PATTERNS
IN VELVET RUGS

The simplest pattern in velvet is made by mixing several colours in pile warp (compare the article about Velvet in MW 34). This will produce stripes parallel to the warp. For instance 8 warp ends in one colour will make a stripe 1 inch wide. Unfortunately stripes in warp are very unsatisfactory as pattern go. About the only application of this technique are cushions (fig.1). The length of the cushion is made from the width of the woven fabric - thus the stripes go across the cushion and not parallel to its long sides.
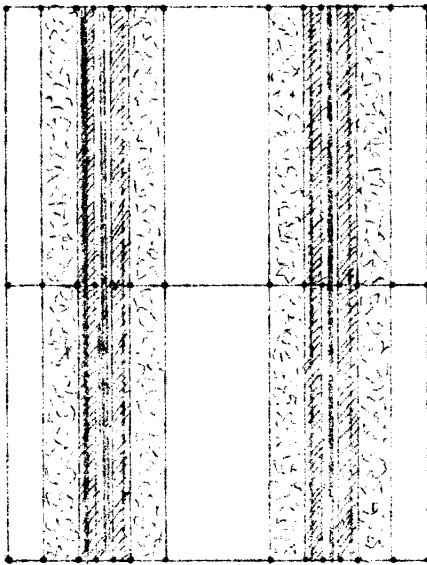
As an example we can make a warp 24" wide for cushions about 15" by 20". This means 192 warp ends in the pile warp. The warping plan may be as follows:

20 white, 12 grey, 4 black, 1 white, 2 black, 1 white, 4 black, 1 white, 2 black, 1 white, 4 black, 8 grey, 4 black, 1 white, 2 black, 1 white, 4 black 12, grey, 40 white, 12 grey, 4 black, 1 white, 2 black, 1 white, 4 black, 8 grey, 4 black, 1 white, 2 black, 1 white, 4 black, 12 grey, 20 white. The ground warp and binder should be grey.

Fig.1

Two-block patterns have more possibilities. But first of all: what do we mean by "block" in velvet? Since one block as in the former example can have as many stripes and colours as desired, then the meaning of a "block" is here not the same as in other pattern weaves. Block in velvet is a combination of colours in one horizontal line, i.e. running across the fabric. If we have two such combinations we have two blocks. But the two blocks are completely independent from each other. One can be all red, and the other all white (this would produce stripes parallel to the weft), or one can have two colours, when the other will have five. The sequence of colours may be also chosen at will.

The profile for velvet looks as in fig.2, where "m" is for instance black, "-" - grey, and "." white. Below the profile we have the draw-down, or simply the pattern of the rug.

If we rather like the traditional patterns we can copy any of the two-block patterns for Summer-&-Winter, damask, or double weave. The black squares in the profile represent one colour, and the empty spaces - another.

The profile can be made in the following way: one square of the graph paper means one inch in the width of warp, or 4 ends in one block plus 4 ends in the second block. Thus if we intend to make
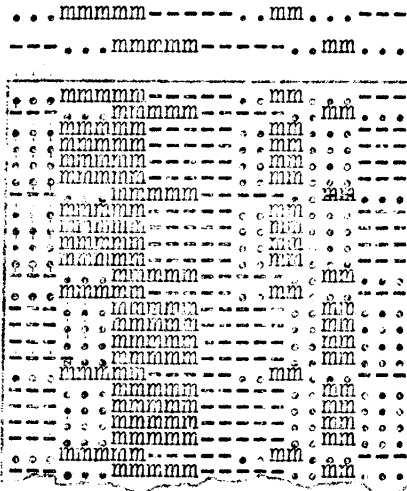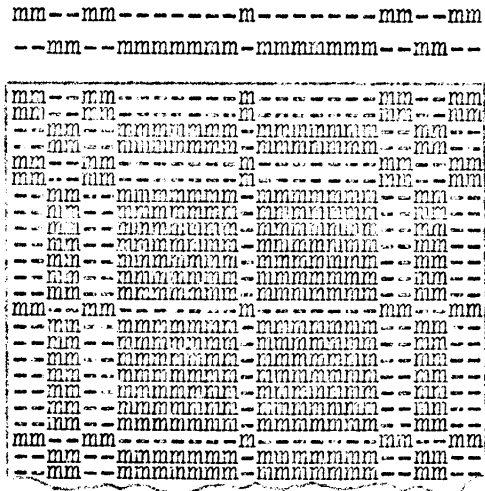

Fig.2

Fig.3

a rug 27 inches wide, we mark off on the paper 27 squares in one line, fill in the colours, and then right under the first line we mark another, and also fill the colours, as in fig.3 for instance.
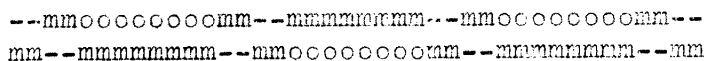
This means of course that we shall have two warps: one corresponding to the upper line of the profile, and a second one corresponding to the lower line. Each will have 27 x 4 or 108 ends. Both will have the same length if both blocks are used at the same rate, but this is seldom the case. Otherwise we must make first a complete draw-down of the pattern and figure out how many squares of each block we have in the vertical direction. For instance if we made a complete draft of the pattern in fig.3 for a rug 27" by 35", block No.2 (upper line) would be used 10 times (or 10 squares), when the lower line (block No.1) takes 25 squares. Thus the warp for the first block will be 2½ times longer than the warp for the second block.

Now, how long are both warps? This depends on the length of the pile, and on the number of the rows of pile per inch. If we have a pile ½" long (or one inch per loop before cutting), and 6 rows per inch, then we need 6 times 1 inch, or 6 inches plus about 1 inch for stitching the pile to the ground, or 7 inches in all. Therefore the warp for the 1-st block will be 25 times 7", or 175" (about 5 yds.) for each rug plus wastage. The warp for the second block will be only 10 times 7 or 70", or about 2 yds plus wastage. It is rather unlikely that we would make only one small rug with such an elaborate set up. Let us suppose that we shall make 5 rugs. Then the length of the warp for bl.No.1 is 5 x 5 plus 1 yd (wastage) or 26 yards in all, and the warp for the bl.No.2 is 2 x 5 + 1 or 11 yards. The ground warp will be still only about 6 yds (5 x 1 + 1).

The threading is made by alternating one end of one warp with one end of the other warp. All warp ends from the warp No.1 are threaded through the frame No.1, and all ends of the warp No.2 - through the frame No.2. The tie-up as in fig.5. Treadles 3 and 4 weave the ground; treadle 1 - block No.1, and treadle 2 - block No.2.

PRACTICAL PROJECT. A light rug 40" by 64" with a ½" pile in wool. Profile as in fig.4: "-" - white, "o" - beige, "m" - dark brown.

Fig.4

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--mmooooooooomm--mmmmmmmmm---mmooooooooomm--
mm--mmmmmmmmm--mmooooooooomm--mmmmmmmmm--mm
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Ground warp: 480 ends of 8/2 cotton, beige, or 20/2 linen, natural. Length - 5 yds.

1-st pile warp: 8 white, 8 brown, 32 beige, 8 brown, 8 white, 32 brown, 8 white, 8 brown, 32 beige, 8 brown, 8 white.

2-nd pile warp: 8 brown, 8 white, 32 brown, 8 white, 8 brown, 32 beige, 8 brown, 8 white, 32 brown, 8 white, 8 brown.

Both pile warps in heavy two or three ply wool (about 800 yds/lb). Length 14 yds.

We beam and thread first the ground warp, leaving empty heddles for the pile warp as in the threading draft, fig.5:
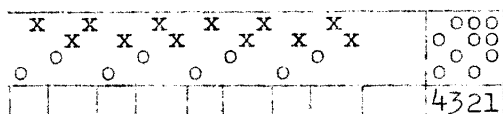

Fig.5

Then we make the first pile warp and beam it on the lower roller (MW 34, fig.3 page 8). Thread the warp through frame 1. Finally we make the second pile warp, beam it on the upper roller, and thread through frame 2. Then we sley all three warps together, following the sleying directions in fig.5, and tie them in.

We now adjust the tension of the rollers, and start weaving: first plain ground: 3,4. The weft is the same as the ground warp. Then we must experiment for a while with the pile to establish the proper texture. We try for instance: 2 (velvet rod),3,4. Then 1,3,4, 3,4. Then 2,3,4,3,4,3,4. Whenever treadles 1 or 2 are used, insert velvet rods. Quite a few inches of each sample should be made, cut, and examined, until we find the best treadling.

Weaving: 2" of block 1, 2" of block 2, 8" of 1, 2" of 2, 2" of 1, 8" of 2, 2" of 1, 2" of 2, 8" of 1, 2" of 2, 2" of 1, 8" of 2, 2" of 1, 2" of 2, 8" of 1, 2" of 2, 2" of 1.

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We must admit that this is not a venture for beginners. The number of factors involved is to high to give "easy-to-follow" instructions. But the result is worth the trouble, and so is the satisfaction of reaching just about the limit of possibilities with a 4-frame loom.

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