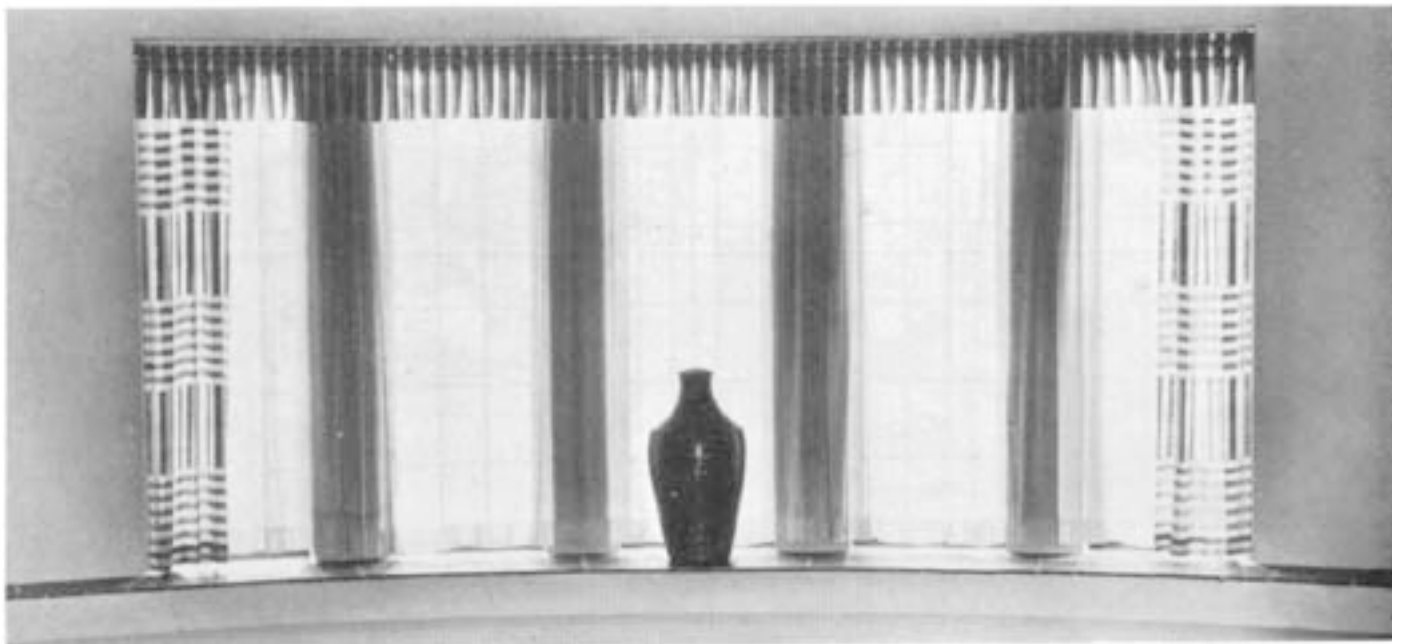




*Weaving department at Kingswood School, Cranbrook*

*Studio of Loja Saarinen. Window drapes in green and gray linen and lustrone*





*Studio of Loja Saarinen. Textile exhibition held at Cranbrook with a reception room rug, 12 x 27 feet, in green and gray shades*

## *The Weavings of Loja Saarinen*

**BY FLORENCE DAVIES**

*Art Critic at the Detroit News*

**T**HE Cranbrook weavings of Loja Saarinen were created to meet a definite need.

This need was not of a material nature, since the world was full of all manner of woven fabrics at the time that Mrs. Saarinen first set up a loom at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in the beautiful Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Neither was this need a subjective or personal thing, such as the need of the individual for self-expression, or of children at play who cry, "Let's make something — what shall it be?", a motif which inspires too many experiments in handicraft.

It was at once, more immediate and definite than that.

It was born of that larger necessity which springs from the age itself, a need to live intelligently in relation to our own

time and place — to believe in Walt Whitman's sound dictum, "not some other place, but this place; not some other time, but this time."

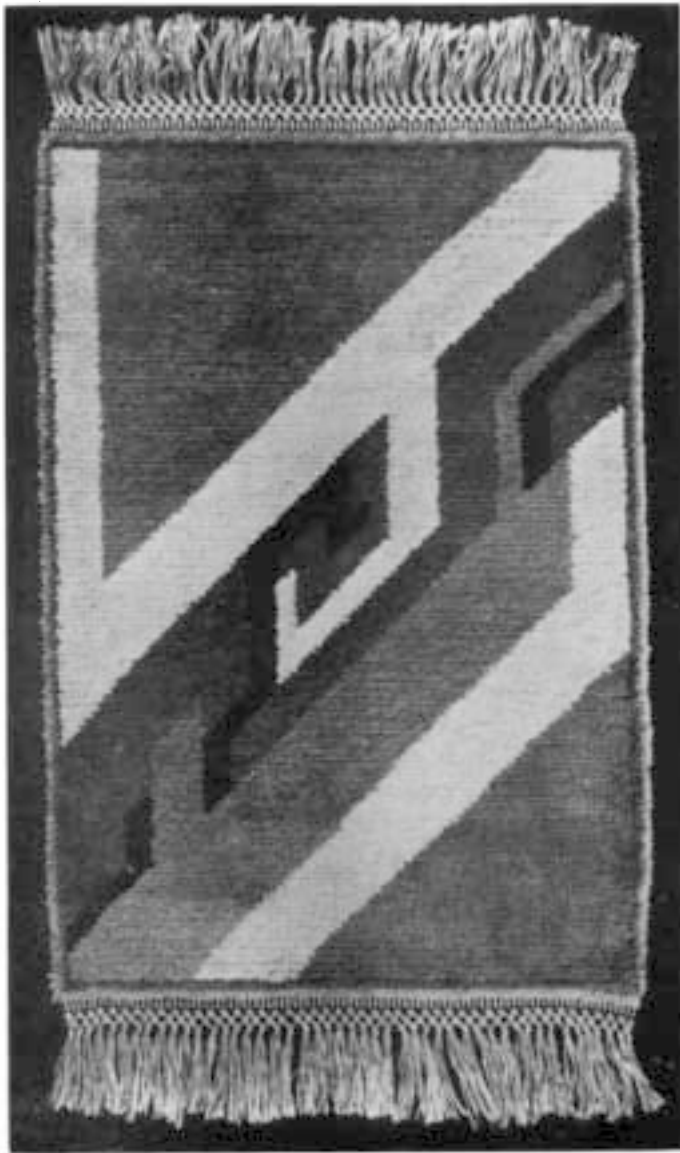
To understand why Mrs. Saarinen, in a world full of textile factories and the looms of art weavers, first started to design and weave rugs and textiles, one must understand something of the woman herself and her present environment.

Loja Saarinen is one of a family which of itself forms a close corporation of working artists. An artist in her own right, she is the wife of Eliel Saarinen, world-famed architect who is now resident architect for the Cranbrook Foundation, Bloomfield Hills, and director of the Cranbrook Academy of Art, one of the Foundation's activities.

Mr. and Mrs. Saarinen and their two children, a daughter and son, have always lived naturally and normally in an atmosphere of artistic creation. Even when their son and daughter were hardly more than children, their family life



*Studio of Loja Saarinen. Luncheon set of black, gray, white, and natural linen*



household, since often after-dinner guests instinctively wander on through the drawing room to the small lounge or conversation center at one end of the big studio, because this room seems to be the most vital place in the house.

Now, all this may seem to be far removed from the Cranbrook weavings. But it is not, because in order to understand their significance, one must understand that they were created in an atmosphere where things needed are made, not ordered, and where creative effort and achievement is as natural as breathing.

Thus it came about that while discussing the appointments of the contemporary buildings which Eliel Saarinen was designing for Cranbrook, Mr. George G. Booth, the founder, turned to Mrs. Saarinen one day and said, half in the spirit of playful challenge, "What are we going to do for rugs and textiles to go with these new buildings, and the contemporary furnishings which your husband is designing?"

"Why don't you design some for us and let us send them to Finland where they do such beautiful weaving and have them woven on those looms?"

It was characteristic of Mrs. Saarinen that she was not interested in such half measures.

"Why not design them and weave them here?," she answered, meeting one challenge with another.

No sooner said than done. Mrs. Saarinen at once set about designing rugs, and a loom of medium size was immediately installed.

The first task which Mrs. Saarinen set for herself was the designing and weaving of a wall hanging to be used over the fireplace in a dining room which Mr. Saarinen was creating for the exhibition of ten contemporary American interiors by ten American architects, which were shown several years ago by the department of Industrial Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, under the direction of Richard Bach.

*by Frances H. Reese, student at Cranbrook Academy of Art*

The result was like a breath of fresh air in early spring.

Here was freshness, restraint, beauty and fitness for purpose.

The designer had not dipped back into the past of Europe and brought forth an outworn pattern as reminiscent of ancient elegance as some threadbare old dowager whose costume had been made over once too often.

Neither had she striven so desperately to be new and different that she had created the sort of unreal, highly artificial, purposely fantastic design which some people imagine represents the spirit of today, so that the very word modern has become at times a reproach.

On the contrary, here was simplicity, intelligence, restraint. Because Mrs. Saarinen knows that in an age of highly developed mechanical means, of steel construction, with its clean, sheer lines, in an age of science and studied efficiency, the bizarre, the disordered and the self-conscious have no place.

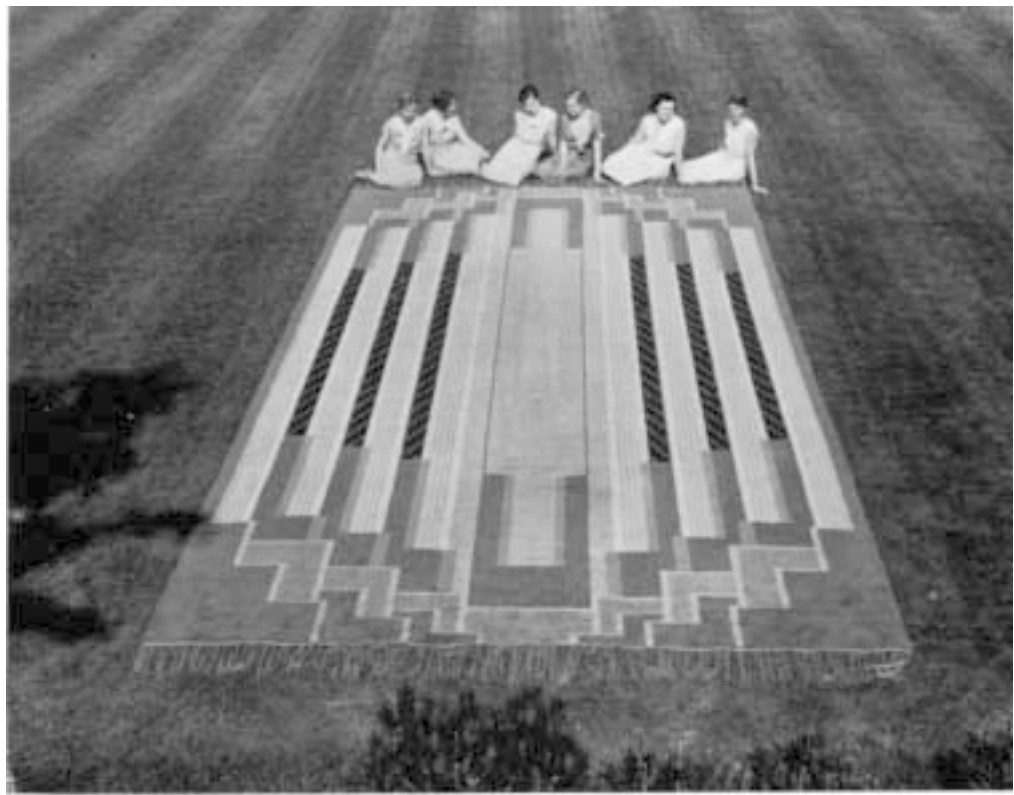
Again because this first weaving was designed to hang on a wall above the fireplace, it was logical that the design should grow upward. What better suited to such a purpose than the tree motif? So a tree was chosen as a theme, but it was not a naturalistic or a painted tree, first because weaving is not painting, nor should it strive to reproduce the effect of painting; and second because naturalistic forms are not essentially expressive of our time. Thus the pattern must have clean, sheer lines, must have almost geometric simplicity and a certain clarity and restraint.

Other weavings for floor, window hangings and furniture coverings followed as one loom after another was acquired. Rugs, however, have always been her major achievement, though she has made delightful textiles for use as upholstery fabrics and curtains.

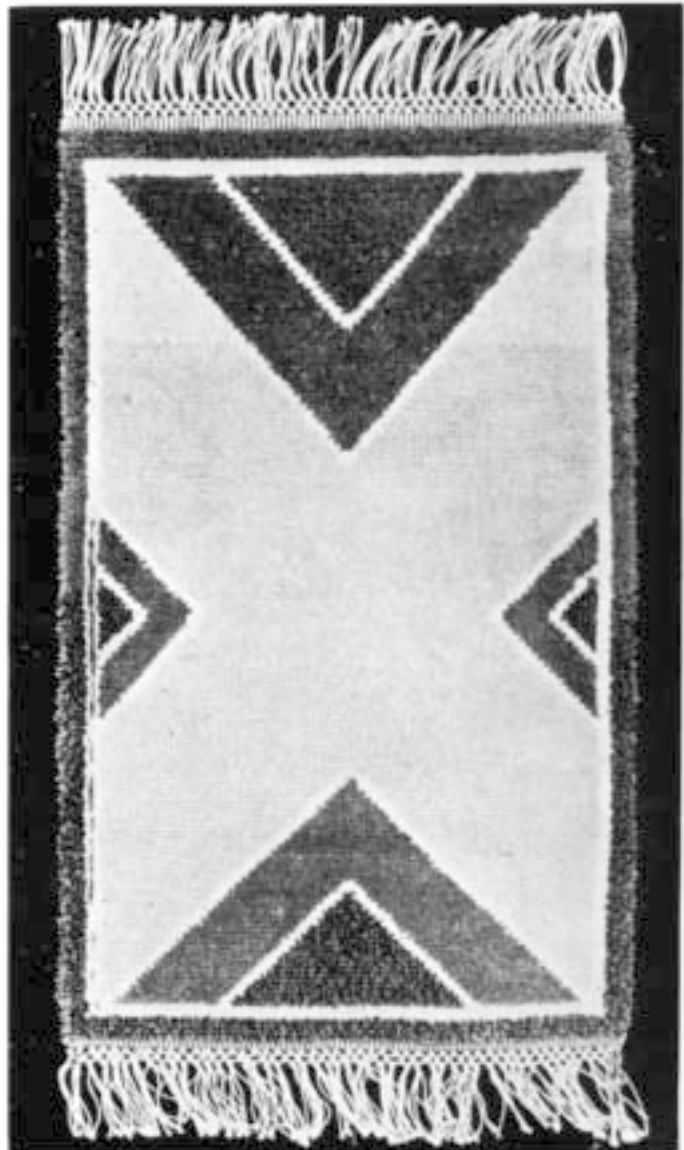
Her rugs are always simple and impersonal in design as befits a floor covering in a contemporary house. More than this, they bespeak the contemporary spirit in their clean, logical patterns which impart a sense of great beauty and strength because of their definitely architectural quality.

As a rule Mrs. Saarinen feels that the cool colors are more representative of the intellectual rather than sentimental or emotional spirit of this machine age, and she chooses most often the grays and browns and greens of the earth, the cool light grays of steel, the rusts and reds, and the precise lemon yellows and warmer yellows with some greens, with black for emphasis and white for high light.

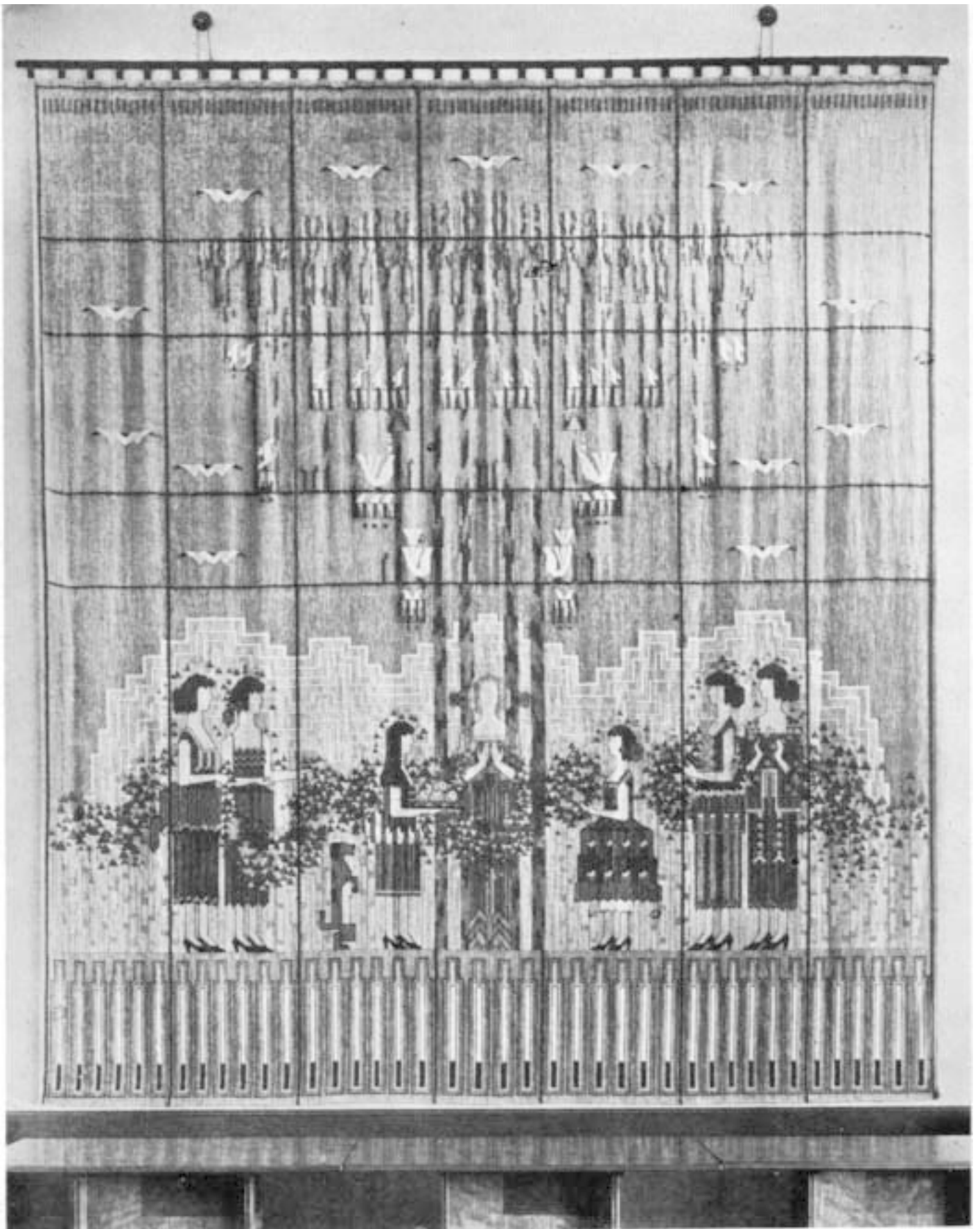
When the Fifth Avenue show room for Hudnuts was installed several years ago, Mrs. Saarinen was given the commission for the rug and produced a distinctive pattern in cool lemon yellow, with grays and browns. More recently when the new setting was designed for the Yardley's shop,



*Studio of Loja Saarinen. Reception hall rug for Kingswood School, Cranbrook, 12 x 26 feet. In bronze and grays with a warm Chinese red*



*by Ann Henry, student at Kingswood School, Cranbrook*



*Studio of Loja Saarinen. Tapestry, 16 x 18 feet, in coarse homespun linen and wool. Prevailing colors: green, coral, and white*



*by Barbara Bennett, student at Cranbrook Academy of Art*



*by Mrs. Lionel Heap, student at Cranbrook Academy of Art*

also on Fifth Avenue, Mrs. Saarinen designed a round rug in rose and gray with stunning accents of black and white, which was admirably suited to the purpose.

Thus from the small beginning of a single loom, Mrs. Saarinen now has at her disposal at Cranbrook about thirty-five looms, three of which are master looms, twelve feet wide, which require the services of three weavers when in operation.

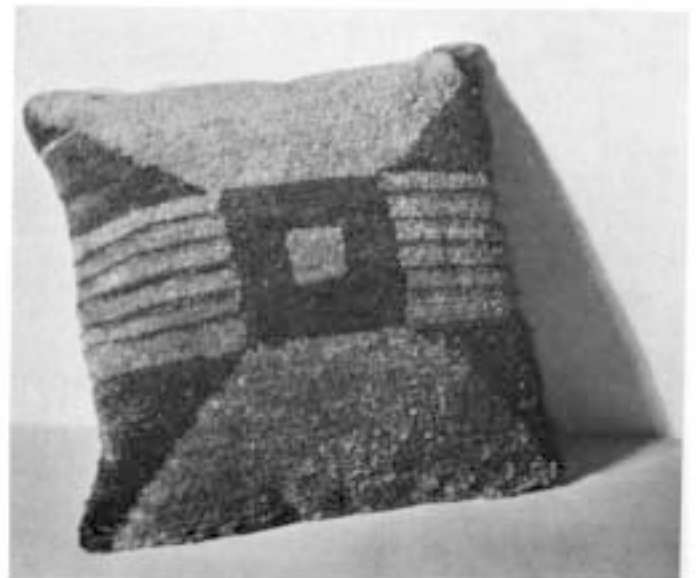
The chief value of the hand-woven curtain fabric, Mrs. Saarinen explains, is the fact that in no other way can the texture and color of the fabric be so perfectly controlled in relation to its surroundings, or made so logical a part of a given whole.

It was because of the necessity of something which belonged wholly to the room that Mrs. Saarinen undertook a great tapestry or wall hanging, which must be reported as one of her major achievements.

As usual the artist started with a need. This need was a large bare wall at the end of the girls' dining room at Kings-

*(Continued on page 31)*

*by Kathleen Green, student at Cranbrook Academy of Art*



## INTERESTING DEVELOPMENTS ON THE "ROSENGANG"

(Continued from page 10)

No. VII

Harnesses

3 & 4 chocolate 1 & 2 bisque	}	4 times (or 8 picks)
2 & 3 chocolate 1 & 4 vanilla		
1 & 2 chocolate 3 & 4 vanilla	}	2 times
1 & 4 chocolate 2 & 3 vanilla		
3 & 4 chocolate 1 & 2 bisque	}	2 times
2 & 3 chocolate 1 & 4 bisque		
3 & 4 chocolate 1 & 2 vanilla	}	4 times
2 & 3 chocolate 1 & 4 vanilla		
1 & 2 chocolate 3 & 4 bisque	}	2 times
1 & 4 chocolate 2 & 3 bisque		
3 & 4 chocolate 1 & 2 bisque	}	2 times
1 & 2 3 & 4		
1 & 2 3 & 4	}	d.b. — 8 picks

## THE WEAVINGS OF LOJA SAARINEN

(Continued from page 17)

wood School, Cranbrook, which had been designed by her husband.

Both in structure and in color the room was light and airy as might befit a dining room where young ladies are to eat. The architectural lines of the room are finely articulated, not massive and heavy; the color rose and gray; the dominating notes of the whole, lightness, grace and cheer.

Thus while the wall space called for a wall hanging or tapestry, it had no use for the sumptuous, or imposing. Here was no baronial castle, whose draughty stone walls needed a heavy hanging to keep out the cold air or whose grayness called for the relief of rich color.

Instead here was a well-lighted room in the contemporary spirit, which called for a hanging with a rather light, sheer quality; a slightly rough texture and a suppleness and freshness suited to the room.

Accordingly a combination of weaves was employed to produce a tapestry which should be light and airy, even transparent in some areas, while the pattern as a whole should be graceful and gay, though sufficiently controlled to keep it well within the proper limits of weaving.

This sense of fitness to purpose is characteristic of all of Mrs. Saarinen's work, whether it be the combination of pure silk and heavy gold thread in small handwoven vanity cases and evening bags, or the simple sturdy texture of the curtain fabric for a school girl's room.

THE WEAVER

## BABY BLANKETS

(Continued from page 19)

A third stringing for a carriage robe was done in a true basket weave, Draft (b), also taken from the Shuttle-Craft Book. This was made of Bernat's Laurel wool set at 15 threads to the inch and threaded as follows:

5½ repeats of draft in white . . . . .	77 threads
5½ " in color starting on 8th thrd . . . . .	77 "
17½ " in white . . . . .	245 "
5½ " in color . . . . .	77 "
5½ " in white . . . . .	77 "
	553 "

Treadled as follows, using great care to keep the weft count 15 shots to the inch and the blocks square: 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 5, 4, 5, 6.

The weaving should be started in white, weaving 77 shots; then with the colored yarn weave 77 shots. If carefully done and the blocks squared, the large white blocks in the corner will be square. The center of the robe, too, should be square, then reverse the border and the heading.

This robe was bound with a tub taffeta ribbon the same shade as the wool used.

A lap pad on this same stringing proved popular. The heading was woven the same as for a blanket, that is, until the same width as outer white stripe; then weave 7 shots of color; 7 of white, and so on, making about three colored stripes; weave a 9-inch center and reverse stripes. The selvaged edges were bound with the same 2-inch tub taffeta, then the piece was folded through the center, the edges stitched together and later bound with the ribbon, thus making a pocket in which to slip a piece of rubber sheeting, easily removed for washing.

This same material and stringing all in white made an exceedingly nice piece of coast material for the tropics. While there is a long loose-looking thread, it is interwoven in such a way that there is no stretching and sagging as in most loose weaves, and for that reason proved unusually satisfactory for a light weight sports coat.

## SCANDINAVIAN ART WEAVING

(Continued from page 24)

two tabby weaves are interlaced, one above the other, where the designs in the fabric meet. The colors on the one side are reversed on the other side of the material. Mrs. Atwater has expertly explained this technique in a *Handicrafter* supplement, Volume VI, Number 1, Part II. Soumak, or Soumak-inlay as it is called by the Scandinavians, is a technique used principally for rugs — and is thoroughly serviceable. Various methods are used in Sweden to introduce the weft into the warp threads. The classical way is to go over four warp threads, back under two, up over four and back under two, and continue this for the width of the weaving or unit of design. The next row is begun in the same way but from the opposite side, making a chain formation in the weft. A tabby is put in after each weft shot.

A few reference books that might interest our weavers are:

"Flamskväv och Finnväv" (Swedish) by Maria Collin, "Skaansk Konstvävnad" (Swedish) by Maria Collin, "Handbok i Vevning" (Norwegian) by Caroline Halvorsen, "Vaevbog for Hjemmene" (Danish) by Jenny la Cour and Johanne Siegumfeldt, "Swenska Textilier" by Nils G. Wollin, "Hemslöjd i Sverige" by Maj Sterner, "Hemslöjd" edited by the National League of the Swedish Society for Home Craft, "Gammel Allmogeslöjd Fran Malmöhus Län" (7 volumes containing many colored illustrations of Röllakan, Flamskväv, Krabba and other techniques), "Finska Ryemöster," and an American book, beautifully illustrated, "European & American Carpets and Rugs" by Cornelia Bateman Farraday.