

THE · BULLETIN · OF  
THE · NEEDLE · AND · BOBBIN  
CLUB

VOLUME · 54 · NUMBERS · 1 & 2

1971

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## FRENCH TAPESTRY TODAY

BY

MADELEINE JARRY

IN 1923, Mme Cuttoli started her campaign to revive the art of tapestry by having the works of such painters as Rouault, Picasso, Braque, and Miro woven at Aubusson. Lurçat also provided a cartoon, and was thus involved in the enterprise from its inception. He can indeed be said to have devoted his life to the rebirth of tapestry; the brilliant renaissance of this art after the second World War in France and, in fact, the whole world, was certainly due to this great artist. But the style of tapestry has undergone a marked change since the general development initiated by Lurçat; evolution has continued apace and the works produced ten years ago are now outgrown and seem almost old-fashioned. What has been woven in the last few years at the Gobelins, at Beauvais, and at Aubusson?<sup>1</sup> What trends are apparent in French tapestry today?

*The Contemporaneity of Lurçat, Le Corbusier, and Adam.*

A remarkable fact must first be pointed out: three great artists now deceased, Lurçat, Le Corbusier, and Adam, are still of major importance. Nothing can be said or written about contemporary tapestry without mentioning the continuing success of their woven designs.

When Jean Lurçat died at Saint Paul de Vence in 1966, the renaissance of tapestry was an accomplished fact. His magnificent *Song of the World* (*Tenture du Chant du Monde*), exhibited in the Hospice Saint Jean at Angers, not far from the famous fourteenth-century *Apocalypse*, dominates the art of tapestry today. The school of cartoon-painters influenced by him (Picart le Doux, Saint Saëns, Dom Robert, and others) continues to flourish.

Another important body of work by a cartoon-painter is that produced by Le Corbusier. Between the last war and his death in 1965, the great architect designed many tapestries, which he called "traveler's murals" (*le Mural du Nomade*). Several of these tapestries were woven at Beauvais in 1967 and 1968, including the *Woman and the Farrier* (*la Femme et le Maréchal*-

*Ferrant*) (Pl. 1) and the *Tripotent Bull (le Taureau trivalent)*. The figures are not modeled, as only pure tones are used; the artist has given the major rôle to the outlines.

Henri Georges Adam, sculptor, engraver, and cartoon-painter, who died in 1967, still holds an outstanding position in the world of tapestries. His hangings are woven with black and white wools only; grays are produced by alternating the two threads in varying proportions. A dozen different values can be obtained with this "thread by thread" (*fil à fil*) technique. Among Adam's last creations are *Meridian (Méri dien)*, woven at Beauvais in 1966 and again in 1967, and three hangings for a triptych called *Mont Saint Michel*, made at the Gobelins in 1967. (Pl. 2)

#### *Technical Research*

Enormous vitality characterizes contemporary tapestry; innumerable artists have been intrigued by the temptation of seeing their ideas woven on the tapestry-loom. Their tapestries are the result of joint research on the part of the artist and of the technician, the weaver. The compositions of Vasarely form a special category (Pl. 3). His very individual art gives an illusion of actual movement. This artist's study of optical science has enabled him to produce mechanical, almost machine-made pseudo-plastic forms. The pure colors that he prefers to mixed threads are not related to any three-dimensional effects, but merely follow the drawing rigorously. Sharp contours and pure tones are also characteristic of the artists belonging to the Galerie Denise René group: Magnelli, Dewasne, Deyrolle, Arp, Mortensen, Sonia Delaunay. Here one finds a magnificent extension of abstract art, but uncomplicated weaving, since only geometrical forms are involved, with few colors, though brilliant and strongly contrasted.

It is, however, true that at the present moment both artists and weavers have become primarily concerned with experiments in the actual weaving process. Some countries, such as Poland and Yugoslavia, have produced daring creations, tapestries conceived as functions of their materials, such as wools and threads of other fibers, differing greatly in thickness. The artists, often women, weave their projects themselves; they avoid an even surface, so that the work acquires actual relief. While on this subject, the French experiments in technique carried out in the Saint Cyr workshop near Melun should be mentioned. This center is directed by the young artist-weaver, Daquin, who learned the craft in the National Manufactories. He uses all the resources of weaving, but can combine them, even in a single work, with other techniques. A tapestry can become a structured object, evoking a spatial form; one of his creations is indeed called *Mospalis*, from *Mo* (mobile) and *spalis* (space).

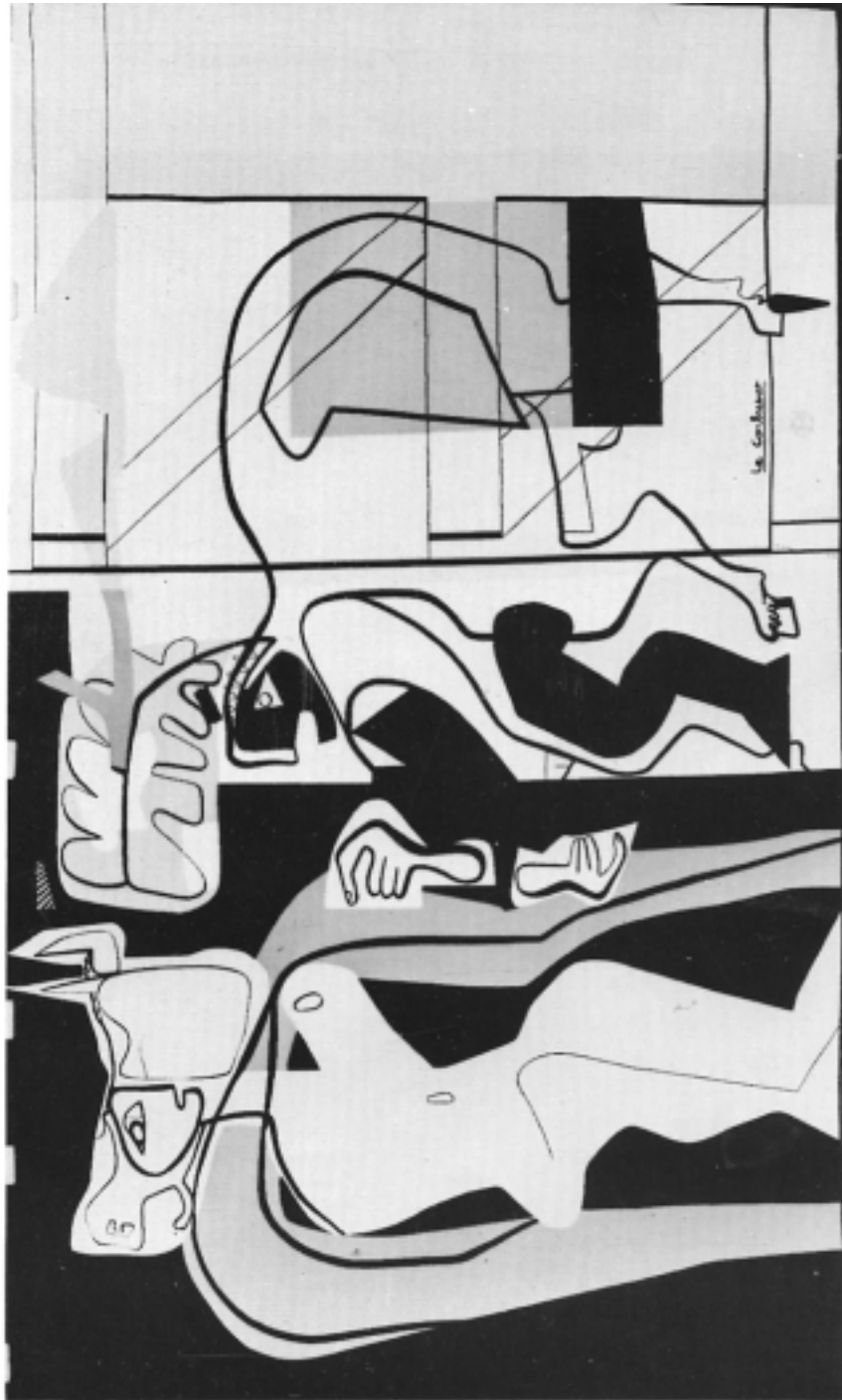


Plate 1. The Woman and the Farrier (*La Femme et le Maréchal-Ferrant*),  
Beauvais tapestry after Le Corbusier, 1967. 2.17 m. x 3.62 m.



Plate 2. Mont St. Michel.  
Gobelins tapestry after Georges Henri Adam, 1965. 4.02 m. x 5.65 m.

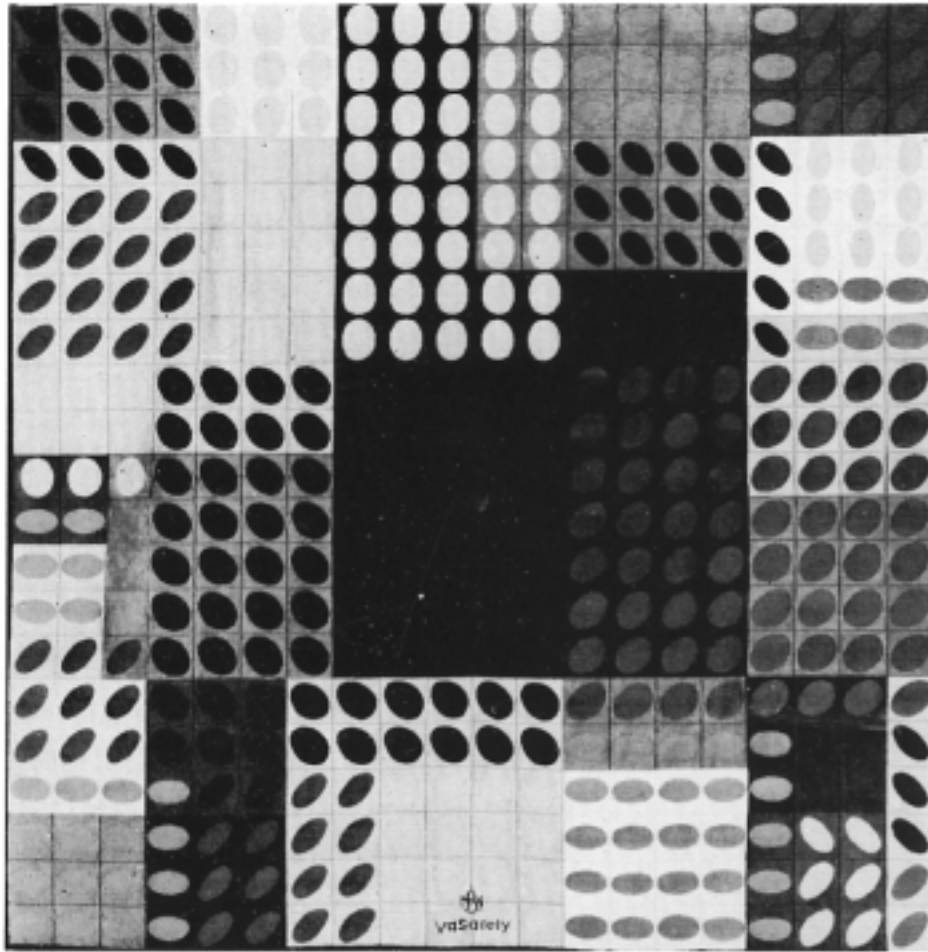


Plate 3. Heckla.

Beauvais tapestry after Vasarely, third weaving. 2.03 m. x 1.97 m.

Nevertheless, tapestry has remained in France and Belgium basically “fine weaving” (*beau tissage*), not a peasant craft, carried out to perfection by professionally expert weavers. All experiments are devoted to discovering the full range of what can be done with colored wools; to this end, the technical processes known as hatchings and hactures (*battages*), insertions (*sertis*), shadings down (*dégradés*), effects achieved by the single passage of the weft (*effets de demi-duite*), and the same thread-by-thread treatment producing shaded stripes (*fil à fil*) are employed; these tricks of the weaver’s trade give increased richness and variety to the actual texture of the fabric.

Some great artists, interested in tapestry as a form of mural decoration, leave these experiments to the skill of the weavers who interpret their designs; others are painters by profession, but weavers in spirit, and have a profound knowledge of wool and its possibilities.

#### *Specialist Tapestry Painters*

Those painters who can be called specialists in tapestry bring, not only a new esthetic, but also a renewed technique, to the craft. The characteristic properties of wool enhance the play of colors, giving an additional element of beauty to a work executed in tapestry; these artists know how to take advantage of all such resources offered them by the material and by the loom. The cartoons entrusted to the weavers, whether the colors are painted or indicated by a system of numbers, are exact preconceptions of every aspect of the finished weaving.

Matégot has revived the medieval process called *piqué*, a mixture of threads of different hues and intensities; he thereby achieves subtle gradations and effects of iridescence, uniquely his own.

The tapestries of Prassinos (Pl. 4) exalt and transfigure the world; in his compositions, based on numbered cartoons in black and white, any suggestion of volume disappears in favor of the handwriting of the “message”.

Tourlière, Director of the National School of Decorative Art at Aubusson, makes use of everything the loom can do; wool and its color effects are the foundation of all his work. He arrives at his results by means of a rhythmical *piqué* in irregular bands and obtains effects of striation admirably suited to the subjects he evokes, fields of grain or the rows of vineyards.

The most recent series of another artist, Jullien, called *From Dawn to Day-Break* (*de l’Aube à l’Aurore*), shows how far he has carried his research; the weaving, which brings out the thickness of some wefts by contrasting them





Plate 4. **Romeo and Juliet.**  
Gobelins tapestry after Mario Prassinos, 1967. 3.95 m. x 5.58 m.

with thin ones, has an effect of relief that enlivens the surface. Singier, whose work has been called "quiet as a Sung painting," is also no stranger to technical research. The same can be said of Wogensky, who was introduced to the loom by Lurçat; his abstract compositions have an astonishing luxuriance of color.

The works of such artists as Lagrange, Longobardi, Millecamps, Schumacher, Brivet, Maurice André, Odette Blanc Falaize, Monique Aradon, and others also deserve mention in this unfortunately far too hasty survey. The achievements of most of these painters, whether woven in the National Manufactories or at Aubusson, have become familiar through the frequent and varied exhibitions held at the art gallery "La Demeure" in Paris, directed by Mme. Denise Majorel.

#### *Tapestries as Translations of Paintings*

It is now more than thirty-five years since Mme. Cuttoli had the works of great masters copied in tapestry-weaving; shortly after the war, tapestries were made after Matisse's pasted papers (*papiers collés*); Picasso's *Guernica* has been woven in the Beaume-Dürnbach workshops. These hangings were not mere reproductions of easel-paintings, but were planned as mural decorations.

To interpret the creations of these celebrated artists calls for great skill on the part of the weaver, since he must not falsify the style of the work entrusted to him. The private workshops of Plasse le Caisne and Cauquil Prince make tapestries from simple sketches by the painters. In the National Manufactories, there has also been much research into the methods of interpreting the works of such artists as Chagall (Pl. 5), Atlan, Beaudin, Gilioli (Pl. 6), Hartung, Masson, Mathieu (Pl. 7), Miro, Picasso, Riopelle, de Staël, Seuphor, Ubac (Pl. 8), and Vieira da Silva (Pl. 9).

The weavers usually have as their starting point a sketch, a lithograph, or a small version of the design. A photographic enlargement is used to provide the full-scale cartoon. This process can bring about changes, not only in the large color areas, but also in details, whose importance may become over-emphasized. The weaver is therefore obliged to re-establish the individual style of each artist by simplifying and modifying the exaggeration caused by the photographic enlargement. This holds good not only for the drawing, but also for the colors. Interpreting the artist's work in this way leads the weaver into continuous research, so that his techniques are constantly expanded. Many attempts to render the color schemes of Chagall's palette preceded the execution of his three large tapestries, the *Creation* (Pl. 5), *Exodus*, and the *Entry into Jerusalem*. Much of Atlan's *Festival (la Fête)* was woven by



Plate 5. The Creation.  
Gobelins tapestry after Marc Chagall, 1967. 4.65 m. x 5.38 m.

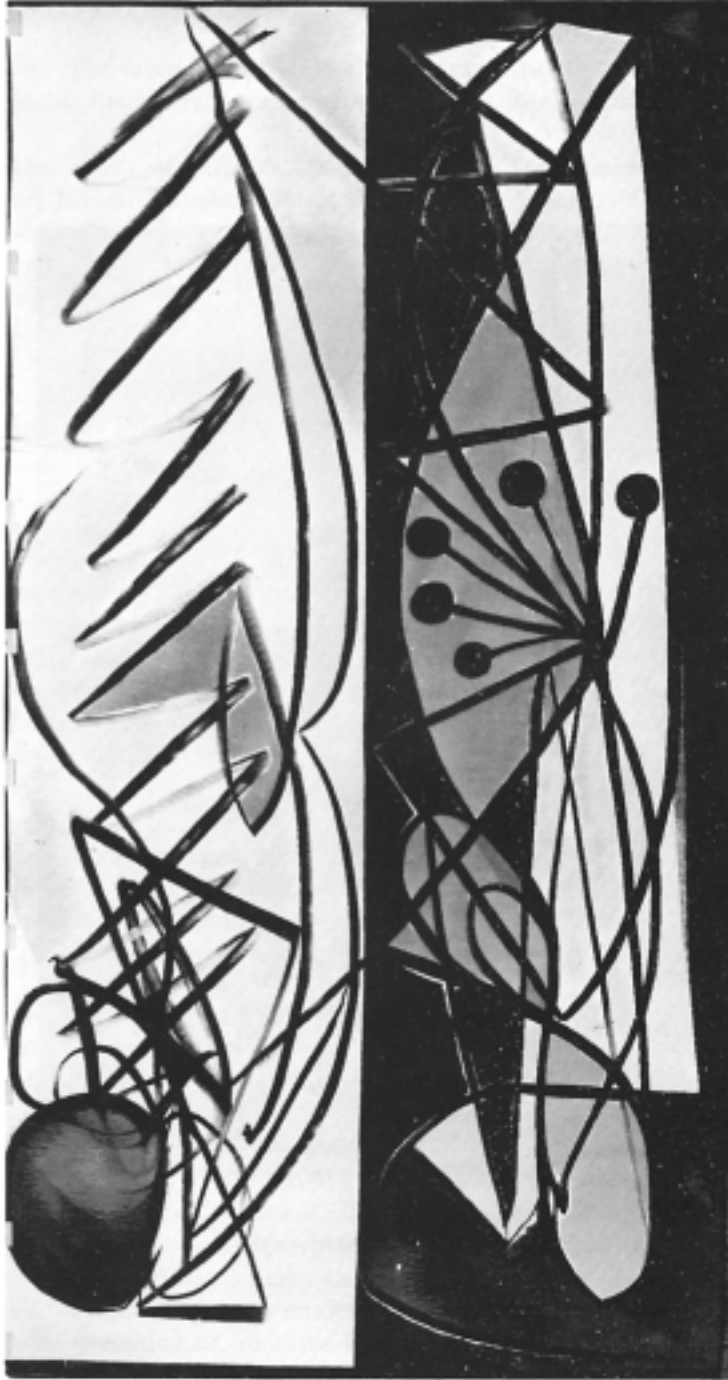


Plate 6. The Sleeping Women (*Les Dormeuses*).  
Beauvais tapestry after Emile Gilioli, 1966. 2.80 m. x 5.44 m.

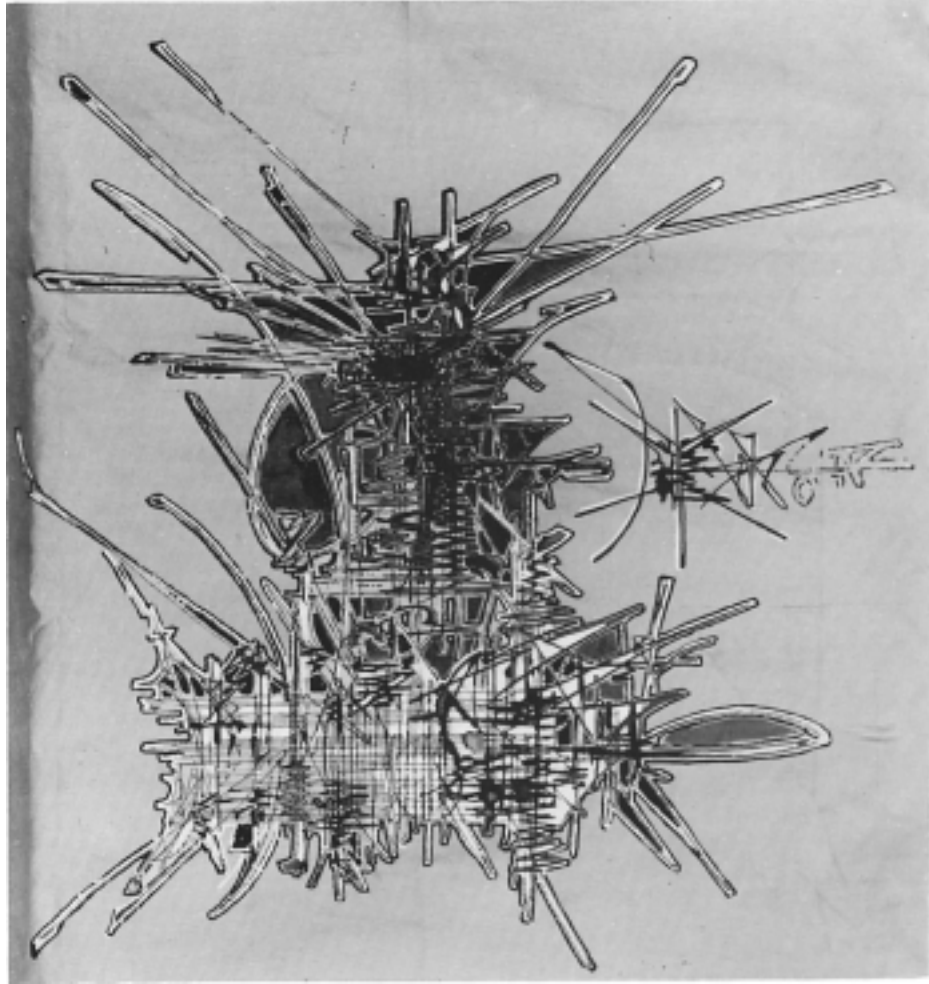


Plate 7. Homage to Nicolas Fouquet.  
Gobelins tapestry after Georges Mathieu, 1967. 4.90 m. x 4.90 m.

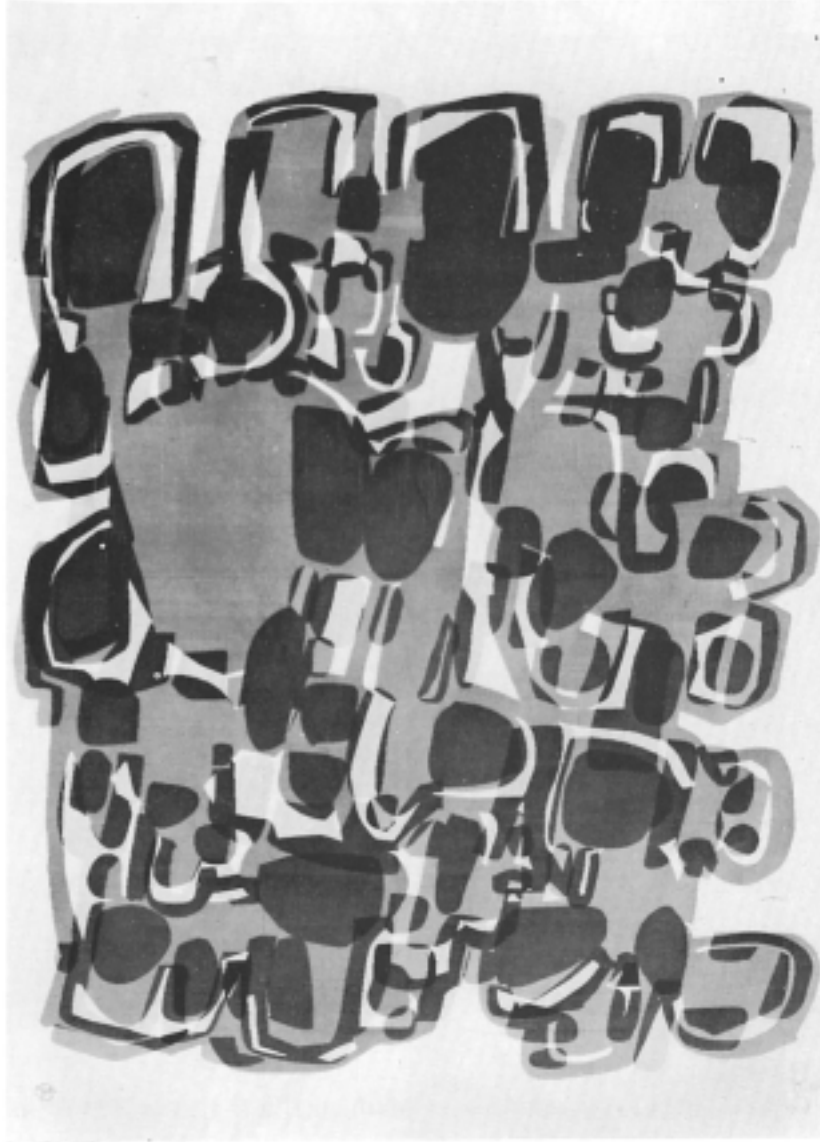


Plate 8. Red and Blue Forms (*Formes rouges et bleues*).  
Beauvais tapestry after Raoul Ubac, 1968, second weaving, 3.05 m. x  
2.40 m.

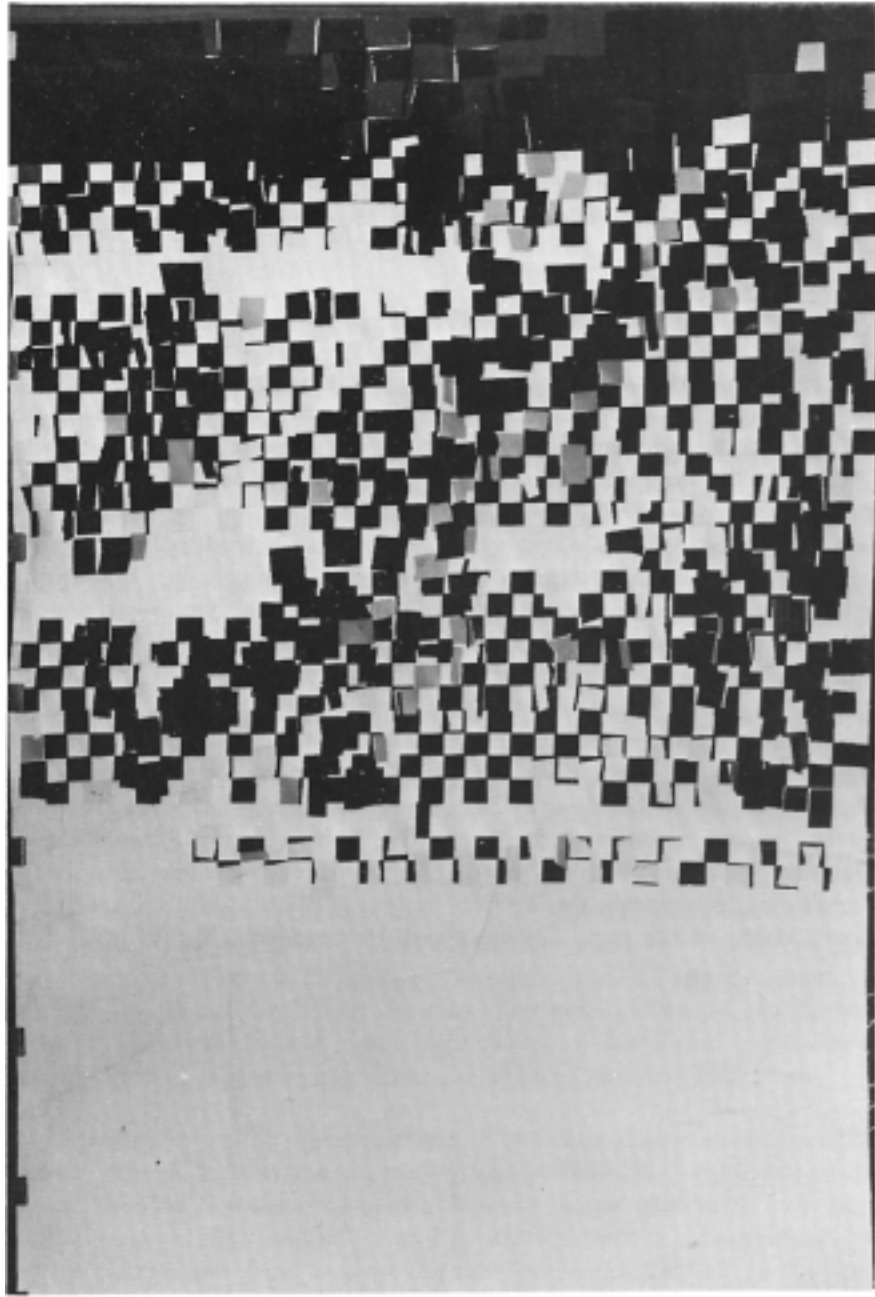


Plate 9. Panel No. 3.  
Beauvais tapestry after Vieira da Silva, 1967. 4.62 m. x 3.15 m.

the process known as single passage of the weft (*demi-uite*), which gives an effect of vibrating color.

The high quality of the tapestries woven in the National Manufactories is universally recognized; the technical ability of the weavers is due to the professional training they receive, which enables them to reproduce on the loom the red chalk and charcoal drawings of Riopelle as successfully as the subtle compositions of Vieira da Silva (Pl. 9). Two amazing tapestries after the *tachiste* painter Mathieu are among the most recent productions of the Gobelins looms.<sup>1</sup>

*Will woven hangings replace mural painting?*

It is still too early to judge the esthetic value of contemporary tapestry, but one can speak of its success and of the enormous variety of its manifestations. Tapestries have regained an important function, thanks to the severely plain style of interior architecture today; as moveable and interchangeable decoration, they can be used as ornamental household objects, bringing modern art into daily life. Will tapestry gradually replace mural painting as the standard covering for walls? Hangings not especially woven, but made up of textile elements, are being used for this purpose more and more frequently. First Bissière, then Louttre, and now Claude Stahly have created magnificent works made of pieces of cloth simply sewn together. Alain Depuis has invented

a process that gives the appearance of weaving; he has reproduced the compositions of Chevalley, Kermarec, and Fleury by applying woolen threads on a cloth framework (exhibited at the Suzy Langlois Gallery in Paris.) Dubuffet's "tapestries," shown recently at the Decorative Arts Museum, Paris, are made with pasted woolen threads by Carmon. Younger sisters of traditional tapestries, these creations demonstrate the interest in textile adaptations shown by contemporary artists of the most divergent stylistic tendencies.

Madeleine Jarry

<sup>1</sup> The Gobelins National Manufactory and the Beauvais National Manufactory belong to the French State; their tapestries are not for sale. The Aubusson workshops are privately owned and their productions are sold commercially.



TAPESTRY-WEAVING  
AT THE DOVECOT STUDIOS

BY

ELIZABETH BIRBARI

A visitor to the Corstorphine section of the Scottish capital will notice in the grounds of the former historic Forrester Castle a one-story gray stone building. This is the home of the Tapestry-Weaving Center in Scotland which takes its name from the unused sixteenth century dovecot in the surrounding garden. At the beginning of this century, Corstorphine was a village separated by farms from Edinburgh. In 1912 the Marquis of Bute, impressed by the quality of the tapestries produced in the workshop of William Morris at Merton Abbey, was inspired to establish this highly specialized craft in Scotland. The result was the Dovecot Studios.

It is sad to record that the two original weavers, imported from Merton Abbey, were killed in the First World War. They had, however, trained three Scottish weavers, one of whom retired as recently as 1963. The high standard of craftsmanship which was set in the early days is being continued by the present staff of weavers.

The workshop at Corstorphine is a large rectangular ground-floor room with windows on one long side. In it stand six mid-seventeenth century looms, measuring from four to twenty feet, brought from a former tapestry-weaving workshop in Soho (Fig. 1). Of the two loom positions traditional for tapestry-weaving – vertical (*haute lisse* – high warp) or horizontal (*basse lisse* – low warp), Dovecot tapestries are woven on high warp looms like these.

A tapestry may be created in one of two ways. For very simple patterns, a weaver can be both craftsman and designer. From only the germ of an idea, he can develop the decoration of a tapestry in the process of weaving. Many skilled workers in Scandinavia and Eastern European countries still adhere to this system. But from at least the late fourteenth century in Europe it has been customary to weave elaborate scenes from cartoons prepared by artists. The craftsmen, however, preserved a great deal of freedom in their choice of



Fig. 1. A mid-seventeenth century loom at the Dovecot Studios.

colors and in the minor details of the design until late in the eighteenth century.

The creative craftsmen at the Dovecot Studios prefer to follow the older tradition of working from an idea. When a tapestry is commissioned, however, the weavers are sometimes presented with a specific design to be reproduced. The accompanying photographs illustrate their procedure as work progresses on a tapestry entitled *Flight into Egypt*, now in the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh.

A tracing of the artist's sketch is made on clear plastic, as seen in Figure 2. The tracing is subsequently photographed and then enlarged to the desired size of the tapestry. When this enlargement is placed behind the warp, the dark lines can be discerned between the threads. The weaver then, in a process called "inking on," reproduces this drawing by marking each warp thread all the way around with a flat pen (Fig. 3).

With these preliminaries completed, the actual weaving may begin. Notice that on the loom the design is placed sideways. When used to cover the wall of a room — for added warmth or for decoration — a tapestry was often an extremely large horizontal rectangle. It was more practical to use a loom the width of the narrower dimensions. Thus the warp threads ran parallel to the long edge of the tapestry.

There are other advantages to weaving in this manner. (1) When weaving figures, the craftsman is able to see the entire figure though it is in a horizontal position, even when the completed part of the tapestry is rolled (Figs. 4 and 5). (2) The long vertical lines, e.g. buildings or columns, can be produced more effectively with long weft passages, rather than with a series of very short ones, one above the other.

Before weaving is started, the warp threads form a plane extending between the upper and lower beams of the loom. When looking at a cross-section, the edge of this plane appears as a vertical line. To proceed with the process of weaving, however, alternate warp threads must be separated into two planes in order that the bobbin carrying the weft can be passed first behind one set of threads and then the other. The two planes are separated by a pole called the shed pole placed at right-angles across the warp with one set of warp threads on either side. The space between the two sets of threads is called the shed. Instead of seeing one vertical line, one now sees two lines, forming the shape of a "V," which emerges from the top of the woven portion and reaches upwards to either side of the shed pole. Therefore, the distance between the two sets of warp threads, or the size of the shed, changes from nil

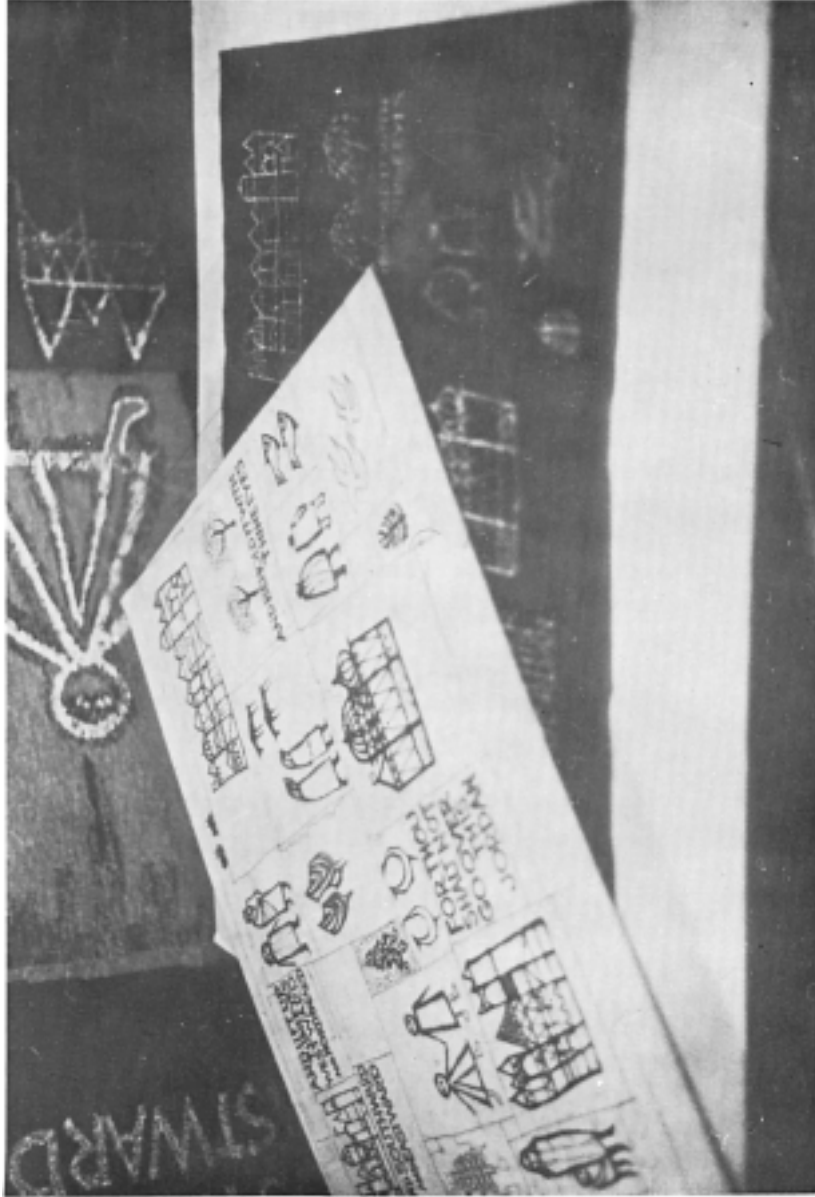


Fig. 2. Black and white tracing on clear plastic (placed over white paper) with artist's colored sketch and the partially completed tapestry in the background.



Fig. 3. Inking-on process. Maureen Hodge, designer-weaver, kindly allowed photographs to be made as she worked.



Fig. 4. *Raising the Standard at Glenfinnan.*



Fig. 5. *Raising the Standard at Glenfinnan* (showing the rolled portion).

at the top weft thread to the diameter of the shed pole several inches above (Fig. 1).

As the bobbin is always passed behind the front set of threads and in front of those at the back, the position of the threads must be reversed each time the bobbin carries a weft thread. Looped around each warp on the back plane (the one furthest from the weaver) is a cord or leash, tied to a pole (seen immediately above the heads of the men in Figure 1) which can be raised as work progresses. As the weaver pulls on these leashes, the threads at the back are forced into the forward position. When the bobbin is passed, therefore, it will go behind this alternate set of threads.

Figures 6, 7, 8 and 9 illustrate the weaving process.

In Figure 6 the weaver holds the appropriate threads (those nearest her) to allow her bobbin to pass behind them from right to left. In Figure 7 she prepares to pull forward the alternate threads (those furthest from her). This is done by using the appropriate warp threads as a guide; as she follows them upwards, her hand will reach the corresponding set of leashes. When these leashes have been pulled, the threads from the back plane are brought forward, permitting the bobbin to be passed behind them from left to right. Figure 8 shows the threads in this position just after the bobbin has passed. After each row the weft must be tightly pressed down, leaving no opening between the horizontal rows (Fig. 9).

There is, naturally, a vertical slit between warp threads wherever one color ends and another begins. These slits may be closed as weaving progresses by (a) passing the weft threads from opposite directions in alternation around their common boundary warp so that they dovetail, or (b) interlocking the weft threads from opposite directions between the two boundary warps. Or, on completion of the tapestry, the edges of the slits may be whipped together.

The technique described immediately above is used currently at the Dovecot Studios. However, Archie Brennan, the master weaver, is presently developing a new process and fitment for looms to bring together the advantages of different techniques and to remove the disadvantages.

The time required to weave a particular section of *Flight into Egypt* can be gauged by comparing Figure 3 with Figure 6. The photographs were taken two days apart. The weekly average can range from one to four square feet per weaver.

The warp threads are almost always of cotton while the weft is woven





Fig. 6. Passing the bobbin from right to left.



Fig. 7. Using warp threads as a guide for reaching the appropriate leashes for the next row.



Fig. 8. Bobbin has just been passed from left to right.



Fig. 9. Pressing down the weft with tip of bobbin.

with wool, cotton, silk, flax, jute, metallic, and synthetic fibers. These different fibers, as well as different colors, are often wound on one bobbin.

A portion of an unfinished tapestry, *Raising the Standard at Glenfinnan* can be seen at the Dovecot Studios. It depicts Bonnie Prince Charlie and some of his Highland followers in 1745. Only the middle portion, indicated by the motif at the top center of the border, can be seen, as the completed half is rolled up so that the part currently being worked is at eye level for the weaver (Figs. 4 and 5).

Figure 4 shows the partial figure of the Prince. Because this is an historical subject, the correct portrayal of the figures involved extensive research. Some of the designer's information was obtained from letters, written between 1792 and 1834, to the firm of William Wilson and Son in Bannockburn, Stirlingshire, Scotland. It was the sample enclosed in the letter below which provided the designer with information for the appropriate tartan for Prince Charlie.

Edinburgh  
September 30th 1826

Mr. Wm Wilson & Son

Gentlemen

We have heard you have furnished for the Officers of the 72nd rg their regimental tartans. We are in want of a piece exactly to their patterns and quality.

Have the goodness to send us a piece accordingly but we will require to have here Twenty yards in about eight days . . . pray lose no time in setting about it.

Enclosed you have pattern of . . . large pattern Stewart and request you will send us a piece in three weeks. We will trust to have this . . .

Your Obedt Serv  
for Meyer & Quilles  
R. Cummings

Figure 10 shows the letter, the sample, and a labelled card to which are attached the colored yarns selected to reproduce the tartan. Although tartans of specific patterns were used by clans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, no formal record of the designs was kept.

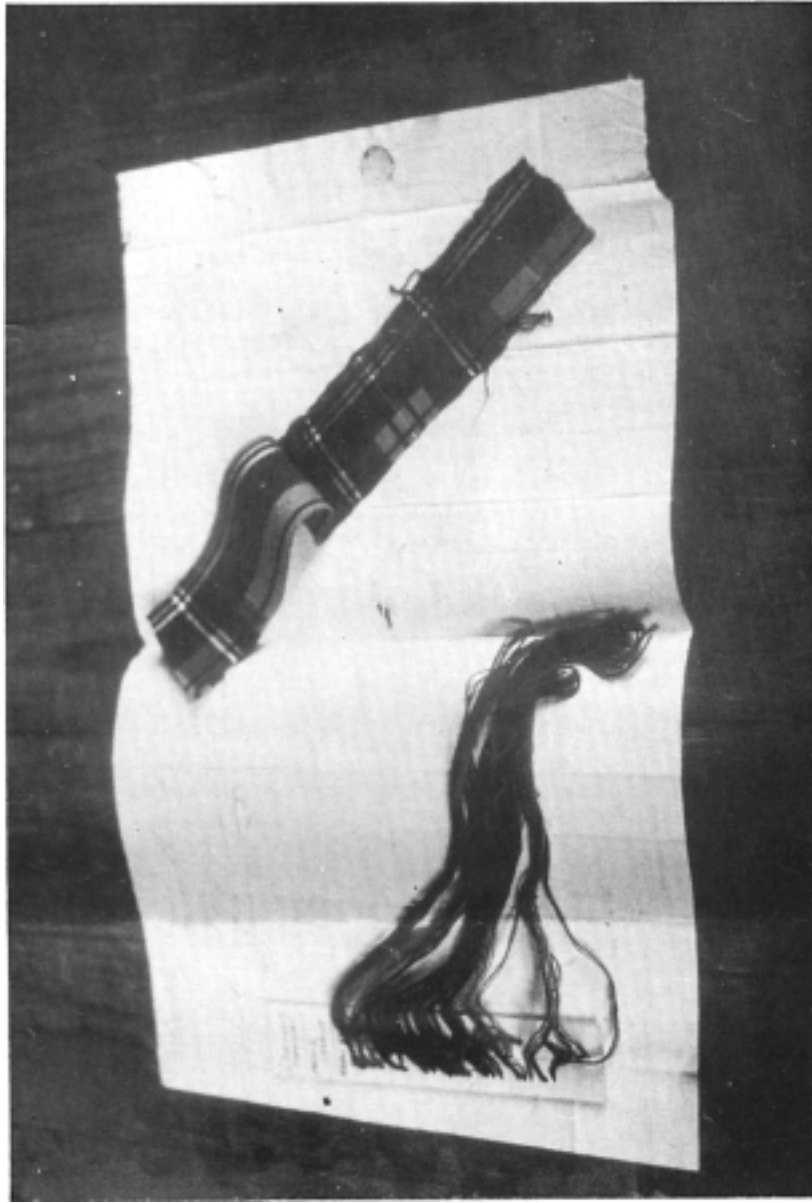


Fig. 10. Letter, sample, and card with selected colors for reproducing tartan.

Another tapestry with historical interest is that showing a birdseye view of Edinburgh in 1575 (Figs. 11 and 12). The wide strip running parallel to the caption, in Figure 11, represents the water of a loch which has since been transformed into the Princes Street Gardens. The completed work is now in the Banqueting Hall of Edinburgh Castle.

A recent tapestry, measuring 18' by 9'6", designed and executed by Archie Brennan for the Council Chamber of the borough of Motherwell and Wishaw, a steel manufacturing center in Scotland, appears in Figure 13. The heraldic device with two steel workers as supporters marks the chair of the presiding officer. In the large panel, designed for this modern setting, the device is repeated but is surrounded and supported by a network of steel bars.

The work of the Dovecot Studios is represented in various parts of the United States. One example may be seen in St. Thomas Episcopal Church, New York, while private collections throughout the country include tapestries adapted from the designs of Stanley Spencer, Cecil Collins, and Graham Sutherland. The work of Archie Brennan, himself, has contributed not a little to the prestige of the Scottish weavers. Throughout this country, there are at least six hangings designed and executed by him which attest to the artistic ability and skill of a modern creative master weaver.

In a land where wools and weaving have long been a part of daily life, this small group of artists keeps alive an ancient craft. In volume of work they cannot compete with larger European establishments but because of the intimate nature of their workshop in Edinburgh, their tapestries have a special character with a very Scottish flavor.



Fig. 11. *Edinburgh.*



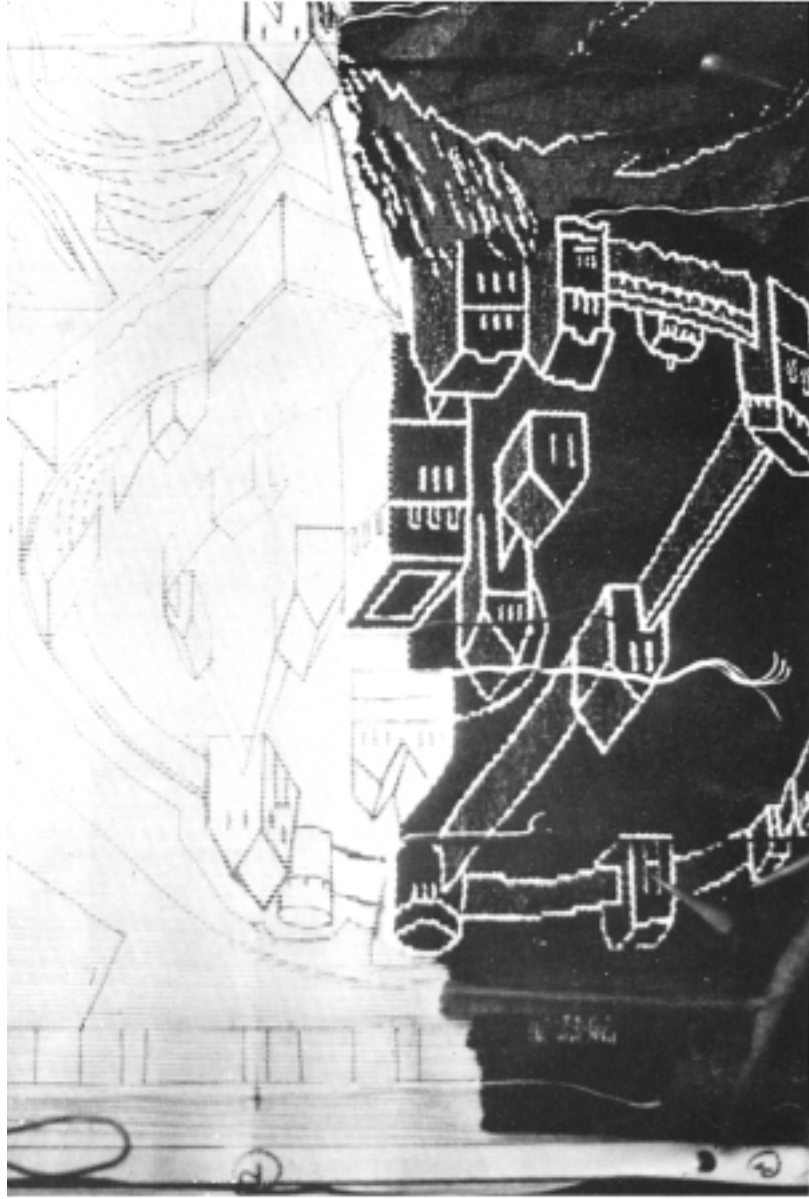


Fig. 12. *Edinburgh.*

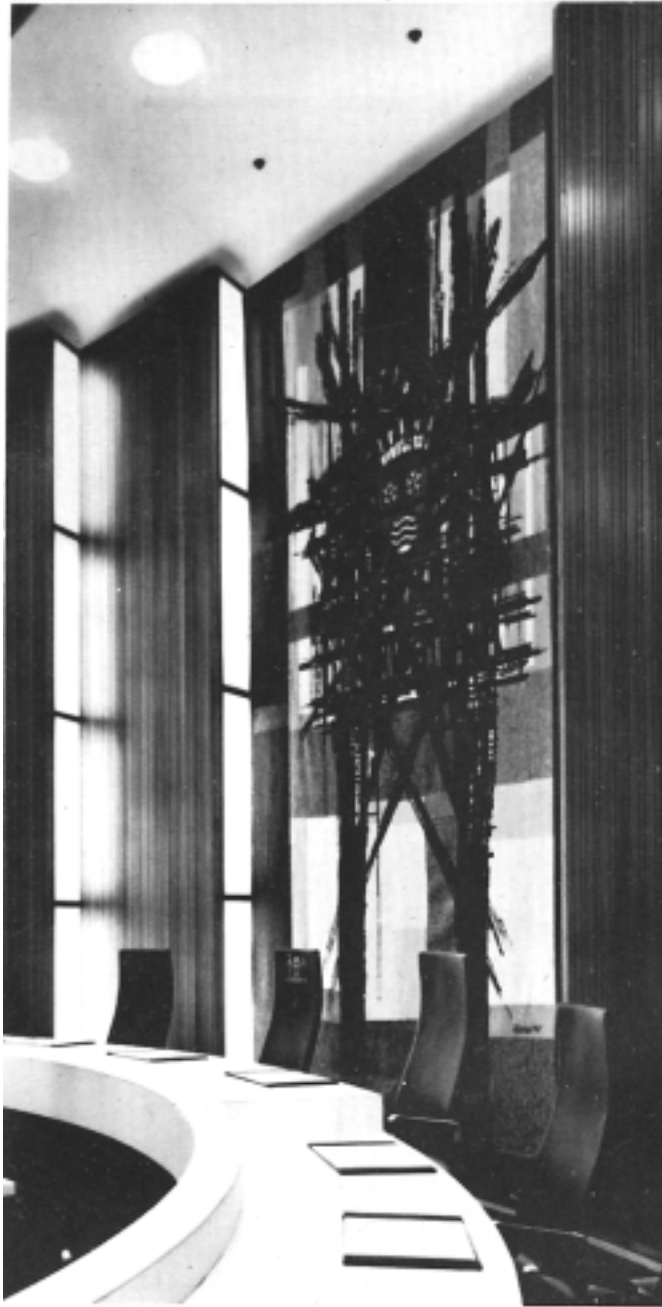


Fig. 13. Council Chamber of the borough of Motherwell and Wishaw.

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## BOOK NOTES

Roger-Armand Weigert, *FRENCH TAPESTRY*, translated by Donald and Monique King, Newton, Mass., Charles T. Branford, 1962. Pp. 214; 64 illus., 4 color pls. \$15.00.

I am often asked to recommend a single, general book in English about tapestries and I am not able to do so. However, for some years now I have mentioned, as a partial answer, Roger-Armand Weigert's *FRENCH TAPESTRY*, translated by Mr. and Mrs. Donald King. The French original appeared in the Larousse series *Arts, Styles et Techniques* in 1956; the color plates and the better quality of the black-and-white illustrations in the English edition of 1962 are definite improvements. For those who read French, M. Weigert's revision and updating of his text in *LA TAPISSERIE ET LE TAPIS EN FRANCE* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1964) in the *Lys d'Or* series is to be preferred, but the little English volume does provide what it promises, a short, accurate, well-illustrated history of French tapestry from its beginnings in the 13th century (known only from documents) until the middle of the 20th.

When we consider that for only one French manufactory — admittedly the greatest, the Gobelins — active for only four of these seven or eight centuries, Maurice Fenaille needed six huge quarto volumes and several hundred plates, M. Weigert's feat of condensation must be admired. Occasionally, the result is a page containing little more than a list of names and dates, such as the introductory paragraphs to the section on the Gobelins in the 18th century, and the brief opening chapter, called "Generalities," though clearly written, would probably not enable a totally ignorant reader to understand how tapestries are made. For example, the words "*les battages, les hachures et les relais*," though neatly translated as "varying the density of the weft threads, hatching with two colours, and arranging the junction of colours in such a way as to produce slits in the fabric," surely need illustrations for complete comprehension. To understand tapestry technique, in fact, the reader is strongly advised to consult the catalogue of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, *TAPESTRIES OF EUROPE AND OF COLONIAL PERU*, by Adolph S. Cavallo, 1967; the account of technique and design, richly illustrated, is the most lucid that has been written in any language. In fact, if it were not that the Museum of Fine Arts has some sad gaps in its tapestry collection, notably

Gobelins and Mortlake examples, this two-volume catalogue could be recommended as the one book on tapestry so much in demand.

One defect in M. Weigert's book was probably unavoidable: it is already out of date. There is no entry in the bibliography later than 1955, and it is unfortunate that no attempt was made in the English edition to include publications that appeared between that date and 1962. One might mention *THE LADY AND THE UNICORN* by Pierre Verlet and Francis Salet (French edition, 1960; English, 1961), dealing with the famous Cluny set, which M. Weigert discusses at some length, or the publication in 1959 of the Gobelins tapestries of the Croome Court Room in the Metropolitan Museum. The words "recently" or "until recent years" are used for events that took place thirty years ago.

A more important objection is that there is no connection between the illustrations and the text; they might be two separate books. The captions to the plates name the subjects of the tapestries, their locations, and sometimes the designers, but there is generally no mention of the manufactory and never a reference to the page where the piece is described; even more exasperatingly, there are no references in the text to the plates, which are also not included in the index. A particularly fine border made for the first weaving of the Gobelins *Story of the King* set is described – but the illustration, when it is finally located, shows an example with no border at all. Another unfortunate omission is any indication of dimensions.

The author must be held responsible for a curiously old-fashioned point of view when he turns from relating facts as an historian to pontificating as a critic. He rightly praises Boucher's merits as a designer, "the characteristic effects of sumptuousness and decorative abundance" of his tapestries, "the rosy or nacreous flesh of lovely women, who, adorned with pearls and luxurious draperies, form harmonious groups in enchanting settings," but, when he comes at the end of the book to sum up what makes a tapestry a good one, he writes: "It is important, however, not to forget that the purpose of tapestry-hangings is to adorn large areas of wall and that they should therefore give the impression of an unbroken, decorative, coloured surface. Deep perspectives, distant backgrounds, and even patches of pale colour must be avoided, for they create 'holes' in the wall, which ruin the harmony and balance of the effect." This is nonsense, as anyone knows who has stepped into a room hung with Gobelins or Beauvais tapestries after Boucher in good condition, or even looked at the color plate of the tapestry room at Osterley Park, with its pale patches, or the black-and-white of the *Psyche* panel after Boucher, with its deep perspective, in this book. M. Weigert speaks of the "oddity" of the *alentours* (wide decorative borders) to the Osterley Park (and Croome Court)

tapestries, “with their simulated pictures, in simulated frames, hanging by simulated ribbons, and throwing simulated shadows on simulated damasks”; he is forced to admit that the device achieves complete success, but he could have added that this brilliant mid-18th century invention, though certainly odd, is as satisfactory a solution to the chief problem in tapestry-design – maintaining interest over the whole surface – as the *millefleurs* of the late Middle Ages. One seems to hear a distant echo of Ruskin proclaiming the necessity of Truth in Art. This attitude was standard fifty years ago, when decadence was thought to have begun with the Renaissance and the art of tapestry to have then sunk continuously until very recently; the critic, whether writing in 1920 or in 1950, always finds that a change for the better has just begun.

The reader, therefore, would do well to consult M. Weigert for facts and to make up his own mind which tapestries he enjoys most. There are some minor errors in the book; the Brussels *Months of Lucas* are certainly not after Lucas van Leyden and the Metropolitan Museum does not, alas, own three pieces of the Beauvais series with scenes from Molière. The translation by Mr. and Mrs. King, who are perfectly capable of writing a history of tapestry themselves, is beyond praise.

—Edith Appleton Standen  
Metropolitan Museum of Art

## NOTES ON AUTHORS

*Mme. Jarry* is Chief Inspector of the *Mobilier National* and the National Tapestry Manufactories. She has written several books. Her most recent one, *La Tapisserie*, Paris, 1968, appeared in an American edition entitled *World Tapestry* the following year.

*Miss Elizabeth Birbari* has studied at the University of Texas and at the Courtauld Institute in the field of costume design. She became interested in Scottish tapestries and the Dovecot Studios when visiting in Edinburgh.

## CLUB NOTES

A delightful lecture on "Early American Regional Embroideries" by Mrs. Sheldon J. Howe of Old Deerfield, Massachusetts, and an abundant tea were offered at the Lotos Club through the kindness of Miss Louise Gilder, Mrs. Jean U. Korée, Mrs. J. Harper Skillin, and Mrs. Lillard Thomas, on Wednesday afternoon, January twenty-eighth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Through the courtesy of the Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mrs. Wells Browning, Miss Elizabeth Riley, Mrs. J. Russell Twiss, and Mrs. Frederick M. Schall invited the members and guests of the Needle and Bobbin Club to the Museum for a guided tour of "The Year 1200" by Mrs. Vera K. Ostoia of the Medieval Department, on Wednesday afternoon, February twenty-fifth. These same generous hostesses offered an ample tea afterwards in the Board Room.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Russell Veit most kindly invited members of The Needle and Bobbin Club to her home on Thursday afternoon, March twenty-sixth, to hear Mr. Max Saltzman, Manager of Color Technology, Allied Chemicals Corporation, give an illustrated talk on "Dyes in Ancient Textiles." After this interesting talk, which evoked many questions, the Club members refreshed themselves with a delicious tea.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Edith M. Achilles, Miss Frances M. Achilles, Mrs. Charles B. Martin, and Mrs. Maurice P. van Buren were hostesses for the Club's Annual Meeting on Wednesday afternoon, April twenty-ninth, at the home of the National Society of Colonial Dames in the State of New York. Mrs. Pieter Maddens, whose husband is the Belgian representative at the United Nations, gave an



illustrated talk, "The History of Belgian Lace," and a demonstration of bobbin-lace making. All enjoyed a festive tea and conversation afterwards.

\* \* \* \* \*

The members of The Needle and Bobbin Club were invited to a private viewing of the Robert Lehman Collection on Thursday afternoon, May seventh, by Dr. George Szabo, Curator of the Collection. Especially on view for Club members, in addition to the famous paintings, were Flemish tapestries, Florentine and Burgundian embroideries of the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, and laces and silks. Attendance was limited to the first seventy-five members to reply by May first. A splendid time was had by these seventy-five.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Spring Safari of The Needle and Bobbin Club was a trip to the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens for a tour, and a talk and demonstration on plant dyes by Dr. Elizabeth Scholtz, their charming resident specialist. A chartered bus took the members and their guests to the Montauk Club, enroute, for luncheon and returned them to Manhattan after the program at the Gardens. Everyone enjoyed the day.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Howard Ellis Cox, Mrs. William Dunaway, Mrs. Cartwright Hooker, and Mrs. John E. McCracken invited members and guests of The Needle and Bobbin Club to the Colony Club on Tuesday afternoon, October thirteenth, to hear Mme. Madeleine Jarry, chief inspector of the Mobilier National and the Manufactures Nationales des Gobelins et de Beauvais, speak on French tapestries of the mid-twentieth century. After this beautifully illustrated lecture, an abundant and varied tea made a happy ending to the afternoon.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Duke Gardens in Somerville, New Jersey, were the goal of the Club's Fall Safari on a fine cold, clear day, Wednesday, October twenty-eighth. Members and guests were taken by chartered bus to the Somerville Inn for luncheon and then on to the Gardens, where a delightful tour of these lovely gardens under glass was enjoyed by all.

Mrs. Chauncey J. Hamlin, Mrs. Paul Renshaw, Mrs. Cochran Supplee, and Mrs. David C. Thomas invited members and guests of The Needle and Bobbin Club to the Lotos Club on Tuesday afternoon, December first, to hear Miss Alice Baldwin Beer, Curator of Textiles at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, speak on "The Painted Cottons of India and the Spice Trade." After this talk, illustrated with beautiful colored slides of maps from the Rare Books Room at the New York Public Library and botanical plates from the library of the Bronx Botanical Gardens, the members gathered around a lavishly laden tea table.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. and Mrs. Norris W. Harkness once more offered their generous hospitality to members and guests of The Needle and Bobbin Club for the celebration of Christmas at a tea and cocktail party on Saturday afternoon, December nineteenth. This warm-hearted and festive occasion in their apartment, charmingly decorated for the holidays, evoked a mood of celebration in their numerous guests truly in keeping with the Christmas spirit, and a glorious time was had by all.

## IN MEMORIAM

The Needle and Bobbin Club cherishes the memory of members who have died during the past year.

*Mrs. W. B. Holton*, a woman of many activities and accomplishments, who especially enjoyed The Needle and Bobbin Club;

*Mrs. Albert C. Koch*, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, a long-time member;

*Mrs. Robert McKelvey*, mother of Mrs. Junius Bird, and enthusiastic member for many years;

*Miss Mary Alice Smith*, delightful professional member, founder of THE HANDWEAVER AND CRAFTSMAN and editor of it for twenty years;

*Mrs. Julia Lillard Thomas*, who enjoyed many meetings and unstintingly offered her hospitality to the Club in return.

Members with back numbers of THE BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB to contribute to our file of Bulletins for sale, please get in touch with Mr. Norris W. Harkness, 580 Park Avenue, New York 10028.

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