

Lenore Tawney (1907-2007)



Lenore Tawney was an American artist who is known for developing new ideas and techniques for creating art using **fiber**. She made other types of artwork during her life, including drawings, collages, and **assemblages**.

Fiber is traditionally used to create **utilitarian** objects, such as clothing, rugs, and pillows. Lenore Tawney used fiber to create sculptural artwork, using an approach that has been named **open-warp weaving**. Her work helped change the way people think about fiber art.

Lenore moved to New York City in 1957 when she was fifty years old and began to focus on making artwork using fibers. About ten years after moving to New York, Lenore had a studio space where she lived and worked. The space had very high ceilings which allowed her to create much larger work.



The contents of her studio are now a part of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center's collection. The objects are displayed at the Art Preserve. This is the first time that the Arts Center has labeled a studio space as an **artist-built environment**.

Fiber

A natural material, such as cotton or wool, or synthetic material, such as polyester or acrylic, that can be used in weaving to create a fabric.

Assemblage

An artwork made of various two- and three-dimensional materials that are put together on one surface.

Utilitarian

An object that has a specific function.

Warp

The threads that are warped, or stretched to have tension, on a frame or loom. They typically run vertically, or up and down.

Weaving (verb)

Creating a fabric by interlacing materials through a fiber warp in various patterns. Tawney's experimentation with open-warp weaving techniques resulted in loose, free-flowing works.

Artist-built Environment

A unique place—frequently a home—that is transformed. Often inspired by the life experiences of the artist, they typically are made of materials that are easily accessible and found nearby.

John Michael Kohler Arts Center

Playing with Fiber

Tawney's work was known for being experimental. She learned traditional methods of creating art with fiber, such as weaving on a loom, and discovered her own, unique processes through her art practice.

To be able to experiment, you have to become familiar with the material and learn how it works.

Use yarn or string and try the following:

- Create a braid using three different strands*
- Create a piece of finger knit fabric*
- Invent your own way to use the yarn or string. Can you make something functional? Or something decorative?

* **Find video tutorials for these processes at socialstudio.space**

Additional Activities

- Find a video about Lenore Tawney and more images of her work at artpreserve.org/artists/lenore-tawney.
- Learn more about how fabric is woven by reading books from your local library or searching online. Can you find out what makes linen different from cotton fabric?



For K-12 Educators

Suggested National Standard Connection

Visual Arts Creating 2.2

Anchor Standard

Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Enduring Understanding

Artists and designers balance experimentation and safety, freedom and responsibility while developing and creating artworks.

Essential Question

How do artists and designers care for & maintain materials, tools, & equipment? Why is it important for safety & health to understand and follow correct procedures in handling materials and tools? What responsibilities come with the freedom to create?