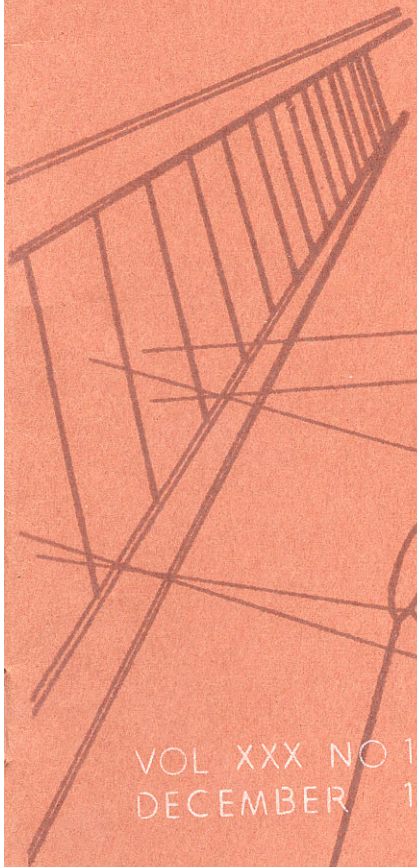
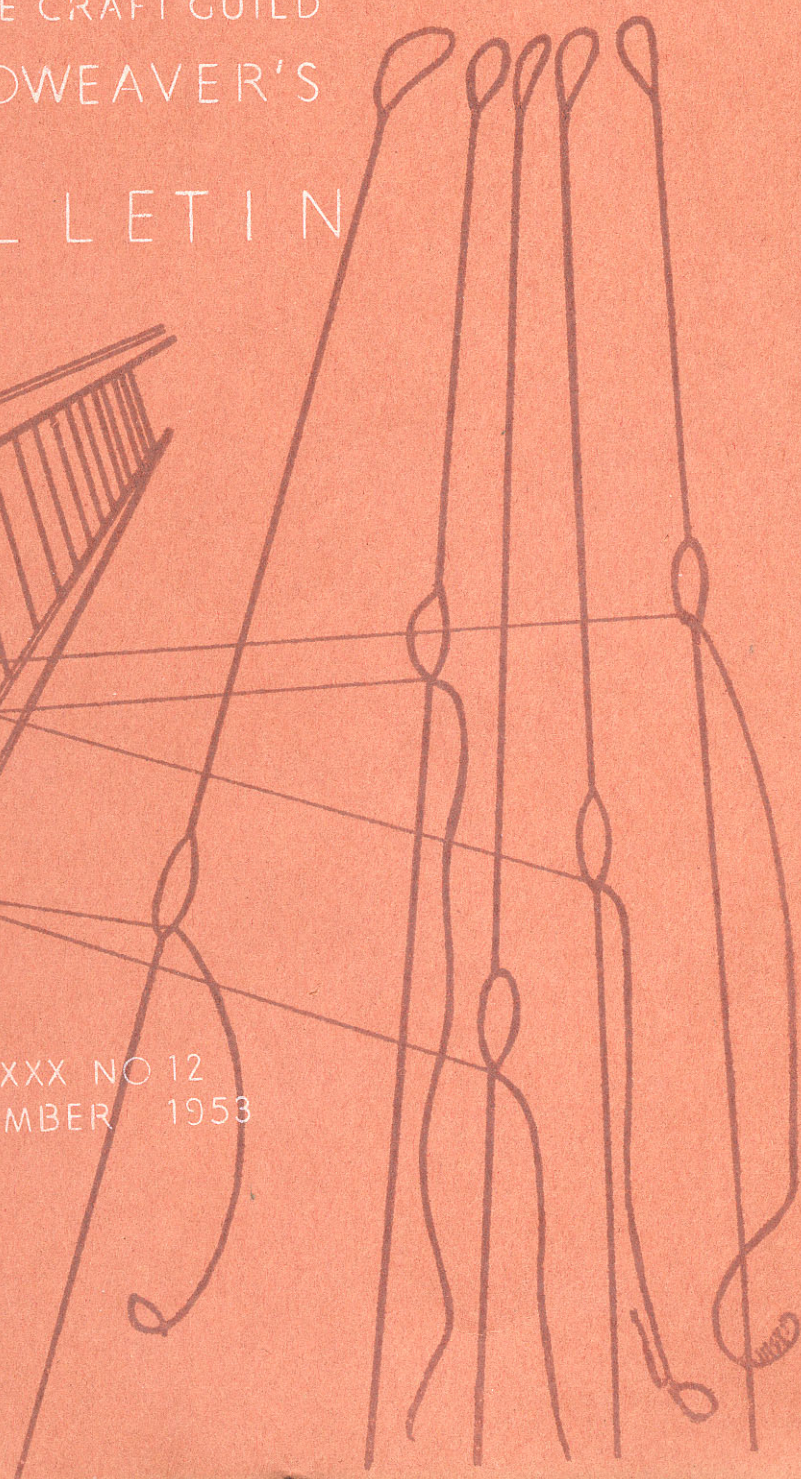


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DESIGN IN ART

(A review of the lecture given by Cyril Conrad, sculptor and Head of the Department of Applied Art, Montana State College, Bozeman, Montana, to the Shuttle Craft Guild Advanced Seminar, September 17, 1953.)

"I am not a weaver. However, I will take no part with the idea that weavers are not artists. I deplore the fact that many people too frequently feel that weavers are craftsmen and that there is a separation between the craftsman and the artist. I am connected with a Department of Applied Art, but basically I cannot see any difference between Applied Art and Fine Art. All artists have the same basic roots, and so you as weavers are artists in your own right, as are ceramists and jewelers and others. I feel that the combination of craftsman and artist is the thing we are all striving for."

The deepest intuitions of any race are found in its arts. Nature is the great inspiration of all art, but the pure imitation of nature is without the field of art. A beautiful thing in nature is a dead thing without the human eye. There are hundreds of thousands of beautiful trees, flowers, rocks, way back deep in the forest that the human eye never sees. These fulfil their purposes,

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whether they are beautiful or ugly. They find life as related to people, only within the human experience. Likewise a work of art must be seen before it lives with us. And so it is within us -- within humanity -- not outside, that we find the very basis of art. Bacon said, "Art is the subjecting of things to the mind," in contrast to science which is the subjecting of the mind to things. Thus, things are our source of inspiration and the human mind uses things as the starting point for creative ideas.

In the sixth century the Chinese sage and artist Hsieh Ho (he-shu-ho) devised six canons which are the basis of oriental art. The first canon of Hsieh Ho, simply transcribed, is that a work of art must have rhythmic vitality. This is perhaps the most important of the canons. One is apt to think of rhythm as being simply repetition. Actually, rhythm goes beyond mere mechanical repetition and includes accent, and flow of one part into another, and continuation, and interruption. Rhythm is the living, vital force of a work of art. The second canon is that a work of art must indicate the ability of the artist to see the anatomical structure of things and to render it. This does not say that the anatomical structure is to be copied in photographic manner, but that it must be understood and the understanding transmitted. The third canon is that the artist's forms must answer to natural forms. Notice that this does not say that the artist's forms must imitate natural forms. The fourth canon is that color must be appropriately distributed. This does not even imply that color must be transcribed from nature. The fifth canon is that a work of art must have composition: subordination and grouping according to the hierarchy of things, or according to importance. We find that composition is a basic part of art, and composition is made up of certain elements one of which is the domination of

one important thing or idea, and the subordination all other elements to it. The sixth canon is that there must be a transmission of classic models. This canon can most easily be misunderstood. The point which Hsieh Ho had in mind was that once a master caught the spirit he was looking for, thereby creating a great work of art, that work of art is worthy of study on the part of others, and in its own right it should then give vitality to a new expression -- not just the cold, analytical copying of the master, but the regeneration of his idea or thought, or the spirit which comes through his work.

Design is the life blood of all art. The basic ingredients of design are line and mass, which are capable of working upon one another, of being coordinated. In a painting or sculpturing or a piece of fine weaving, we find that the elements of the design -- the line and mass -- have been coordinated. Thus, art is the relationship of one thing to another. There is also the coordination of idea and media. A weaver knows that to try to capture the exact expression of a flower and put it into a piece of woven stuff is not the essence of good weaving. Rather, the artist uses line, mass, and space to suggest ideas. The viewing mind should be able to pick up the idea from the suggestion, and to recreate it in his own mind. As weavers, and as artists, one should avoid a display of gaudiness, an over elaboration which usually suggests simply virtuosity, and remember that every last detail need not be stated. Leave something for the imagination, the spiritual aspiration to say.

COLOR AND TEXTURE IN INTERPRETATIVE WEAVING

(A review of the study introduced by Mrs Helen Conrad, painter and craftsman, to Seminar members.)

Helen Conrad brought a complete surprise to

to every Seminar member in her talk on Color and Texture. We had expected her to come armed with color charts, and to elucidate the intricacies of complementary and analagous color harmonies, of tints and shades, intensities, saturation, and color technology in general. Instead, she told us not to bother to learn, or if we had learned to feel safe in forgetting, color theory. In place of using theoretical guides, she told us to go to nature for our keys to good color harmony. Nature provides the examples for the best color harmonies, and the creator produces more vital, inspired work if he is working from good examples instead of from cold theories. She told us to go outside -- no further than the doorstep is necessary -- and pick up any small object which in itself has appeal: a stone, a twig, a leaf, a bit of moss, a flower, a piece of bark, an insect web, a bit of dead wood, almost anything can serve as color and texture inspiration. Analyze the object thoughtfully to determine what colors it contains (a process which we found surprising, as unexpected colors never before seen were found in the most common of nature objects). Carry the analysis further, to determine the amount or the proportion of each color. Then start matching and mixing yarns, using the color harmony found in the natural object as the guide for the color harmony of the textile to be woven.

Determine the texture in the same way: through the analysis of a small nature subject which has a pleasing and appropriate surface effect, and then interpret this texture through weaving technique and yarn selection.

Mrs Conrad emphasized the fact that the weaver (or any other artist-craftsman) should become as aware of the simple and complex things about him as the painter. We accept the fact that the painter will walk down the street or drive across the country

constantly on the look-out for subjects which he would like to paint. The weaver should look about him in the same way, always ready to discover a color harmony, a texture, a design arrangement which he wants to weave. An idea is the starting point for any creative design regardless of what the medium may be, and nature is the best idea source.

Following Mrs Conrad's introduction to the system of interpreting nature subjects in a textile the Seminar group walked to the studio, each person finding on the way a subject for the weaving project. There were flowers, autumn leaves, rocks, sage brush, a piece of partly burned wood, a twig of rose hips, etc. With 14 different looms, each threaded with different material and technique, it was easy to find a suitable basis in color, type of yarn and technique for each interpretation. In the case of white warps which were too stark, the warps were painted with textile paints to the desired color. At the end of the day each sample, with its inspiring object, was mounted for study. I wish it were possible to present each one of the textiles visually, as each one seemed truly inspired and a textile which could find a good use as a piece of cloth. Never have I known a group of weavers to work with such inspired enthusiasm, each completely absorbed with his own creative problem, nor have I ever seen more varied, handsome and vital textiles taken from a group of looms.

In approaching textile designing from this new point of view, it is basic that the weaver-designer keep in mind that he is making a fabric, and that a fabric must appropriately serve some useful purpose. A good fabric, unless it is intentionally designed as a wall hanging, is not merely a bit of abstract art. Therefore, in the selection of the nature of the subject, in the selection of yarns, in the selection of technique, and in the interpretative weaving, the designer must be guided by the requirements of a

functional textile for a specific purpose. (For practicing, the specific function may be overlooked and the attention focused on interpretation, but the creating of a good piece of cloth is basic.) The designer must also remember that this is not a color and texture and pattern problem which can overlook the problems of different systems of interlacement of warp and weft -- that is, weaving techniques. Proper selection and use of technique is as important in the expressive integration as the selection of yarns and colors. The textile which simply combines suitable colors and types of yarns in a plain tabby or twill weave, we discovered, is apt to be naive and lacking in sustaining interest. It is the control over the basic technical arrangement of warp and weft threads which adds significance and vitality to a creative textile.

Example: AN INTERPRETIVE TEXTILE

As an example of an interpretive textile, I shall describe the one I made after the Seminar was over, not that it was better, or even as good as some of the others produced, but because this type of expressive weaving is so subjective that one can speak only of one's own work.

The morning after the first autumn snow had covered the surrounding mountains with a veil of white, through the studio window I saw, gleaming in the brilliant sun, a poplar branch, white barked and golden leaved, with a lingering tint of green. Against the smooth, white mountain side, it was golden lace, delicate, transparent, yet with opaque strength. Although my day had been predetermined to correspondence, letters slipped unanswered for another day, as it seemed that this simply had to be woven. Beside the window was a loom threaded with white kashmir (STYLES #36) 18 ends per inch,

18 inches wide, threaded to twill for the gossamer fabric -- the ideal base for the subject, and a long narrow stole was the obvious fabric.

The materials I selected were white Kashmir, yellow, gold and lime green Fabri, fine gold supported metallic. I started by weaving a quarter inch of white kashmir, beaten to a weft rep (to represent the stark white limb and twigs), then shifted to transparent tabby with the same yarn (representing the veil of snow-cover seen through the branches). After an inch or so I began a stripe made up of a group of small opaque stripes, each separated by open metallic, using first yellow, then gold, and ending with green. The stripe was treadled:

"	1-2	"	"	"	"
"	<u>1-3</u>	"	"	"	"
"	2-4	"	"	"	Metallic
"	<u>1-3</u>	"	"	"	"
"	2-4	"	"	"	Fabri
"	3-4	"	"	"	"
"	<u>2-4</u>	"	"	"	"
"	1-3	"	"	"	Metallic
"	2-4	"	"	"	"

repeated as desired, changing colors as desired. (This stripe represented the clinging leaves, yellow near the branch, deepening to the deader golden color, but tipped with pale green. This last effect seems to be a nature freak this year, when the trees turned and then warm weather came, bringing new growth of tender green leaves at the tip of every branch.) The color stripe and the two-texture kashmir stripe were alternated for the full length, but always in differing widths. How to evaluate this textile, I do not know. But the effect is charming, and the stole gives me a warm reaction whenever I see it because never have I had more pleasure in weaving. I suggest that you too select a nature subject toward which you have a strong reaction and give yourself a little of this fun.

RHYTHM IN WEAVING

(A review of a short talk by Ruth Lathrop Sikes, former teacher of Eurhythmics, Seminar member, and extension of remarks by Harriet Tidball.)

Miss Ruth Sikes told Seminar members that rhythms are natural to any physical activity and the greatest pleasure and minimum fatigue result if good rhythmic motions are consciously developed. True rhythm is impossible if any part of the body is tense and unrelaxed. She demonstrated how, if the back is held stiffly erect, the muscles of the arms and legs are tightened toward a consequent jerkiness of motion which causes rapid fatigue. The body muscles should be relaxed from the center of the back, to give free, loosely hinged action to both arms and legs.

Rhythm, said Miss Sikes, is a regular, uninterrupted pulse which is broken into cycles by accents. The simplest rhythmic accent is 1, 2, 1, 2, repeated. Next is 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, repeated. When one comes to a sequence of four beats there is a natural tendency to add a minor accent: 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, repeated, and this tendency becomes even stronger when one uses a system of five beats: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, repeated. In most cases, or at least with only one accent, five beats in the rhythm is the limit for the human body.

Since rhythmic motion is the most pleasurable motion, and rhythmic activity can be carried on longer, with less fatigue, Miss Sikes suggests the following rhythm for the handweaver:

<u>Beat</u>	(with the beater)
Throw	(the shuttle)
Catch	(the shuttle)
<u>Place</u>	(the weft with the beater)
Change	(the shed, or treadle).

Miss Sikes' remarks applied to the use of treadle loom, as rhythm cannot be developed when one uses a hand operated loom, or at least not a completely coordinated, relaxed rhythm -- a fine argument for the treadle loom if the weaver wishes to have the utmost pleasure from the weaving craft.

Being a firm exponent of rhythmic weaving, I should like to carry Miss Sikes' remarks a bit further. Not only does rhythmic weaving increase pleasure and reduce fatigue, it also leads to better textiles. Streaked, uneven fabrics result if weaving is jerky or is constantly interrupted while the weaver goes through such unnecessary activities as fingering selvages, checking written treading directions, adjusting poorly wound bobbins, or looking under the loom to determine which treadle to set on. Rhythmic weaving increases the sensitivity of the body to warp tension so that the rhythmic weaver knows immediately when warp tension has altered and the position of the warp should be changed.

Necessary to rhythmic weaving is the balanced use of the entire body. A rhythm which involves the arms only, or the legs only, is not satisfactory, nor is a rhythm which necessitates the use of the right side of the body more than the left side, or visa versa. There is a lack of coordinated activity when one arm must operate a lever or a wheel to change sheds, more than the other, making one of the chief objections to hand operated looms.

The tie-up of the loom is a controlling factor in rhythmic weaving. The most rhythmic foot motion is the walking motion in which the use of the right and left feet alternate. Therefore treadles should be tied in such a way, regardless of the weave, that the right and left feet are always alternated. This is impossible if tabby

treadles are tied to the center or to the outside for a two-shuttle weave. The tabby treadles should be tied to the right (conventionally, though the alternation may be maintained if they are at the left) and the first four treadles, to the left, should be tied to pattern. Thus the right foot operates the tabbys and the left the patterns. On a 4-harness, 6-treadle loom the treadle spread is sufficiently narrow (if the loom is well built) that tabby may be woven on the two right hand treadles with alternated feet, though it is a little difficult for the right handed person to operate tabby treadles tied at the left. Twills and single-shuttle weaves on 4 or more harnesses and treadles should be tied up so that the right and the left feet can be used in unbroken alternation, if possible. One of the least economic of body motions is that required when both feet are making identical motions at the same time, as required by the loom with the single tie-up (4 treadles for 4 harnesses, so that 2 treadles must be depressed simultaneously). The single tie-up loom, like the hand operated loom, should be avoided by the person who wishes to have the utmost enjoyment from weaving.

THE SEMINAR EXHIBIT

During the course of the Shuttle Craft Guild Seminar for Experienced Weavers there was considerable discussion of exhibits and the value of exhibiting to the individual weaver. It was quite generally agreed that seeing and being able to study handweaving of any and all types done by other handweavers provides inspiration and the meat for progress to any weaver, whether a beginner or an expert. Even those Seminar members who live in metropolitan centers where handweaving exhibits are frequently shown, felt that there is insufficient opportunity for thorough appreciation and study of other weavers' work (study not for copying but for

learning and inspiration in the spirit of the sixth canon of Hsieh Ho). From the other side of the exhibit picture, it was quite generally felt that the handweaver who has passed the stages of being a beginner and is able to design an original textile needed to have other people see his textiles in order to enlarge the self-critical and consequent forward attitude. It was consequently agreed among the 17 Seminar members that a round-robin exhibit would be collected from the group, each member contributing the textile or textiles he had woven which would be of greatest interest and profit to the group. One member, Mrs Afanasiev, agreed to take the responsibility for assembling, packing, and routing the course and all members contributed financially toward defraying the basic expenses. As discussion of the project progressed, almost every member thought of some group, Guild or individual weaver who would appreciate the opportunity of being able to see and use an exhibit of this kind. Therefore it was finally decided that the exhibit would be opened for general use -- that it would be sent to any person or organization sufficiently interested in having it to pay \$5.00 to cover costs of correspondence and initial handling, to assume responsibility for the safety of each piece in the collection, and to pay the express and insurance on to the next person. The exhibit will start its round the first of the year, so all applications, with the \$5.00 payment, must be in the hands of Mrs Afanasiev by Christmas. If you would like to have this unusual exhibit, write to Mrs Frances Afanasiev, 1216 S Fifth Ave, Bozeman, Mont.

BOOK REVIEWS

FOUR-HARNESS HUCK, by Evelyn Neher, 225 S Main St, New Canaan, Conn, \$2.50. One subject treated well and thoroughly in a specialized book can have far more value to a craftsman than a multiplicity of

skimmed. The value of specialization of subject-matter is illustrated in this new booklet. Although Huck may seem a small subject, this thorough thesis indicates what the imaginative mind can do with a single, simple threading and carries implications to the weaver which may be applied to many other weaves. Mrs Neher presents 117 excellent swatch photographs of 117 different textures woven on huck, each with unusually clear directions. Her section on threading formulas can teach any weaver a great deal about draft writing. The presentation could be considered a model for the serious approach to any weaving technique, and from this point of view alone the book should be invaluable to the serious handweaver. We are proud that Evelyn Neher has been a Shuttle Craft Guild member for several years, and we recommend her book with enthusiasm. Order this book from the author, or from the Craft and Hobby Book Service,

DRESSING THE LOOM, by Ida Dean, \$3.50. Specialization of subject matter, it might seem, has been carried beyond the sensible in this attractive booklet. Somewhat pretentious in format and very artfully laid out, this is a picture book illustrating with 24 photographs and a few words the method of vertical mill warping, chaining, and raddle beaming. "One Method for Dressing the Loom" would be a more logical title. The photographs are splendid and the general layout more sophisticated than that of most handweaving publications. For the beginning weaver who has been unable to follow the directions for this same warping method given in Worst, Beriau, Black, and many other standard works, these pictures will provide fool-proof directions for one warping method. Available from Craft and Hobby Book Service.

BYWAYS IN HANDWEAVING, Mary M Atwater, Macmillan, November 1953, \$7.50. This first new book by Mrs Atwater since THE SHUTTLE CRAFT BOOK OF AMERICAN HANDWEAVING, 1928, 1951, is news to any handweaver. To be published soon. Orders being taken by the Guild.