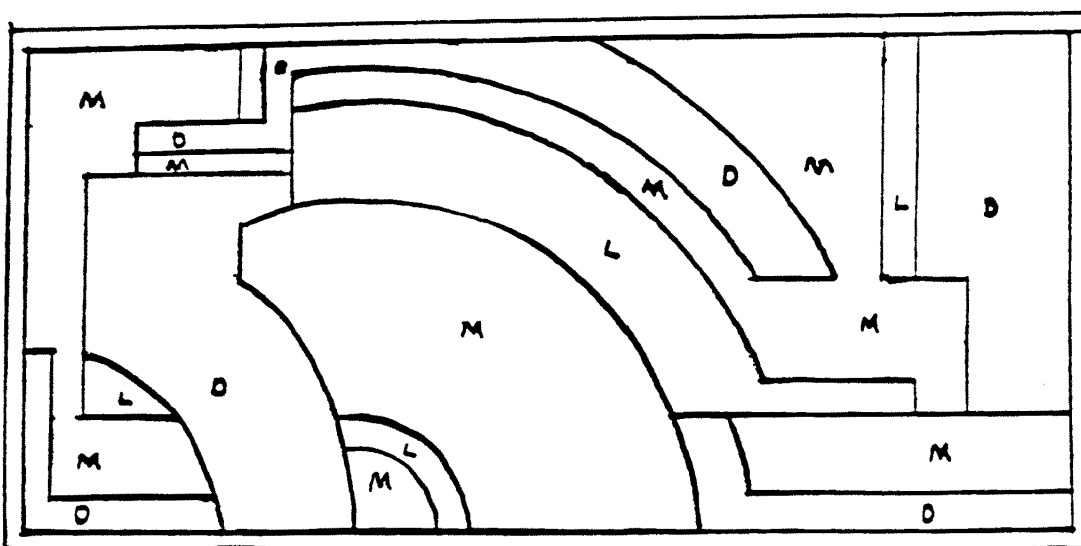


Handweaving News

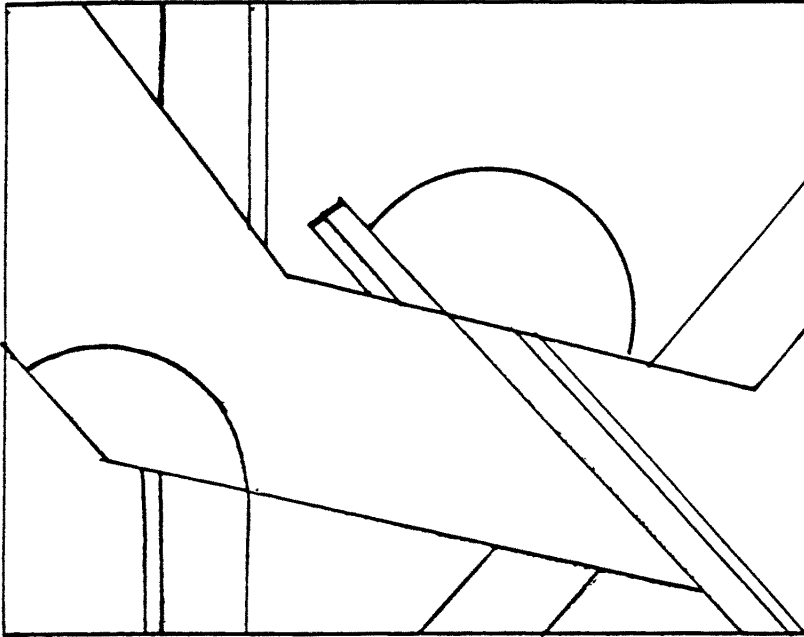


Importance of Texture in Handweaving Design.

Ever since January of 1934, the January issue of the News has discussed in some form the matter of designing for Handweaving. As there are many of you who are new subscribers, perhaps it might be well to review as briefly as possible the content of these issues. In January 1934 a "Method of Designing Stripes, Borders, and Plaids" was given, and is I think one of the fundamental things every weaver should know. This is a simple procedure which anyone can carry out, and answers the question most often asked, especially by beginners, "of how long shall I make this piece of weaving", meaning of course the proportion of width to length. It is based on the principles of dynamic symmetry with all of the complicated mathematics left out. The January 1935 News contains an important outline of "A Basis of Criticism for Works of Applied Design." And this outline is explained, and an attempt is made to explain just how such a criticism can be used in handweaving. It gives a sound foundation for forming a judgment, more than just saying that "this is a poor piece of weaving," with relation to its design and structure as a whole. In January 1936 a simple method of Designing with the Square as a Unit was given, as well as a list of a few important books on design which have been helpful on this subject. Simple well designed squares can be carried out by beginners with much success, and inspire confidence. Also it has always seemed to me that this type of designing for handweaving most naturally fits the use of the weaving materials, and the fact that wefts cross the warps at right angles. January 1937 contains an explanation of free and loom controlled pattern design, and a method of using cut paper for designing free pattern design, as well as an entirely new form of making loom controlled patterns designed by Mrs. Florence Bratten. And in January 1938 further notes on designing with particular reference to free weaving techniques etc.

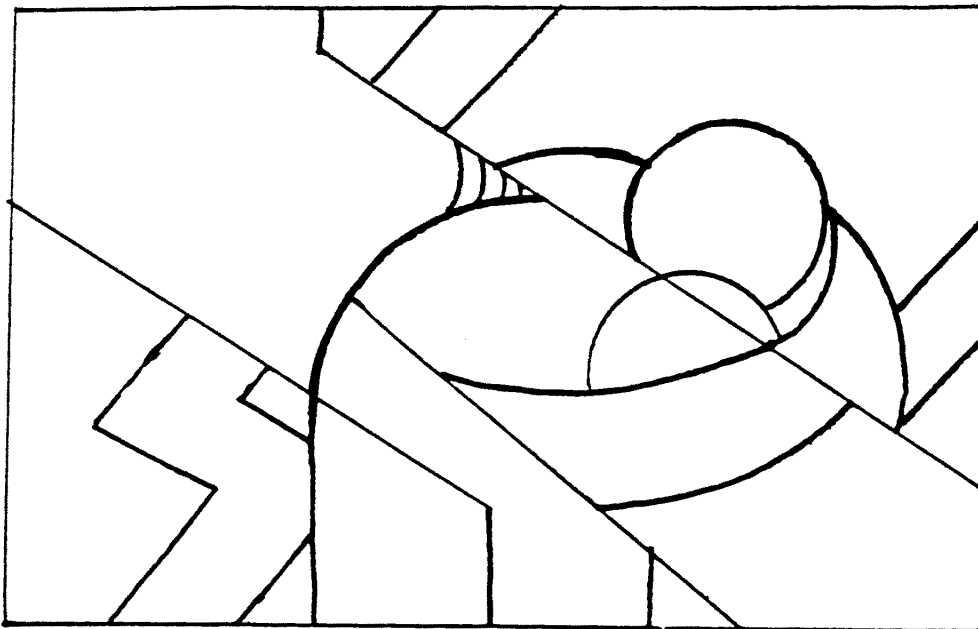
Threads are the essential structure of all woven textiles. With these on our looms we build up fabrics of different textures according to the kind of thread we use, how it is set in the loom, and what weaving technique is employed. The quality of this fabric may be thick or thin, soft and pliable or hard and board-like, dull or shiny, rough or smooth. Textures are an important part of modern textiles and offer a wide field for individual experimenting and designing of new ways of using threads on our looms. It has occurred to me many times that most weavers have not been interested enough to work with the possibilities in different kinds of threads. If they have found one type which they like particularly, they stick to that type.

There are a good many ways in which the designs on this page may be used to develop interesting unusual textures. A very logical procedure in texture experiments is to begin by making a piece of simple stripes of different kinds of yarns, twine, and threads etc. Have the stripes of different widths and of different yarns combined coarse against fine, rough against smooth etc. For instance make a heavy stripe with heavy rug chenille or rug wool, a narrow stripe of fine mercerized cotton or silk, some raphia, cellophane, carpet warp, metal thread of some sort, candlewick cotton, art silk, linen thread, silk boucle, finely cut corn husks, finely cut silk stocking material, etc. There is no better way to acquaint students with different kinds of threads and yarns than this, and it is simple and easy to do, and better suited for the person who is just beginning to weave than to take too complicated a design for the first attempt.



The next step is to take one very simple design or motif, and develop it in several different techniques, one after the other on the order of a sampler.

For instance, take such a simple motif as a square or rectangle and combine it with a triangle or a slight curve. Then weave this first in laid-in technique using three different kinds of threads or yarns. Then weave the same design in embroidery weave in some form. There are endless ways of making a most interesting sampler in this fashion, and much may be learned from such an experiment in making of weaving textures.



Some people like best to work with very coarse threads and make coarse textures, while others prefer fine threads set close in the reed. Different weaving techniques also impose certain limitations on both the kind of thread used, as well as the design it is possible to use.

Several abstract designs are given this month designed by beginning students. These may be used for a number of different things, but the main object in presenting them here is the hope that they may be used for texture experiments with different kinds of threads. The design at the top of Page 1 could be used for a knotted rug using the Ghiordes knot in several colors of heavy rug wool. The letters L, M, and D, indicate light, middle, and dark for colors. Trace off these designs, better still make some of your own, and enlarge them. There are two convenient ways of doing this. One is to trace the design on to cross section paper with carbon paper and then follow the outline as near as is possible on the squared paper. This can then be planned according to the number of warp threads to be used. Or the design may be divided up into small squares, and an equal number of squares be drawn on a large size sheet of paper the actual size the design is to be woven, and then lines drawn in the squares on the large sheet just as they are on the small original design. In this way it is possible to secure the same proportions in the enlarged design as in the small one.

Suggested experiments in textures. Choose a design, preferably a simple abstract one. Decide what technique is to be employed and what threads are to be used both for warp and weft. For our first experiment, we will use the design on Page 1 enlarged to about 18" or 20". Set carpet warp or knitting cotton about eight or ten threads to the inch in the loom. We will use the laid-in technique entirely. Now comes the choice of threads. To eliminate the color problem entirely, it is easy to have all of our threads white, natural, or just off the white and play up the texture just by using different kinds of threads next to each other, for the different areas of the design. For instance in this design one can use, heavy cotton rug chenille, rug wool, Rayon art silk, linen, silk noils yarn, and fine and coarse mercerized cottons. Occasionally it probably will be necessary to put in a few extra shots where a fine thread meets a heavy one in the design in order to fill the space required, but this may be adapted as the weaving progresses.

A second experiment which would be entirely different in effect, would be to create different textures by using the same kind of thread throughout, but employ a number of different weaving techniques to carry out the design areas. For instance, use laid-in technique, tufting, embroidery weave, Spanish weave and possibly others in such a way as to have different techniques accent the space divisions of the design. Some of the design lines might have to be changed slightly as the weaving progressed according to the type of technique employed. There are a great many possibilities in this sort of weaving and a field in which practically nothing is being done by handweavers. And yet it seems to me, it is one of the most logical phases of handweaving because it depends entirely on the use of threads and techniques for its texture effect. This problem can be a very challenging one even for the most advanced weaver, particularly if the color scheme is also introduced.

Some of you may not care for the abstract designs presented here. And if you do not, better still make up your own designs, but keep them simple. Right here would seem to be a good place to emphasize the importance of keeping woven design on the abstract rather than the realistic or naturalistic side. Imitating painting techniques with threads is considered by the best authorities very poor functional design in weaving. We have cameras to photograph exactly the house we live in, we do not need to preserve it in threads. Weaving is formed by the crossing of threads at right angles to each other, and is a limitation of technique which should always be considered if our handweaving is to be truly good functional design. Texture is an inherent part of woven fabric and a natural result of the use of materials and weaving techniques. Let us as handweavers pay more attention to texture, to the materials with which we work, and create with them to see what they will do for us on our looms. We can be much freer with them on our hand looms than the power looms can possibly be. And we can create fabrics which are interesting and unusual solely for their textures.