

SECOND SATURDAYS FROM HOME: NATURE WEAVING



Take a walk around the block to find materials for this week's Create at Home project – a nature weaving! Chinese artist Ai Weiwei used trees as inspiration for his sculpture *Iron Tree Trunk* at Laguna Gloria... what will YOU use?

MATERIALS:

- Cardboard (~4in x 5in)
- Natural Materials (grass, flowers, etc.)
- Yarn or string
- Tape
- Scissors

HOW TO:

1. First we are going to create our loom. Begin with a small piece of cardboard, roughly 4"x5" or so. Cut five evenly-spaced slits along the top and bottom of your cardboard. Slits don't need to be very long, just long enough to hold your string in place.
2. Cut a long piece of string that you can wrap around the board five times through each cut notch. Tape one end of the string to the back of the board. Pull your string through the notch in the top left corner of your board. Then wrap the string around your cardboard through the bottom left notch. Continue to wrap your string left to right across your board. When you've woven the string through all the notches, tape the end of the string to the back of the board.
3. Now it's time to weave with your natural materials! The pattern to weave is "over, under, over, under." Your first piece of grass (or other object) will go over the first string, under the second, and so forth.
4. The pattern alternates for each new row you weave through the string. If your first object moves "over, under, over, under" the string, your second object will be the opposite, or "under, over, under, over". This technique helps hold your weaving together.
5. Make sure all your objects are gently pushed together toward the top of your board. The closer together the materials are, the better they will hold in place.
6. When you've added all your materials and filled your loom, it's time to remove the weaving from the board. Carefully add a piece of tape to the top and bottom of your weaving. The tape should touch each of the strings, running parallel to the top and bottom of the board. If your weaving goes all the way to the edge of your board, you can add the tape to the back of your board. Carefully fold the edges of the tape under so that they are holding the edge strings in place.

7. Place your weaving face-down on a flat surface. Use scissors to cut the strings on the back of your board. Make this cut between your two strips of tape, leaving the strings at the top of your board longer than those at the bottom. Gently remove the strings from their notches.
8. Once your weaving is lying face-down, free from its board, add additional pieces of tape to the backs of the ones you previously placed. Doing this will ensure that your tape is not sticky, and it provides extra strength to hold your weaving together.
9. Attach the weaving to your stick! Use your loose ends of string at the top of your weaving to tie your stick to the weaving (parallel to the top side).
10. Cut a piece of string about six inches long. This piece is going to allow your weaving to hang on a wall. Tie each end of the string to the ends of the stick.
11. If you want to make your weaving a little fancier, you can tie the bottom ends of the string together to make tassels. If you choose to do this, tie every two strings together.
12. Now your weaving is ready to hang!
13. Share what you made! Post a picture and tag us @contemporaryATX or use the hashtag #SecondSaturdaysAtHome so we can see your amazing artwork.
14. Learn more about the artwork that inspired this project, Ai Wei Wei's *Iron Tree Trunk*, at TheContemporaryAustin.org!

DID YOU KNOW:



1. Ai Weiwei's sculpture *Iron Tree Trunk* is made of the exact material in the title – IRON! You will notice from its color that the material is very rusty. Weiwei created this sculpture from iron so it would intentionally continue to rust and change over time. You will notice different patterns and colors each time you visit this sculpture. Why do you think it was important to Weiwei for this sculpture to change over time?
2. Ai Weiwei began his career as a painter but after moving to NY his artwork changed and he became a conceptual artist focusing on found objects. A conceptual artist is an artist that decides first on the idea they want to share and only decides on the materials or technique they wish to use after. The materials are often chosen intentionally to help share the idea. Although *Iron Tree Trunk* is not a found object, it is a copy of a found object – a real tree from his home country of China.
3. *Iron Tree Trunk* and the other tree sculptures created for this series were inspired by a trip to Jingdezhen, China. Local vendors in this area sell objects from nature such as a stone or wood to customers who often live in urban environments. The idea is that they are able to contemplate nature even when they are far from a natural environment. Weiwei has done the opposite with *Iron Tree Trunk* though. He has recreated a natural form from metal, a material used to build skyscrapers, and has displayed it in a natural setting. Why do you think Ai Weiwei decided to do that?