craft and Fabric Glue**, 4 oz (23820-1004); share 5-6 bottles across class

**Beadsmith Micro-Fine Chain Nose Pliers** (84740-1001); share one between 4 students



### Optional Materials

**Hemptique Hemp Cord Spools**, assorted colors, 205-ft, 0.5mm (63830-)

**Creativity Street Wooden Beads**, 1 lb (80937-1001)

**Excel Blades Curved Point Tweezers**, 4.5" long (56408-1004)

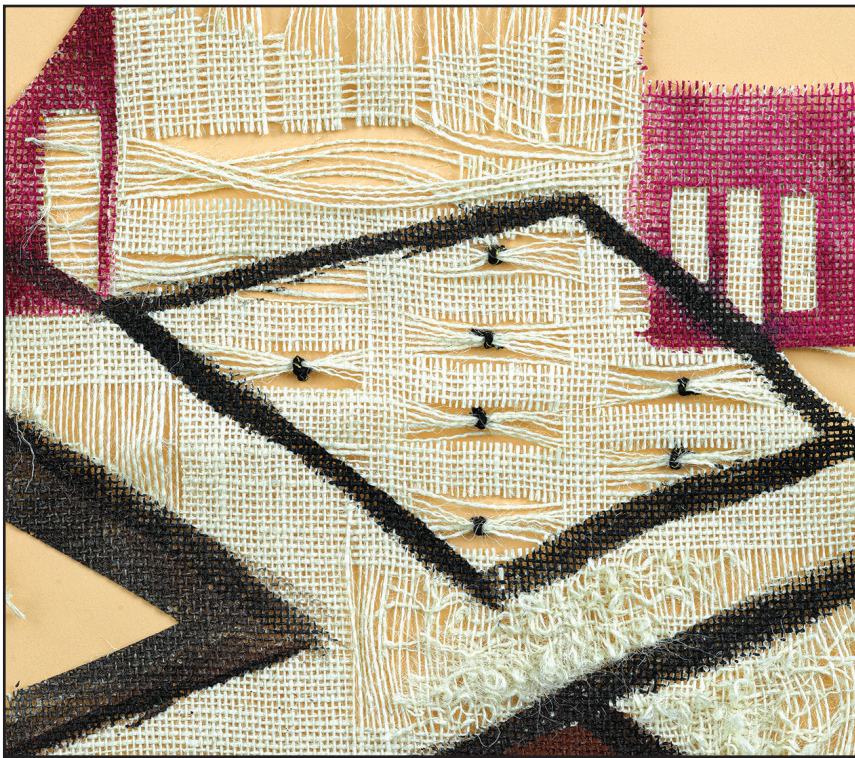
**Seam Ripper**, 5" (63182-1001)

**Creativity Street Wooden Dowel Rods**, 1/4" dia x 12" length, pkg of 12 (60448-1412)

**Crescent Black Matboard School Class Pack**, 11" x 14", pkg of 40 (17269-1405)

**Ready to order materials?**

Go to [www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plans/reductive-weaving](http://www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plans/reductive-weaving) to access a product bundle for your convenience.

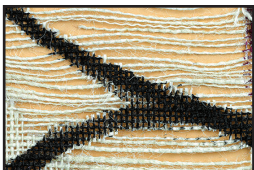


**Process, continued**

2. Paint a simple design onto burlap with fluid acrylic paint. The acrylic will seal the fibers of the burlap so that they will be held in place. These will be the positive areas that will remain as solid portions in the finished piece and will not be removed.

As an option, these areas could be painted with a clear glue or medium to seal the positive areas without adding color.

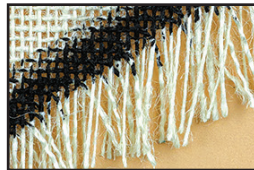
3. Before proceeding to the deconstructing process, try practicing and experimenting on scrap pieces. Try some of the following techniques:



Remove vertical stands of the weaving, leaving just horizontal strands (weft).



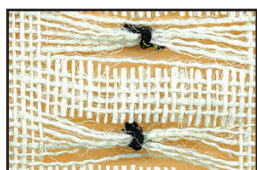
Remove horizontal stands of the weaving, leaving just vertical strands (warp).



Create fringe along edges.



Partially remove strands, making raised, textured areas.



Tie or bind strands with other string or thread.



Attach beads by tying or gluing.



**Step 1:** Plan a design with areas of burlap that will remain solid. Paint these areas with liquid acrylic color.



**Step 2:** With scissors, remove burlap fibers either horizontally or vertically to create open weave.



**Step 3:** Explore other ways to alter the fibers and create texture and areas of interest. Finished pieces can either be designed to hang or glued to matboard to display.

**Ready to order materials?**

Go to [www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plans/reductive-weaving](http://www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plans/reductive-weaving) to access a product bundle for your convenience.

## Process, continued

4. Apply what was learned on the practice pieces to the painted piece of burlap. Deconstruct unpainted areas to create open warp or weft. Start with the simple technique of removing fibers in a defined area. Use scissors to snip the horizontal strands in the burlap (referred to in weaving as the **weft**) or vertical strands (known in weaving as the **warp**). A set of tweezers or small jewelry pliers is useful in removing single strands. A seam ripper may also be handy for cutting and removing strands.

If an area is removed that was not intended to be, apply a small amount of glue to repair. Hemp cord can be used to gather and bind strands as well as add small areas of color, if desired. Beads can be added as focal points in the design.

5. Design a means of hanging the deconstructed burlap design with string or by attaching it to a dowel rod. Deconstructed pieces can also be glued to matboard. The matboard provides support and also will accentuate the open weave if a contrasting hue is chosen.

## 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.

### Connecting

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

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding