



*Courtesy of John Russell Pope, Architect*

Tapestry Room in the residence of J. R. McLean, Washington, D. C. This room was built for the purpose of displaying these valuable and antique specimens of art.

## Tapestry Weaving in America

*This glorious art industry is making great strides in this country and developing along most original lines*

**T**HE tree of art and industry is about to put on a new crown—it is growing in America. What appears to some of us as hectic—mere caprice and irresponsibility—a bringing of ourselves forward with ideas—is the first rising of the new sap, and soon, let us hope, the tree will in the warmth and glory of the new sun, take on in the unfolding of its branches a shape worthy of our notice and admiration, and unclipped by the artificial hand of the academic school be left to bloom in the glory of nature.

In quest of American-woven tapestry, one need not travel further than the shores of New York City, though our looms are not distributed throughout different localities, we are not without them in this country. Indeed, very creditable work has been under way since the Baumgarten looms, situated in Williamsbridge on the banks of a little stream in the Bronx, started their looms in 1893 under the guidance of the late William Baumgarten. Here he imported talent and set up a community which in itself looks like a bit of the old world transplanted.

Hidden away in the crevices of the Palisades just opposite New York, stands one of the foremost and fast-growing studios to which travel the students and lovers of this art, even as we sought out the factories of Paris and the looms of the continent. At Edgewater, under the able direction of Lorentz Kleiser, ancient patterns are copied and original designs are being executed, with creditable and exact authenticity.

The Herter Looms, located within the busiest district of New York City, continue to create and supply the demands made upon them by decorators, architects and

art patrons. They have executed varied and magnificent examples of ancient design, also numerous original patterns made for and suited to the American spirit of decoration.

A visit to any of these looms is of untold interest. Here we do not find the throb and haste of the power-propelled factory. Each studio, in turn, seems more like a great, quiet school where tasks are being accomplished in peaceful silence. One is impressed with the seriousness and earnestness with which the work is being accomplished, through patient years of apprenticeship, before the student becomes a talented and gifted worker, taught by imported experts, old in the art. As a reward there are few instances to be found in modern work of more perfect or exact adaptations of the ancient examples than are found right here, but admittedly lacking in charm and color which only age has given to the ancient examples extant.

The furtherance of sincerity in the production of the industrial arts of this country is slowly, though most surely, coming into its own, first with a recognition, then understanding, and soon, let us hope, with appreciation. And it is hoped that the American artisan will work on this line of thought, combined with honesty of material and labor so that we may stand with prominence not for a day but for the future, in the great awakening of this ancient art's revival. This art must be watched like a tree, else it dies for want

of encouragement when our backs are turned. After being neglected as an art for over a century, tapestries are again being held in highest esteem, and again considered a necessity in the homes of the wealthy and luxuri-



This large piece of tapestry has strong decorative qualities, obtained by the use of large flat surfaces of color. Edgewater Looms.



The musical panel—original composition—shows a charming reproduction of the famous Mille Fleur pattern. Edgewater Looms.

ous, and are playing an important part in the refinement of the day. Enormous sums are laid down in this awakening and the home-maker and art patron are with certain patriotic feeling beginning to reach out and aspire for the American article.

Americans have heretofore been so dependent upon other countries, because of their abundant yielding that up to the present they have had little thought of purchasing elsewhere. Now, necessity has stepped in and is showing us what home artists are accomplishing.

One cannot adequately describe in a limited space all the wonderful possibilities for the use of tapestry and the process of its weaving. Those who would follow the subject with interest can find specimens of value and much information in the Metropolitan Museum of New York City, or in the looms already mentioned.

Modern American tapestry, like other expressions of art, is inclined to be decorative, striking and strong in color, lacking quite naturally, the tones which only antiquity and the age can give. The thick silks and cottons in this country have been used often to good advantage but the finest results are undoubtedly obtained by the use of colored wools. Its surface absorbs light and has a quiet intensity unequalled by any other material. Silk combined with wool may sometimes look extremely well but it must be used discriminately with taste and with knowledge.

The process of tapestry seems simple and follows a certain simple procedure. First, the cartoons done in the manner of a painting are set for the weaver's study. Then the setting up of the warp, known by the high or low warp. The finer and closer the setting of the warp, the more valuable and durable the tapestry. Now the warp is usually of cotton, although wool was used entirely in the ancient days.

The colors are carefully chosen and the weaver begins his work. Even though exacting, it is agreeable and undertaken with love and interest. The materials are colored by the arduous labor of a master-chemist, who often takes years to produce the satisfactory results. The cheaper dyes are not lasting and eventually bring to an

early destruction the life of a well designed tapestry.

Women are executing most of the work for the smaller furniture covers and are the best masters in the art of restoring and preserving the old tapestries.

The buying of American tapestries is an extraordinarily wise investment, although not generally regarded in this light, for the art of tapestry is again on the eve of a great development and bids fair to occupy a place foremost in the valuable arts of the world. In purchasing, the art patron should be guided by the valuable advice of dealers who look beyond the immediate sale.

The commercial aspect of the question must be fully dealt with, as must the question of comparative inactivity and backwardness of this country in its own products pertaining to art and the many industries allied to it, showing an unfavorable contrast to the now crippled countries abroad. We have been so bent on making haste and increasing production that we have not taken the required time to produce tapestries and the like for the sake of art and endurance. But out of this international chaos we are inclined to predict the coming of national calm, a reflective moment of life and humanity, creating a sober attitude which will reflect upon the mirror of art.

Where one can afford the luxurious use of tapestry in decoration, and it can likewise be used with taste and

appropriateness to its surroundings—never in the wrong place—it has a decorative value far exceeding any form of wall decoration. Looking carefully into the soft color scheme employed in its weaving we find innumerable color effects which in themselves are lessons in combining of color which can be followed with artistic results. To those who possess them, then, let this handsome piece be a scheme from which the rest of the room may be built up, and to those who may acquire, let the art of illumination be exercised in its full extent. Our architects are fortunately creating homes of luxury and excel-

lence whose interiors require such perfection of adornment. The study of tapestry throughout its periods of development, together with the history of its art patrons in the several countries where the industry flourished, is one of utmost interest and importance.



This large panel was especially designed and made and shows an unusual treatment. Herter Looms.



Tapestry woven at Williamsburg after a modern painting. Wm. Baumgarten Looms.