
MASTER WEAVER

Z - HANDICRAFTS * FULFORD * QUEBEC * CANADA

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No.17

HANDWEAVING MADE EASY.

We have yarns "easy" to work with, looms working by magic, books, which teach weaving in a few easy lessons, shuttles practically self-propelled, and many such beautiful things - at least in advertising.

Frankly, when I read these ads I feel insulted. Do I want to learn a hobby which does not require any mental or manual skill?

One can design a loom which will eliminate nearly all cooperation of the weaver. Such a loom may be excellent for industrial handweaving, or for occupational therapy; it may be a blessing for the sick. But if its greatest asset is that it is fit for feeble-minded, then it is hardly worth while to try to sell it to the craftsmen.

All "easy" things whether looms, yarns, books, or teachers have their limitations. If they are really easy, then they cannot give much satisfaction to the consumer, because by mechanising and simplifying the otherwise very complex craft, all possibility of creativeness will be eliminated.

There is a fundamental mistake made by those who use the argument of "easiness" in advertising. They forget that the whole tendency of our modern life is to make the mechanical part of it "easy". Easier cooking, cleaning, washing, heating, and all other chores. This tendency is legitimate because of the shortage of domestic help. But crafts are not chores! Just the contrary - they are healthy reaction against the easiness, the mechanical easiness of our every day's life. We are craftsmen because we are fed up with pressing buttons, and calling the electrician whenever the button does not work. At the same time we find satisfaction in creating, and nobody can create with half-automatic gadgets, and ready-to-use recipes.

What we are after is to fight and overcome difficulties. Not artificial difficulties such as making toasts on an open fire, but real problems intrinsically connected with the craft.

This would-be easiness of weaving has a very demoralising effect on beginners. After they hear so much about it, they are extremely disappointed with themselves and develop an inferiority complex, never suspecting that the advertising is not always gospel truth.

When teaching we should be quite outspoken on this point. Handweaving is anything but easy. The apparent easiness with which an experienced weaver throws the shuttle 60 times a minute has been acquired during years of work, and on hundreds if not thousands of yards of warp. The analysis "at a glance" of a fabric is the result of long and serious studies. The ability of combining colours and yarns into a practical and pleasing texture is either a gift, or the fruit of painstaking research. Good edges do not "just happen".

Handweaving is one of the most exacting hobbies. And no wonder. Such as it is now - it is the final product of work of millions of craftsmen during thousands of years. Lucky as we are to inherit the fruit of their experience, we cannot hope to assimilate all this knowledge and skill in a few easy lessons.

CODED WEAVING.

When we do not feel like making special threading drafts, we can still weave coded messages on any draft which gives 4 different blocks of pattern. This means any 4-frame twill, plain, diamond, dornick, herringbone, then any overshot, crackle, and even summer-and-winter, but always woven with binder.

Instead of the length of floats, we use here the number of the block. The picks of weft remain as before. Since however the numbers of blocks are completely arbitrary, the clue to these numbers must be given in each woven piece. We do this in the first horizontal border. The first pick of pattern weft means the 1-st block, the second pick - the 2-nd block, and so on. We shall show later on on a draft how this works out.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	-	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
2	-	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
3	-	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
4	-	V	W	X	Y	Z	-	-

Fig.1

The code is given in Fig.1. The rows (horizontal) are the blocks; the columns (vertical) are the number of picks. One pick of pattern weft does not mean anything (first column), except at the beginning, where it shows the order or numbers of blocks.

The letter "A" is the first block used twice, "Z" is the fourth block used 6 times.

Let's suppose that we have the threading draft shown in fig.2. We start the border repeating several times the same treading with only one shot of weft on each treadle. The first shot will be the first block for the whole message. In our case treadle No.1 will be used for block No.1 (in a draw-down the first pick of weft is the lowest one, as in actual weaving). Then treadle 2 for block 2, tr.3 for

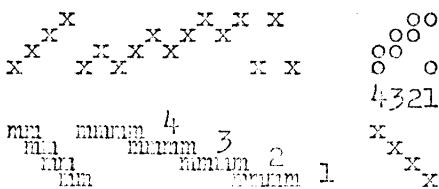


Fig.2

block 3, and tr.4 for block 4. We could start on any other treadle as well, but once this order is established it gives the clue to the whole message and therefore cannot be changed.

The importance of preserving this order becomes obvious when we try to read the message. Since we have only the woven piece we have no idea what tie-up and treading were used, but we know that the first pick of pattern weft is No.1 (fig.2) and that it shall have the same number whenever it is repeated all through the coded text. Thus when reading we must refer always to the first four picks of weft in the border.