

HANDWEAVING

NEWS

Importance of Texture in Handweaving.

Threads are the essential structure of all woven textiles. By texture we mean the "feel" of a fabric. Is it soft, smooth, fine, coarse, rough, etc. The present tendency in textile designing places much emphasis on texture interest rather than on pattern. As handweavers, how can we build up original textures in the fabrics we weave on our looms? There are a number of ways which I shall try to point out.

First, texture can be achieved through variations of loom controlled techniques such as twills, simple over-shot pattern, summer and winter technique, crackle weave etc, but keeping these always subordinate to textural effect desired.

Secondly, texture can be obtained by the use of the free-weaving techniques, such as laid-in, spanish weave, tapestry in its varied forms, lace weaves etc. But by far, the most important fact in all of this is, what kind and sizes of threads and yarns are to be used. Textures gained through the use of very simple pattern, such as twill, or even just plain weave tabby, can be exciting, interesting, and offer a large opportunity for the development of new and different textiles for modern uses. And it has occurred to me many times that many weavers do not realize the great possibilities which lie in just the use of different kinds and sizes of the threads with which they weave. It is my firm conviction that if handweaving is to follow the present modern emphasis on simplicity of pattern, weavers must stop using recipes and traditional patterns, and go back to the real elements, threads, of which cloth is constructed. Those of you who have been subscribers for Handweaving News over a period of years will note how very often in presenting a weaving technique or a pattern, the emphasis has been not on the governing of the specific design presented, but on the development of the structure by which it was achieved. It has always been my firm belief that the teaching of fundamental principles is much more important than running around collecting and using someone else's recipes. The use to which a fabric is to be put sets up certain requirements as to the kind of thread which can be used, and how close to set it in the reed. For instance material woven for upholstery, needs to fill certain definite uses different from those of hats or bags.

Now just how are some of the ways we can use threads of different kinds and sizes. First let us consider warps. In these days with so many restrictions on threads, and the difficulty of obtaining them, many people write me that they do not know how they are going to weave at all, they cannot get enough of anything. Have you ever tried to use up all your odds and ends of threads in a warp? It can be done, and most effectively if you are not afraid to use some experimenting and also ingenuity, some coarse and some fine threads. Coarse threads can be sleyed one thread in a dent, and fine threads several in a dent, also dents can be skipped. In doing this there are a few principles which it is best to follow. Colors can be mixed but try for either a cool or warm effect, with perhaps just an occasional accent of bright color. Or if all the warp is of bright colors, use a neutral color for all of the weft shots. To avoid a warp striped effect, separate the different kinds or colors of thread as it is being sleyed by using other yarn in between. For instance in a recent warp, there were only twenty threads of one kind and color. These were sleyed at intervals in the reed so as to about equally divide them up according to the width, then other threads were put in between in the same way. With combinations of different threads in the warp, do not ever mix wool with cotton, or wool with linen, unless you use another warp beam for the wool warps. Wool threads stretch more than cotton or linen.

Variations of Weft Yarns. There are many kinds of threads and yarns which can be used as weft yarns. These include of course cotton, rayon, wool; linen if you have some on hand, or combinations of these. I recently obtained some hat straw, variegated cellophane, nylon of rough texture, smooth and crinkly rayons etc. Then there are the many new synthetic threads, which while they are not yet available, will be as soon as the needs for the armed forces are met and peace is assured. Watch for such things as aralac, saran, the vinyon and vinvon E and nylons, as well as new metal threads of aluminum and glass. They will all be important. Right now, look into the uses which can be made of such things as pine needles, raffia, corn shucks and cat-tails for rough textures. Finely cut percales or wool plaid materials can be most effective. Use combinations of several fine threads to make one coarse weft. All of such materials can be used as wefts on the Hearthside loom or on a floor loom. It is most important to use imagination, ingenuity, and not be afraid to try out and experiment with materials on the loom until the texture and color effect desired is created. Now is a very good time to use what you have and make it do.

As a help to show what can be done with threads in this way, I will give some of the texture experiments which some of my students at Wayne University have woven, and which found a place in the recent exhibit at the Art Institute in Detroit.

1. On the Hearthside Loom. Materials for Hats and Bags. Warp coarse beige nylon, threaded in slits, fine smooth grey rayon in holes of the heddle. Weft alternate shots of shiny hat straw cream color and bright green novelty rayon with a gold thread in it.

2. Same warp. 9 shots grey raffia, 9 shots of rose raffia, 9 shots of dark blue raffia. Repeat in same order throughout for required length.

3. Same warp. one shot grey raffia, one shot of cream color hat straw, one shot of lime yellow two ply wool yarn. Repeat for length desired in same order.

4. Black carpet warp. One shot coarse rayon crochet cord; such as is used for crocheted bags, 1 shot of coarse black rayon boucle; repeat for required length.

5. Dark wine colored carpet warp. Wefts, 2 shots of dark wine color mercerized cotton No.5, 1 shot dark red violet Germantown yarn, 2 shots DR mer.cotton No.5, 1 shot dark red raffia, 2 shots DR mer.cotton, 1 shot red yarn, 2 mer.cotton, 1 shot red raffia, 2 shots mer. cotton, 1 shot red raffia, 2 shots red mer.cotton, 1 shot red raffia. Repeat from beginning over and over for length desired.

6. Warp same as 5. Weft 3 threads of a fine dark greyish red silk boucle', one shot; 1 shot dark blue raffia, one of the silk, 1 blue violet Germantown yarn, one of the silk, one raffia blue, 1 silk, one red violet Germantown yarn, one shot of the silk, one shot dark blue violet yarn. Repeat from beginning over and over for the required length.

7. Black warp No.20/2 cotton set 20 to the inch in the reed woven on a four harness loom. Weft, weave $\frac{1}{2}$ " black mer.cotton No.10, $\frac{1}{4}$ " black rayon boucle', $\frac{1}{2}$ " mer.cotton black, 1 shot copper metal thread, 1 shot narrow black leather lacing, 1 shot copper, 4 shots black mer.cotton, 1 shot copper, 1 shot leather, 1 shot copper, 4 shots black mer.cotton, 1 copper, 1 leather, 1 copper. Repeat from beginning for length desired. This is a very handsome piece to be used for a large black bag.

8. Same warp as No.7. Weft one shot mer cotton black No.5, 1 shot leather lacing black, 2 shots shiny black hat straw. Repeat for length desired. This leather lacing is the same as that used for lacing together leather for hand made leather purses etc.

9. Same warp as No.7. Weft fine wool plaid material cut $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide. This plaid had white, soft blue, and red brown in it, and was most attractive when woven. Could well be used for upholstery or chair seat material.

These weavings may sound very simple to do and they are, but the effects are excellent as far as texture is concerned. And those of you who wish to do interesting materials, will I hope be stimulated by these, and try some for your own use. Furthermore such work is very difficult to copy exactly, if you wish to do original weavings.

As this sort of weaving is rather difficult to visualize, it occurs to me that perhaps some of you might be interested in having an Exhibit made up entirely of some of these textures. Let me know if this would be of interest to you.