

Jane Southgate

The guide takes you through the processes Jane uses when creating both her own work and preparing public workshops; it is based on a pair of workshops she ran at Gainsborough library, as part of the MORAG project.

You will need to make a simple cardboard loom – and you can watch a video of how to do that at <https://vimeo.com/61079457>



Think about it

Word, lists and phrases

Keep writing lots of stuff down - ideas/thoughts/feelings - then sooner or later something will develop.

List words and phrases associated with working with fabrics: -

- Sewing
- Knitting
- Crochet
- Weaving
- Warp
- Weft
- Interwoven
- Joined
- Torn
- Laced
- Coming apart at the seams
- Hemmed in
- A stitch in time saves nine

List emotions and the colours you connect with them.

List words that you connect with the experience of aging and the colours that you connect with these words.

Treasure Hunt - things around you

You may come across a material and think 'I could use that!'

Find a scrap of woven fabric – take it apart – see how it is constructed.

Materials, patterns and textures

You probably don't need specialist materials or equipment. Sometimes your choice of materials may be dictated by a theme... sometimes you may want to use a particular material to explore its colour, physical properties or to push its possibilities and use it in a different way.

For this activity you will need:-

- Card, string, rags
- Paper, fabric, paints, inks, crayons
- Newspaper and apron

Make yourself at home

Try to find a space in the day when you know you will have some uninterrupted time and you can make a mess. You may want to cover table surfaces ready for working with paint and ink.

In the house it's easy to get distracted. Perhaps you have a spare room or a garage or shed that you could use as a studio.

Spending time organizing or clearing up when you're thinking about a new idea can prepare a space to work in and also prepare your mind for work.

The last thing you did

Have you ever had a go at weaving or knitting?

Do you have any memories of family or friends weaving or knitting?

Feelings

The focus of this activity is to give you starting points that help you to:-

- Use your hands to connect to your work.
- Explore your feelings and emotions related to your experience of, for example, ageing.
- Engage intuitively with the process of weaving
- Express feelings and ideas through the process of weaving



Get going

Warm up

Make a card loom – you can see the video at <https://vimeo.com/61079457>

You may want to have a go at weaving with a small card loom first and then make a bigger weaving when you've developed your ideas a little and are more familiar with the process.

Make a mark

To make the weft threads:-

- Choose a colour that you feel encapsulates your feelings or an experience you've had.
- Cover the table or surface you're working on to protect it.
- Using a variety of materials, (paint, ink, etc), colour the surfaces of pieces of cloth or paper.
- Let this dry.
- Write, draw, and express your feelings about ageing. Cover the pre-coloured paper and cloth.
- Tear or cut into strips with which to weave.

Play

Experimentation and play are essential; through this most of the ideas come to life.

Experiment with weaving. Cut up paper and fabric. Threads should travel across the warp of the loom alternatively going under than over each warp thread.

Start anywhere

An idea can provide a starting point. Try not to stick too rigidly to the initial thoughts, just get the ball rolling and then discover the interesting stuff along the way.

Start by playing with materials and making things otherwise anxiety about not having an idea inhibits any ideas at all. It's a bit like that blank piece of paper that's so daunting you daren't start drawing/writing.

Making anything however good or not you think it is, is better than doing nothing. Sometimes you need to get out the rubbish in order get to the good stuff.

What's in your space?

Find materials around the home that you can weave with:

Plastic bags and old sheets cut into strips, pieces of rope, raffia, tinsel, etc.

Don't know?

You probably don't know what you're going to end up with. To know would stifle the work, which needs to develop along the way – be allowed to breathe.

Not knowing is both exciting and nerve wracking at the same time.



Keep going

Add in and take away

Collect anything that you would like to include in your weaving i.e.

- other written matter
- cloth
- ribbon
- hair
- plant matter
- anything at all that will help express your ideas

These could be in your chosen colour, or could have personal significance.

Chop & change

Prepare warps using thin wire rather than thread. This will allow you to mold your final piece to aid construction of final piece. Make several looms to work on at any one time. Allow different ideas and approaches to develop.

Questions?

What would happen if.....

- you introduced another material?
- you make/find warp and weft threads that are giant size?
- the loom became part of the work?

Don't stop

Feel the surface, do you want it flat, or do you want to add more texture? If so, where and what sort of texture? Try weaving with odd textures – plastic bags, wire, string, grass.

Emergency restart

Not sure you're getting anywhere? Stop, leave the work and go and make a cup of tea, get some fresh air, do something completely different.



How did it go?

How do you know when it's over?

When you have filled the threads on the loom you can cut and tie the thread on the back of the loom and take off the finished weaving.

Any surprises?

Have you ever woven before? Has this experience changed your view of weaving as a process?

Did you enjoy it?

Did the time go by quickly? Was the process relaxing?

What were the best bits?

What did you enjoy most? Making the loom, making the weft threads, expressing feelings or ideas?



What next?

Choose another starting point

Try using a circular piece of card with an uneven number of cuts around the edge.

Tell a friend

Discussing ideas with other people is a good way to develop new ideas or develop existing ones, it's as if by letting that idea out there is room for another one! Talking to others can help you look at things from a slightly different perspective.

External links

<http://janevsouthgate.blogspot.co.uk/>