



MUSEUM FROM HOME

April 1, 2021

Diné (Navajo) Rugs in the Museum

Did you know that members of the Diné (Navajo) Nation have been making rugs like the ones you see below for nearly 500 years? They use a special kind of loom called a vertical loom, which stands upright and is about the size of a door, to make their rugs. They also raise their own kind of sheep called Navajo-Churro sheep to get the wool to make their rugs.

The environment is important to the design of the Diné (Navajo) rugs. Originally, they used vegetable dyes made from things that grew in nature to dye the yarn that they used to weave their rugs. Today, some Navajo weavers buy machine colored yarn, and some continue to dye yarn with natural materials the same way their ancestors have been for hundreds of years. They also looked at the beautiful things they saw in the world around them to inspire the patterns and designs in their rugs. Look at the rugs below. What things from nature do you see in the designs?



Unknown Dine (Navajo),
Pictorial Rug,
circa 1910-1920,
Wool, aniline dye,
80 3/4 x 49 in.
Gift of Robert F. Rockwell III.
78.921 F.

Unknown Dine (Navajo),
Regional Rug, circa 1930,
Cotton, wool, aniline dye,
57 x 42 1/2 in.
Gift of Robert F. Rockwell III.
78.229 F.



Embroidery Inspired by Our Environment

Becky McNeill - Quilt Artist

Materials in Kit: Burlap fabric, Yarn, Yarn Needle, Chalk, 2 Craft Sticks
Materials Needed: Scissors, Glue

Follow the directions to create your own mini-rug with embroidered designs.

1. Take a walk outside and observe your natural environment. What living things do you see? Animals? Plants? Insects? What non-living things do you see? Clouds? Rocks? What else?
2. Choose one thing you saw on your walk that you want to stitch on your mini rug. Lay your burlap out with the raw edges at the top and the bottom. Leaving the top 1" of your burlap blank, use basic shapes to draw what you saw in the center with the chalk. Be sure to keep your drawing very simple.
3. Choose a color of yarn for the first part of your picture and thread your needle. Do this by pushing one end of the thread through the hole in the needle. Pull about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the yarn through the needle. Start with your needle behind the burlap and push it up through the fabric in the place where you want to begin stitching. Leave a 3" tail of yarn sticking out of the back to tie off later.
4. Use a RUNNING STITCH to trace the outlines of your drawing. Look at the pictures and "Words to Know" section on the next page to see how to make a running stitch. To switch colors, you will need to tie a knot on the **back** of your burlap. There are two ways to tie a knot. You can tie off to the yarn you have been sewing with or you can tie off to the tail of a different piece of yarn nearby. The pictures will help you. Then thread your needle with a new color and continue stitching. Remember to always start from the back and leave a tail to tie.



Running Stitch



Tying Off to the Same Piece of Yarn



Tying Off to a Nearby Yarn Tail

5. When you have finished tracing your drawing with stitches, make sure that all of the yarn tails on the back have been tied off. Then, you can WEAVE some stripes into the burlap like the Diné (Navajo) rugs at the museum. Thread your needle with yarn and push the needle over and under the individual strands of the burlap as you move across the fabric from one side to the other. Be sure to start and finish on the back and leave a tail of yarn on both ends. You will use the tails to secure your yarn by tying knots. Use the weaving pictures to help you. Add as many stripes of weaving as you would like, but make sure to leave the top 1” of the burlap blank.

Weaving



In weaving words, your yarn is the WEFT. The burlap threads are the WARP.

6. To create a hanger for your rug, cut a piece of yarn that is the same length as the distance from your wrist to your elbow. Place one craft stick on the table and add a line of glue on top of the craft stick. Lay the top edge of the burlap across the craft stick. Add another line of glue, then place the ends of your hanger yarn in the glue just like the picture. Gently press the second craft stick on top, making a sandwich. Let it dry completely before picking it up.



7. When your rug is dry, you can hang it on the wall and enjoy your creation inspired by nature.

Adding a Hanger



Words to Know

running stitch – an embroidery stitch made when the needle is pushed down through the fabric and then back up as it moves across the line of stitching, creates a dashed line on the top of the fabric

weave – create fabric by interlacing two sets of threads together in an over then under pattern, usually done on a loom

warp – the threads in a weaving that run up and down on the loom

weft – the threads in a weaving that the weaver adds from left to right to make the patterns or designs