

**DAMASK.** A textile with satin, twill, or taffeta figures on satin ground of the same color, the lines of the figures contrasting sharply with the lines of the ground and causing the shifting sheen that marks the appearance of damask as viewed from different angles. In satin damask the figures are in weft satin, the ground in warp satin. Just as tapestry (q.v.) is primarily a wool weave and a weft weave, so damask is primarily a silk weave and a warp weave, the figures of tapestry being formed by the manipulation of the weft on bobbins, the figures of damask by the manipulation of the warp with harness. In damask the weft, being shuttle-thrown the whole width of the warp, is manipulated with difficulty. In tapestry the warp threads, being divided into only two sets—one consisting of the odd threads, the other of the even threads—instead of five or more sets as in damask, permit plain weave only. Damask, then, marks the development of the loom to a point where the warp threads can be freely manipulated to form figures. (See WEAVING.) Most upholstery and drapery silk damasks have the figures in taffeta, giving a bolder contrast than would the finer lines of the weft satin threads. Damasks are also woven in wool, linen, mercerized cotton, and other materials less expensive than silk.

An important class of damasks are those in linen and cotton intended for use as tablecloths and napkins, usually white (the finer grades being woven in the gray and bleached after weaving), but sometimes (especially in the coarse grades and for the cheaper and less civilized peoples) in red or blue. The better grades are made of very fine linen threads woven close, with the warp in eight or more sets, and in patterns that are often most elaborate, picturing architecture and landscapes and human figures, against a comparatively plain or striped ground.

The word "damask" has for generations been so carelessly and incorrectly used that it is still incorrectly defined in almost all books of reference in all languages, and often employed inaccurately in museum labels and catalogues. Perhaps the simplest and most comprehensive, though hardly the clearest, definition would describe damask as *flat-figured satin*.