

THE WEAVER'S PALETTE

By NATALIE T. CORBETT

IF WE were, first, designers, then weavers, we could solve more easily, perhaps, one of our most baffling problems—color, and how to use it. Nature uses color courageously. The day from gorgeous sunrise to opalescent clouds at sunset flames with color. The march of the flowers in our gardens through the seasons from daffodils through delphiniums and snapdragons to gladiolas and chrysanthemums is as varied and brilliant as the rainbow. The shades and combinations of yellows, blues, and greens are infinite. A zinnia bed as a sampler would keep us forever at the dye pots.

Too many weavers forget or fear the glory of color. The Puritans and their influence nearly made the world color blind, and reduced colonial weaving almost to a blue and white existence. Never can we be thankful enough to our ancestors for the beauty of the designs which they bequeathed us—the Rose path, the Whig Rose, the Honeysuckle, the Log Cabin, Indian War—and dozens of others. To beauty of design, however, I make a plea that we, as weavers, add the spark that makes a beautifully handwoven fabric vibrate and live, color. Utilitarian objects today, whether linoleum, saucepan, shower curtain, or costume accessory, almost flaunt color.

No one who has been to The World's Fair in New York can come away blind again to the wonder and glory of color. It runs like a theme through this World of Tomorrow. It is as persistent as the beat of Ravel's "Bolero." And we at our looms must beat in as repetitiously color upon color. The modern world exhibits it everywhere, and the commercial world demands it, if an article is to sell. Unfortunately, too few weavers know the technique of using color as does a designer or an artist. We either avoid, through ignorance or fear, bright or varied colors; or by trial and error trust to a lucky throw that will make a pleasing color combination. What follows is just a series of notes, not for the trained designer, but for those weavers still struggling wistfully, yet fearfully, for that color which they love, but dare not use with abandon.

Suggestion 1: Instead of weaving a table runner or square in a vacuum, as it were, take a specific piece of pottery, and select yarns that match, harmonize, or contrast with the individual piece chosen. Spanish, Italian, Quatemalan, Danish, and the subtle colorings of hand made pottery are particularly suggestive and beautiful. Illustration 1 is a table piece, 19" square, woven for a Danish fruit bowl, and matched in Bernat wools to its old blues, rose, and browns. All the pieces illustrated happen to be woven on the familiar Rose path warping. Any pattern, however, would do as well. The point is that our beloved colonial designs are given new life when woven in modern color. Illustrations 2 and 3 are table pieces, the motif in each case being taken from the brilliant Mexican colors so popular today. The effect is far removed from the sober coloring of the original Rose Path.

Suggestion 2: For costume, sport, and evening bags, make

your bag part of a definite ensemble. Be sure you are up to the minute in your color scheme by weaving the bag to match the season's latest chiffon handkerchief, scarf, or corsage. Know what are the stylish colors in velvets, chiffons, tweeds, and silks before laying in your wool or linen. If you are not near exclusive dress shops and department stores, send for samples of new dress goods, or consult the colored sections of fashion and pattern magazines. See what fun it is to weave with a bit of bright color—a handkerchief or a scarf—pinned to your loom. Look at it as does the artist painting with a model or still life on the stand before him.

Suggestion 3: Use swatches of cretonne, chinze, blocked linen, etc., for starting points in weaving. Weave footstool covers, pillow covers, table pieces, chair seats—all in harmony with the curtains that the swatch suggests. Remember there was a textile designer before there was the weaver of that swatch. It is on the market because the designer knew color. Make your article more marketable by profiting from the color sense and skill of that designer. If we are not designers ourselves, we can learn much from what every beautifully designed textile can teach us.

Suggestion 4: Luncheon sets and mats are more interesting to do, more apt to be woven colorfully, and more effectively displayed if they have been woven for specific, not imaginary, dishes. A piece of bright glass or pottery has sold many a handwoven table mat, and vice versa. Each enhances the beauty of the other.

Many years ago, the writer visited where old world tapestry weaving was done in this country. In the tour from dye room to display room, she was shown where literally hundreds, if not thousands, of spools holding as many shades of color filled the yarn room. Here, she was told, the weaver, cartoon in hand, came to select the colors he was going to use on the tiny shuttles he plied back and forth. We weavers have not that number of colors to inspire us and from which to choose, but we can take our bowl, swatch, or dress accessory with us whenever we buy new yarns or consult our sample yarn cards. Then before we start weaving, we have our colors spread out before us, as does the artist who spreads his oils upon his palette.

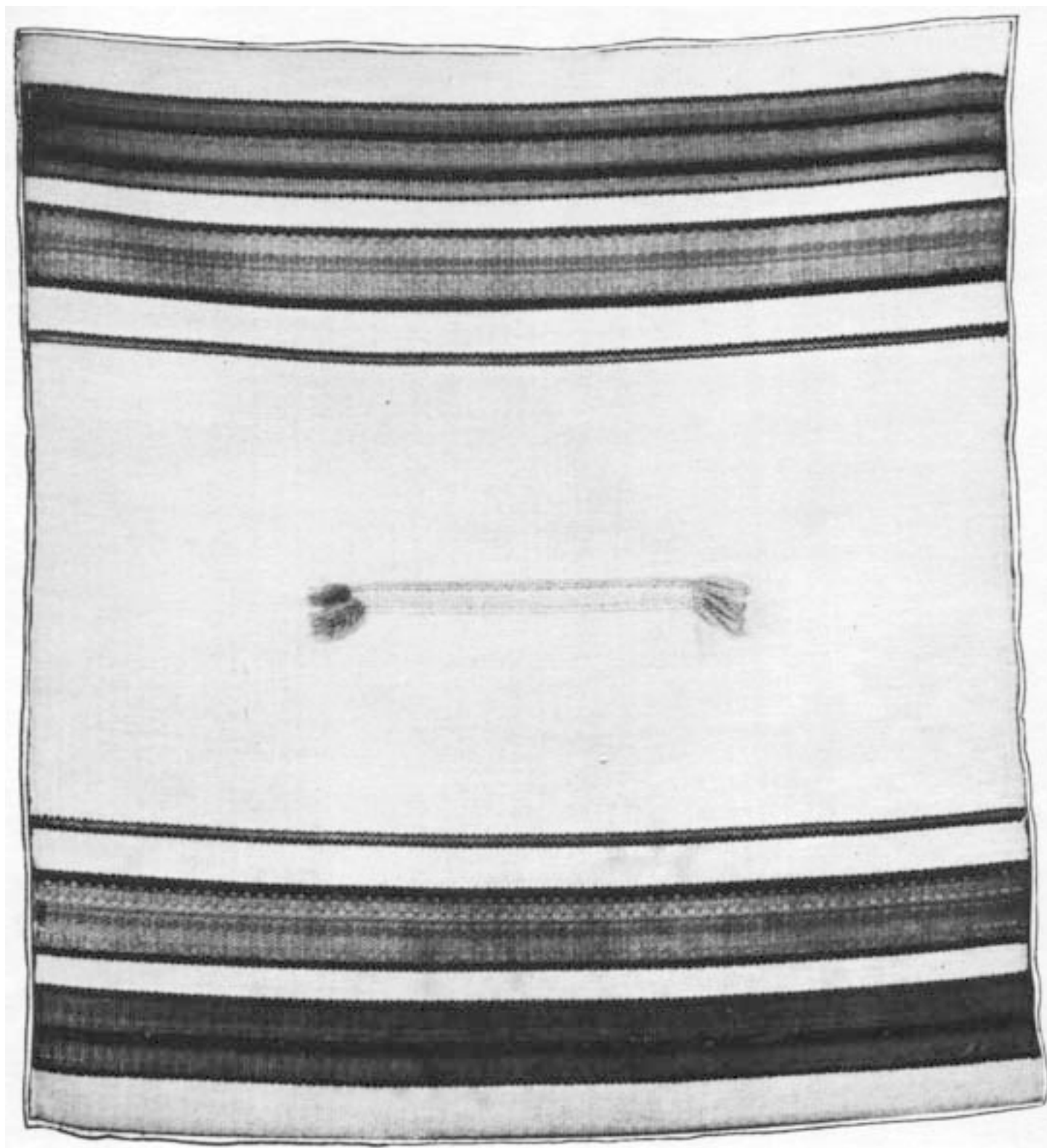
I have not attempted to give the number of picks or the treadlings in these three illustrations, because the greatest satisfaction, I believe, and eventually the most perfect art, come from originality and individual adaptations. We must be creative, as is the great designer and artist, to be great weavers. Moreover, she who creates beauty with her hands gains power and freedom for herself and leaves a rich inheritance to her children and grandchildren. As our grandmothers are remembered for their beautiful designs, let our children remember us as those who loved color and used it joyously and fearlessly. Then will our handweaving of today be a living part of The World of Tomorrow.

As suggestions for the use of color, I am giving the colors used in these three table pieces illustrated in this article.



Illustration 1: Bernat's weaving special

Brown	627
Rose	*808
Blue	797
Blue	*795
Black	



Illustrations 2 and 3:

Tan	*15
Gold	111
Green	616
White	7911 (Imported Sport Tweed)
Green	183 (Peasant Wool)
Peacock	155 (Peasant Wool)
Black	

