

At-Home Art Activity

Construct your own Woven Building!



VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

Communities around the world are filled with many different buildings – some are tall, like the skyscrapers found in New York City while others are smaller like a church or library. Architecture, or the practice of designing and building structures, not only creates the physical environment where we live, but can also represent the culture of a community.

Consider the different buildings in your community and use weaving techniques to construct your own woven building inspired by Faith Ringgold's work, *Tar Beach II*.



Materials:

- Felt
- Ribbon
- Cardstock
- Scissors
- Tape/Glue
- Recycled Fabric

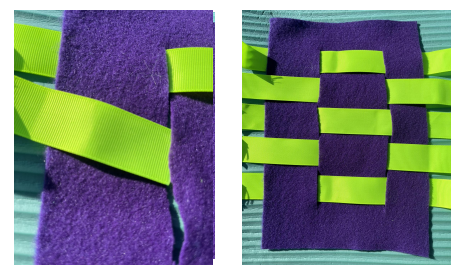
Constructing a Woven Building

1. To create your building base, start with a rectangle of felt, you may also use recycled clothing or fabric scraps. Start by folding your base horizontally. Make three (3) cuts along the fold of the felt, but do not cut all the way to the edge. Leave an inch or so uncut.



2. Unfold the felt and you should have two slots for weaving.
3. To weave the ribbon through the felt, insert the ribbon under and over the slots.

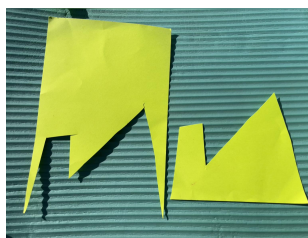
4. Use another piece of ribbon to weave through the felt but alternate the pattern by starting the second strip over then under the slots.



- When you have woven the ribbon through all of the slots on the felt, place a strip of tape or a dot of glue on the back to secure the ribbons to the felt and trim the edges of the ribbon using scissors.



- Cut out a triangle out of the construction paper - this will be the roof of your building. Glue the roof to the building.



- Set your final work out on display!



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Tar Beach II

1990

Faith Ringgold, American born, 1930

Quilt (acid dyes, screen-printed)

2001.252

Inspired by African and African American storytelling traditions, the work combines narrative imagery with written text that gives permanence to what might be considered the oral component of the story. Here, Ringgold tells the tale of Cassie Louise Lightfoot, a little girl growing up in Harlem in the 1940s. The scene is one of domestic leisure set on a New York City rooftop. Referred to in the vernacular of the day as “tar beach,” the roof was a place where city dwellers could find relief from oppressive summer heat and the stresses of everyday life.

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Cut-Pile Cloth (Primary Title)

Unknown artist - Kuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo
Textiles, Raffia
African Gallery East

Cut-pile cloth, also called “Kuba velvet,” is one of several types of textiles that Kuba weavers create from raffia palms. Although weaving this type of cloth is slow and laborious, the result is an exquisitely complex two-dimensional design. The material’s velvet-like texture is created by inserting strands of raffia between the fibers of a loosely woven fabric, and then either cutting the strands or leaving the loops. Patterned raffia cloths, like the examples displayed here, are a sign of wealth and prestige among the Kuba and are used for ceremonial and ritual occasions. They are given in tribute to the Kuba king and are part of marriage contracts, legal settlements, and funeral ceremonies. Even today, a Kuba family’s wealth may be indicated by its textile inventory, and raffia-cloth squares are used as a form of currency.



Man's Wrap Skirt (Primary Title) Woman's Ceremonial Wrap Skirt (Former Title)

19th - 20th century
Unknown (Artist), Kuba Culture, Democratic Republic of Congo
Raffia palm fiber
2011.530

The raffia palm grows in abundance in western and central Africa. Its fibers supply the raw materials for weaving raffia textiles, an art form in which Kuba artisans excel. The burgundy-colored field and the black and white edging of this handsome skirt identify its owner as a person of high standing in the royal court. More than twenty feet long, the skirt would wrap a number of times around the body, creating a voluminous garment. The openwork in the red field is created by clustering groups of warp threads while leaving intervals between the groups that are spanned by the weft, creating a cool, delicate covering. These textiles are usually created via a community-based effort - children often help gather the raffia and palm leaves, women might dye the materials or embroider, etc. and then men will typically do the weaving on the loom.