
MASTER WEAVER

BI-MONTHLY BULLETIN FOR HANDWEAVERS

Z-HANDICRAFTS - FULFORD - P. Q. - CANADA

March, 1957

No. 32

DESIGNING MADE EASIER

C O L O U R .

Here is our problem: there are honest craftsmen who not only enjoy weaving, but also achieve a very high technical level. At the same time their designing is puzzling, and can not be justified by any accepted standards. It is not only that their weaving is not "contemporary" as we wrongly put it (anything made now is contemporary), not in keeping with our present requirements, and therefore useless. This would not be so bad.

A perfect colonial coverlet, even if woven now, is still a good piece of weaving, and it may find application for instance in reconstruction of colonial crafts for educational purposes, in supplementing pieces of interior decorating in museums, and in still existing houses with colonial furniture. When we speak about "bad" designing we mean that it is bad regardless of time and place to which it could be referred. The pattern as well as the colour scheme may be all wrong without being original enough to deserve any attention, the texture may be dull or exaggerated, and the yarns unsuitable.

On the other hand the craftsman, should this be pointed out to him, may be quite willing to learn to do better. But he may be simply unable to follow one of the methods described so far, because of the time involved.

The obvious solution of our problem would be to learn at least some designing by means which would not require long years of study. Are such means available?

In our opinion they are not. But ...

There are craftsmen, artists, authors, and teachers who have different convictions. And we feel that it is our duty to report, regardless of our personal bias, such modern methods of designing which claim that by following certain sets of rules one can reach a comparatively higher level of skill in designing. This will not change a layman into an artist, but will at least make him avoid the worst blunders, the most common pitfalls.

The following articles should interest teachers first of all. Then the craftsmen unsure of their designing, and finally those weavers who do not feel any need of help in making their projects, but would not mind comparing their methods with so called "objective" standards.

We shall start with colour, because the problem of colour is the easiest one to be formulated in nearly mathematical terms, and because it concerns most of us. In the second article we shall speak about pattern, and in the third - about texture.

Colour is defined by its three components: Hue, Value, and Chroma (or Intensity, or Saturation).

Hue is the position of the colour in the rainbow (or solar spectrum), and for our purposes we shall distinguish 10 hues: Red (R), Yellow Red (YR), Yellow (Y), Green Yellow (GY), Green (G), Blue Green (BG), Blue (B), Purple Blue (PB), Purple (P), and Red Purple (RP).

Value is the lightness or darkness of a colour. We shall have also 10 values, but the darkest is always black, and the lightest - always white. In practice a colour may have values only from 2 to 8.

Chroma means the purity of the colour. The higher the number - the purer the colour. Thus chroma 0 means that there is no colour, just gray. Chroma No.1 - a trace of colour, but mostly gray. No.2 - more colour, less gray. And so on, until we reach chroma 6, 8, 10, 12, or even 14. In practice it is unavoidable to have the colour mixed with some gray, and the highest chroma available depends on what sort of yarn, and what kind of dye was used.

A complete description of a colour must contain all these three factors, and it has always one or two letters followed by two numbers, e.g.: R 4/8. The letter or letters mean Hue; the first number - value; the second number - chroma. Therefore R 4/8 means Red, value 4, chroma 8. It is a sort of Dull Red. But we can not depend on such descriptions as "dull red", or "pale green", or "burned orange", or "navy blue". They mean a different thing with different manufacturers, and can give only a very approximate idea of the actual colour.

Therefore, before we can go any further, we must have sample cards of colours. As far as we know the only readily available and not too expensive samples are made by Munsell Color Co., Baltimore, Md. A so called "student set" of 10 hues (about 250 colours in all) may be had for about \$ 5. The samples are not mounted, but they are easy to assemble on sample cards supplied with the set.

There are certain rules which govern the selection of colours for each project. We shall not describe here the theory behind these rules. However, we advise the reader to get acquainted with a book by Maitland Graves "The Art of Color and Design". The method of selection described here is based on the theory of Graves and Munsell, but adapted to the requirements of a handweaver.

We suppose that we have 4 colours in our project. We shall explain later what happens when the number of colours is larger or smaller. The first rule is that the spaces taken by our colours should be widely different. The colour areas do not need to form any definite sequence however.

We shall call our colours: A, D, W, and Z. These letters were adopted simply because two of them come from the beginning and two from the end of the alphabet, and they indicate that we have two pairs of similar colours, but that there is a marked difference between the two pairs. Incidentally it helps to remember that D is the Dominant colour (it occupies the largest space). W is the next in size, and if D is light - W is dark, and vice versa. "A" means Accent and should take much smaller space than either D or W. If D is light A is still lighter. If D is dark, A is still darker. Finally Z has the smallest area of all and follows W in the same way as A follows D. In other words A is the lightest, then comes D, W, and Z which is the darkest. Or alternatively A is the darkest, then we have D, W, and Z - which is then the lightest. This must be remembered when making selection of Hues.

In the table I are given 80 different combinations of Hue. The first 20 will produce very contrasting effect (major), the next 20 - a medium one (moderate), and the last 40 - very little contrast (minor).

Table I

A -	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP
D -	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P
W -	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG
Z -	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G
A -	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP
D -	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P
W -	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B
Z -	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG
A -	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP
D -	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R
W -	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y
Z -	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y
A -	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y
D -	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y
W -	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R
Z -	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP

Which of the 80 combinations of colours we shall adopt, depends entirely on the project we are weaving. In other words we have a free choice. When making the selection we must remember that the most important colour is D. Thus for instance if we intend to have a prevailing effect of red we have the following combinations in the table I to choose from: RP,R,GY,G; YR,R,PB,B; RP,R,Y,GY; YR,R,P,PB; R,R,Y,GY; RP,R,Y,Y; YR,R,P,P; and R,R,P,PB.

We must not worry at this stage about the apparent incongruity of our colour schemes. So far we have only the Hues, but we are not going to use them in their purest form. Let us suppose that we have selected from the above list the combination: RP, R, Y, GY. The dominant colour is Red, but as we shall see later it won't be pure red. The Accent (A) will be red-purple of a different Value than the Red. It will be darker if the Red is dark, and lighter, if the Red is light. As a contrasting colour we have Yellow, with another accent in Green Yellow.

To find the Values of our 4 colours we shall use table II.

Table II.

A -	9	8	7	6	5	9	8	7	6	9	8	7	9	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	1
D -	8	7	6	5	4	7	6	5	4	7	6	5	7	6	7	2	3	4	5	6	3	4	5	6	3	4	5	3	4	3
W -	6	5	4	3	2	5	4	3	2	4	3	2	4	3	4	4	5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	6	7	6
Z -	5	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	3	2	1	2	1	1	5	6	7	8	9	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	8	9	9
	minor			moderate			major			minor			moderate			major														
	light dominant colour						dark dominant colour																							

Here we have a choice of 30 values combinations. First of all we must decide whether the dominant colour is to be darker or lighter than W. Then whether we intend to have strong contrasts in value (major), moderate, or weak (minor). Table II is divided accordingly into 6 groups. Each group has several combinations of values. For instance in the same group we can have all colours dark (1,2,4,5), or all colours light (5,6,8,9). When making the choice of values we must remember that No.1 value means always black, and No.9 - white. Thus if we select the combination: 1369 (the last one), we shall have black instead of RP, and white instead of GY. This is of course permissible provided that we realise what happens.

Let us continue with our example. We have decided on the combination of colours: RP, R, Y, GY with red dominant. Our next step is to decide whether we want this dominant to be dark or light (compared with W). If it is dark, then we must look for the values to the right of table II. If we like rather weak contrasts without either white or black then we have the following choice: 2356, 3467, and 4578. Let us take the group: 3,4,6,7. Then our colour scheme looks so far as follows: RP 3; R 4; Y 6; GY 7.

The last step is to find the Chroma of these four colours. We shall find them in table III.

The first two columns from the left have very weak chromas, The second two - moderate chromas, and the last two - very strong chromas. The chroma number for the dominant colour is the highest possible, but we can always use a smaller number. For

Table III.

A -	4	6	8	10	12	14
D -	2	2	4	6	8	10
W -	2	4	6	8	10	12
Z -	2	4	6	8	10	12

that matter we can go down to zero, which means that any dominant colour can be replaced by gray of the same value.

To finish with our example we shall select the fourth column from the left as our chromas. Now the complete colour scheme will be: RP 3/10; R 4/6; Y 6/8; GY 7/8. To describe the same colours in other terms would be a very difficult proposition. For instance RP 3/10 in textiles alone has four different names (harvard, crimson magenta, ruby), and the same terms are used to describe several other colours not always closely related. Our R 4/6 has not less than 150 different names; Y 6/8 - only fifteen; and GY 7/8 - about fifty.

This last operation seems to be extremely simple, but it is not. Because when we have selected the desired chromas we discover

only too often that one or more of the four colours does not exist at all - or at least that we can not find it in our samples. In our example we were lucky to select such hues, values and chromas, as to have a colour scheme which can be used in practice. But this is not always the case. Most colours have a poor selection of chromas for both very dark and very light values, with the exception of blue and yellow where the highest chromas correspond respectively to the darkest and the lightest values.

Let us take another example. From table I we choose the following combination of hues: YR, R, PB, B. From the second table: 8, 6, 3, 2 for the values, and from the third table: 12, 8, 10, 10 as chromas. The resulting colour scheme is: YR 8/12; R 6/8; PB 3/10; B 2/10. Of these four colours two are impossible: YR at value 8 cannot have higher chroma than 4, and B at value 2 reaches only chroma 2.

What can we do in such a case? Strictly speaking we should reject this particular scheme and try another, but there are easier ways. First we can keep the original combination of hues, and values and try other combinations of chromas. If this also does not work, we can change the values, not at random, but by selecting another combination from table II. This will work although it may mean quite a lot of work. There is never any need to change the Hues.

Another way consists on taking the nearest chroma found in the sample cards, provided that the discrepancy is not too great. In our second example we would have YR 8/4 instead of YR 8/12, and B 2/2 instead of B 2/10. Both are too far from the original scheme. Even changing the chromas according to table III would not really help because the only combination which would fit (4,2,2,2) would be rather dull. But if we try a less contrasting plan of values, e.g.: 7,6,4,3, and also a little less contrasting selection of chromas, as for instance: 8,4,6,6 - then the colour scheme becomes practical: YR 7/8, R 6/4, PB 4/6, B 3/6.

So far we have been speaking about 4 colours. If we do not want more than three, then we simply eliminate Z from any colour scheme. If on the contrary we are going to use more than four, we can subdivide any of the basic four in the following way: 1-st: the area taken by the two new colours should be equal to the area of the basic colour; 2-nd: both should be of the same hue, but one of a lower value and chroma, and the other of a higher value and chroma. For instance in our last example we can replace R 6/4 by R 7/6 and R 5/2; or PB 4/6 by PB 5/8 and PB 3/4. There are also other ways: one colour of higher chroma and lower value, and the other of lower chroma and higher value, etc. This however becomes a little too complicated.

We must also remember that we can always change D into gray of the same value, and that we can replace either A or Z, or both by white and/or black by selecting very contrasting values from table II. Finally we can make the whole project in one hue (monochromatic) with different values and chromas taken from tables II and III.
