

## Fiber Mesh Mash

A staple for needle crafts, plastic mesh canvas becomes the base for a textural fiber and wire mash-up

A product familiar to anyone with needle craft experience is plastic mesh canvas. Commonly used as a foundation for creating designs with yarn, its rigidity makes it suitable for a variety of shapes, both flat and dimensional.

An unconventional way to use plastic mesh canvas is to consider it a base for textural and dimensional fiber art.

Fiber craft is perhaps the oldest art form there is, and, for a great deal of history, it has been synonymous with women's work. The women's movement of the mid-20th century helped bring a revolution in fiber as artists such as Sheila Hicks, Lenore Tawney, and Magdalena Abakanowicz experimented with highly dimensional and large-scale forms, abstraction, environmental art, and figurative sculpture.

"Fiber" is a blanket term for a large variety of natural and synthetic materials including cotton, wool, synthetic cords, twine, thread, raffia, silk, fur, wire, and, of course, yarn. Beyond weaving, fiber art is created through knotting, coiling, pleating, lacing, crocheting, braiding, felting, quilting, casting, and many other innovative techniques.

As an open-ended introduction to fiber art, this lesson provides students with a means to create a dimensional base structure. Once this substrate is in place, students follow their own path of exploration and experimentation, discovering the many ways fibers can communicate color, texture, and form.

**GRADES 3-12** Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

### Process for grades 5-12

1. With scissors, cut a half sheet of plastic canvas into 4-5 shapes. Shapes can follow the mesh lines of the canvas and have straight edges, be curved, or free-form shapes.

As an option, shapes can be cut before students begin, allowing them to choose from an assortment of geometric or organic shapes.

2. Use pliable wire to connect the shapes, imagining how it might hang



### Materials (required)

**Colorful Plastic Canvas**, assorted colors, 10-1/2" x 13-1/2" (63103-); share one between two students

An Assortment of Yarns and Fibers, recommend:

**Red Heart Super Saver Yarn** (65267-)

**Trait-tex Jumbo Roving Yarn** (65214-)

**Jute Twine** (62984-)

**Hemptique Hemp Cord Spools** (63830-)

**Brightly Colored Burlap** (63202)

**Raffia** (60908-)

**Ribbon Assortment** (62100-)

**Blunt Tapestry Needles**, #18, package of 12 (66903-1009) or **Bendable Blue Plastic Needle**, package of 12 (65103-1009)

An Assortment of Wires, recommend

**Twisteez**, box of 50, 125 ft (33407-1050)

**Blick Copper Wire**, 24 gauge 100 ft (33415-1024)

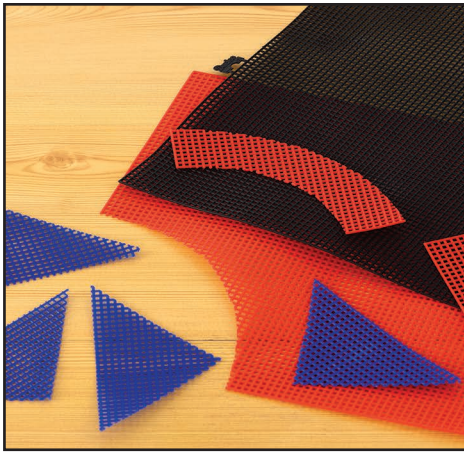
**Colored Copper Wire**, set of 6 colors, 26 gauge (60689-1269)

### Optional Materials

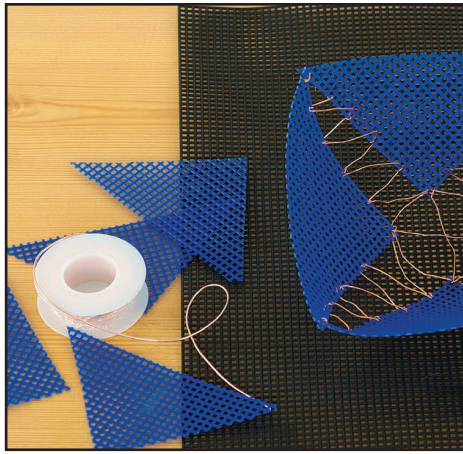
**Assorted Macramé Beads** (60709-1000)

**Plastic Canvas Circles**, 4-1/2" Dia, package of 10 (63103-1830)





**Step 1:** Cut plastic canvas into 4-5 shapes.



**Step 2:** Bind shapes together with wire.



**Step 3:** Add fibers to the structure by stitching, weaving, knotting, etc.

### Process for grades 5-12, continued

on a wall. The pieces may be left flat and joined together or curled and bound to create dimension. Pieces may be cut, more pieces may be added, and some may not be used at all. They can be traded with other students in order to have more color choices.

3. Once the structure is in place, provide an assortment of materials and resources for turning it into a fiber sculpture. **Tips:**

- Blunt needles can be used to weave fibers through the openings of the plastic canvas and create a variety of stitches. The plastic has enough “give” that large diameter yarns, heavy jute, and strips or fabric can be pulled through the openings.
- Consider negative spaces as part of the overall piece. Negative spaces may include the area between the pieces of mesh and open spaces formed by creating dimension. These spaces can be designed with more wire or fibers.
- Basic macramé and needlepoint stitches can be found through an online search and provided to match the ages and skill levels of students.
- Incorporate “add-ons,” such as beads, to create areas of interest.
- Keep design elements in mind as the fiber sculpture is created: line, form, color, texture, pattern, etc.



### Process for grades K-3

1. Provide each student with a half sheet (9" x 6") of colorful plastic canvas.
2. Students weave safe, colorful plastic-coated wires through the openings in the mesh. Beads can be attached to the wires.
3. Upper elementary grades may experiment with stitching and weaving yarns using a blunt plastic needle with a large eye. Plastic canvas has enough “give” for needles to be pulled through the mesh openings.

### National Core Arts Standards – Visual Arts

#### Creating (Investigate, Plan, Make)

**Anchor Standard 1:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

**Anchor Standard 2:** Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

#### Connecting (Synthesize)

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

