

The Modern Approach to Weaving

BY MRS. MARIA STEINHOF

TODAY, we want to create, we must inevitably create, things corresponding to our modern life. In weaving, we must understand once and for all that the time of copying "Queen's Delight," "Governor's Garden" and "Summer and Winter" is over!

Unfortunately, handweaving is now relegated to the role of a minor art. We must understand this situation as a transitory one. Only several decades ago, weaving was the victorious competitor with painting as the highest color expression. Even today, the divine tapestries of Burgundy and Brussels, the weavings of Mexico and Peru are valued higher than a Rembrandt.

Further, we must not believe that handweaving has been exclusively a feminine art. The great masterpieces of Hindu and Chinese handweaving were the work of men.

The handweavings of former epochs could reach their high standard only because they were ever creating new forms. Today, when handweaving has degenerated to copying old patterns, glorious in themselves, it has become a minor art.

If we look at the innumerable patterns of fabrics dis-

played in our department stores, if we consider the beauty of all these new and fantastic weaves, the many previously unknown combinations of threads, hairy woolens, metal weaves, synthetic materials, then we are aware that we can no longer captivate anybody with pieces of handwoven material whose only virtue is that it is handwoven.

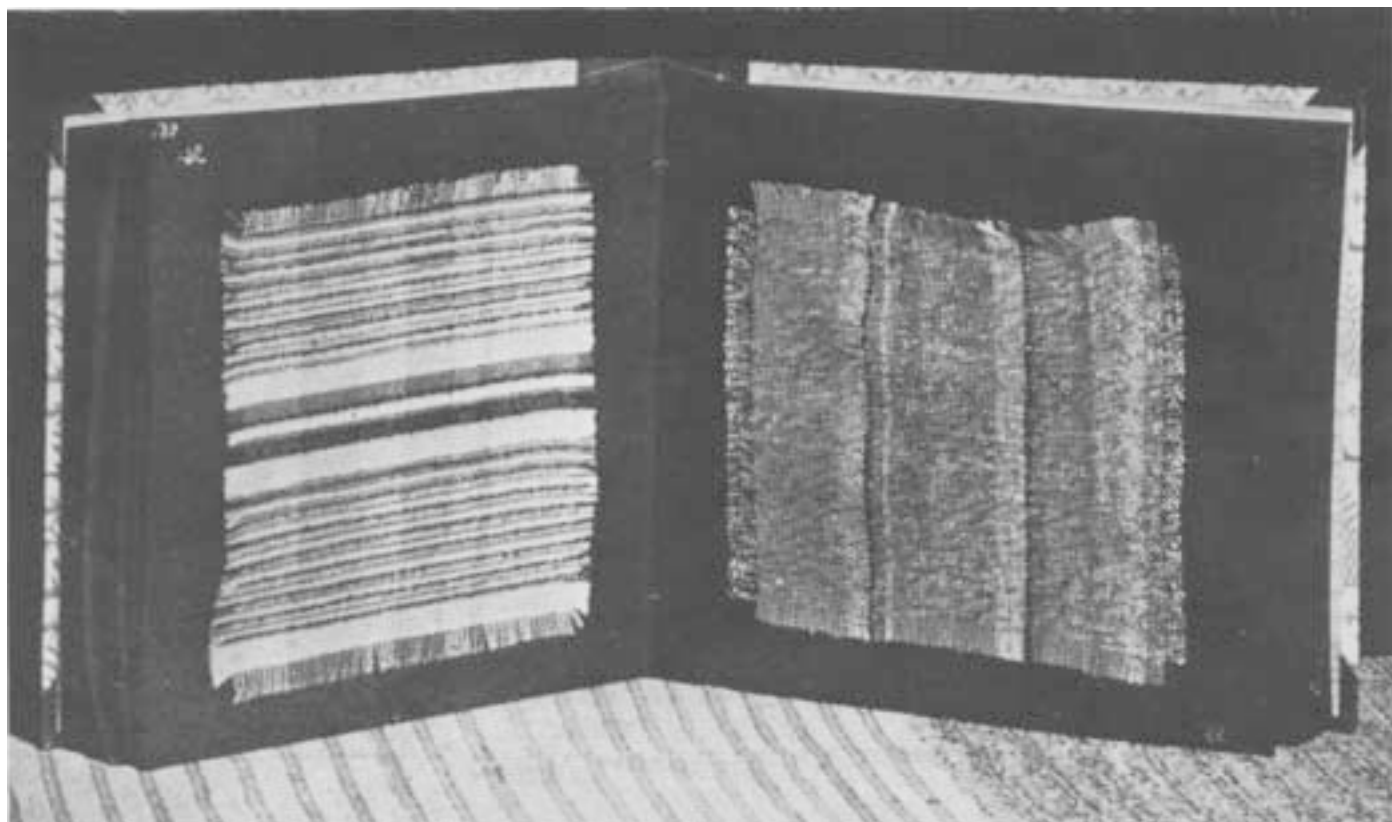
It may be painful or it may be a blessing but, today, nobody cares whether a fabric is handmade or the work of a machine. The effect of the fabric is the decisive test. If anything, the handwoven fabric must be superior to the machine woven fabric, otherwise it has no justification to be chosen in preference to the latter.

After these few critical comments let us be constructive. How can we arrive, anew, at creative, contemporary handweaving?

Let us become practical.

The creative tools of weaving are like those of all art: first, the inborn urge to express yourself through a craft, in our case through weaving; second, the material of the craft, in our case, *the thread*.

As with Music, Weaving has always been the deepest



Sample book of designs by Maria Steinhof

objective expression of the human psyche. The reason lies perhaps in the fact that the beauty of color of the dyed thread is superior to that of the colors in painting.

If you want to play the violin well, you have to be enamoured of your instrument. In the case of weaving, you choose as your instrument the thread. The thread becomes the mediator of your creative longings. All threads are beautiful if you strive to acquire the sense of their nature. Their right application, directed by your natural gifts, gives birth to the creative value of a pattern. This so ardently desired pattern is a result and not a preconceived start.

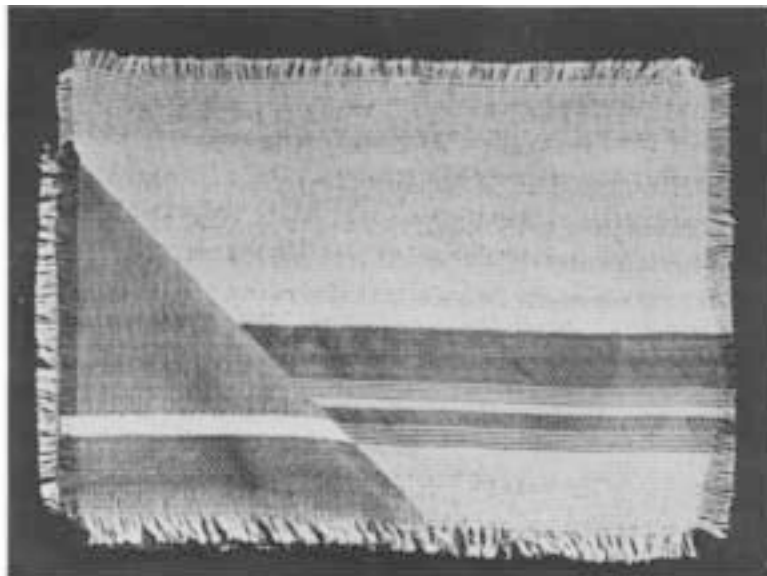
When you are already acquainted with the technique of weaving, the first thing to do is NOT to begin with preconceived patterns, copied or otherwise.

There is only one road which leads to a new pattern. This way is to start actually weaving, to try out this or that thread—to experiment. The reason for having inherited inexhaustible treasures of past art lies therein. Formerly, to create in any other way than that of experimenting was unthinkable. The unknown countries of your self are not less real than the known ones. They are the most solid ground. They are your future!

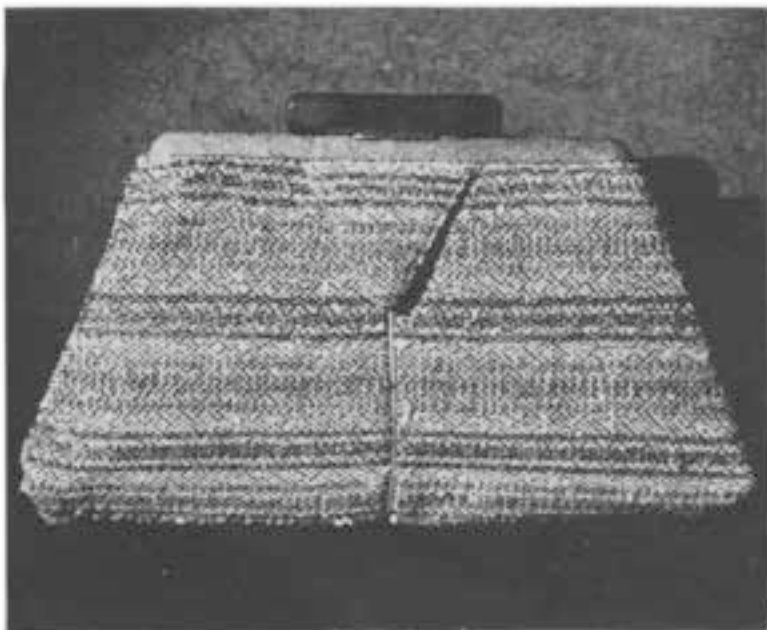
Invention does not mean repetition! I mean: when you start to weave, forget that you have ever woven. Weave as if you were continually beginning. Do not repeat yourself or somebody else. Therein lies the secret of any art creation: Be yourself!

Fortunately, we are witnessing an emergence of American Art, and I believe that handweaving will assume the position of leadership.

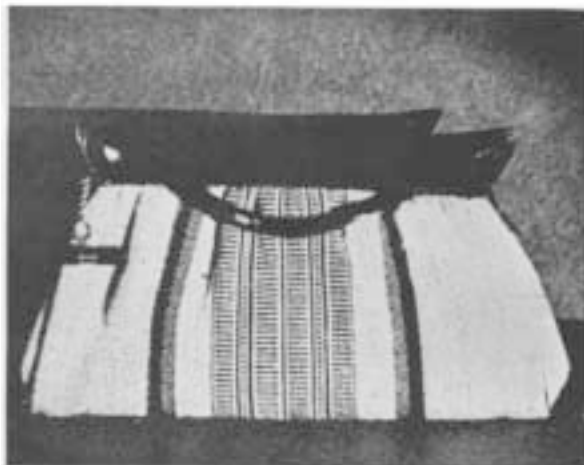
I believe with certainty that the pattern born of the handloom, initiator of any weaving whatsoever, will become the animator of the omnipotent machine loom, and, therefore, the future competitive power of the Textile Industry of the country.



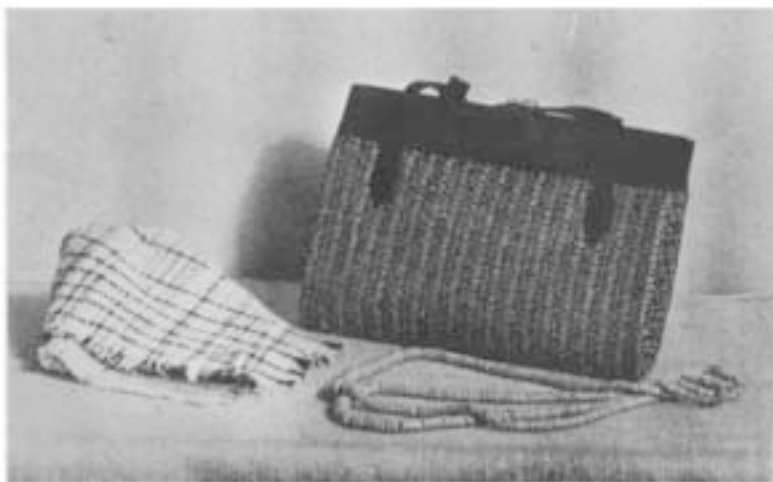
Sample for table napkins in Bernat's Kool Knit and Perle cotton. Colors: Ivory, blue and yellow



Handbag woven of Bernat's Bouclé de Laine in Tan and No. 518, 506



Handbag woven of Bernat's Weaving Wools in gray, black, and orange



Handbag woven of yellow and black Bouclé, with top of black Antelope leather