

# Learning with FABRIC & THREADS

Thesis

by Norina O'Shea

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LEARNING WITH FABRIC AND THREADS  
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## INTRODUCTION

I propose in this thesis to treat basketry, basic weaving, decorative designing and tapestry.

As a teacher I would see a great need for this study. It trains the child in observation, colour appreciation, in the ability to perceive the various textures and forms. It stimulates their interest and awakens their insight into the more complex and abstract forms of art. The teacher herself would need a thorough knowledge and clarification in every aspect of these crafts, if she is to guide the pupil and impart enthusiasm for the work.

Personally I feel a need to do this study, because in my dealings with children, questions have arisen which demanded explanations of development in the many areas of work to which I introduced them. Also I intend to make wide use of these crafts and skills in my teaching of art, firstly because there is a movement back towards the crafts in our time and a greater appreciation of hand work and secondly children find great satisfaction in doing and making, and thirdly the work itself in this area is therapeutic. Also it is the answer to the child who says "I cannot draw". There are few among the slow learners or in a mixed ability class who cannot achieve with their hands.

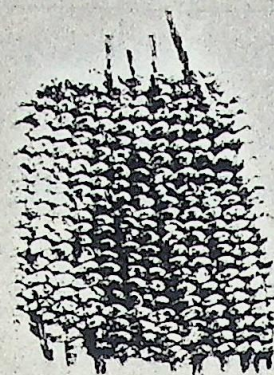


My research work was done in the library and the National Museum. Having first listed the areas I was going to research I consulted the better general encyclopaedia e.g.

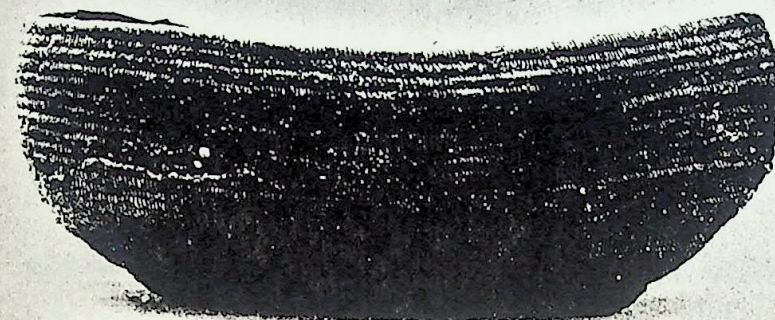
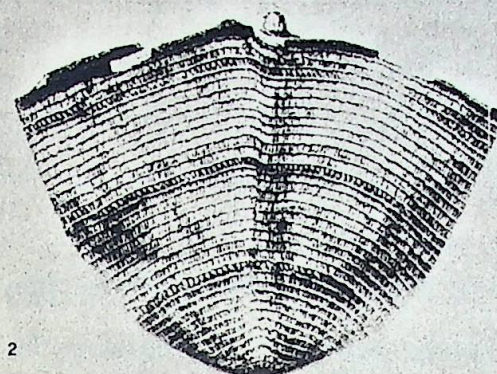
"Encyclopaedia International" as well as specific histories of art and craft books. Source materials have been always made available in the College - actual exhibits and literature dealing with the subject. Apart from this I have found visits to such centres as the Kilkenny Design Shop and various craft shops and folk exhibits very beneficial.

Under specific headings in Chapter 2 I hope to outline the history and the evolving techniques.

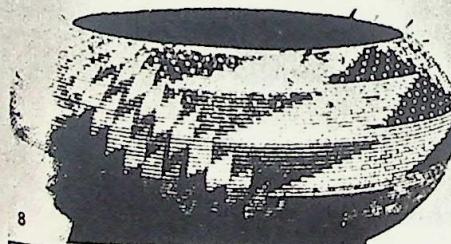
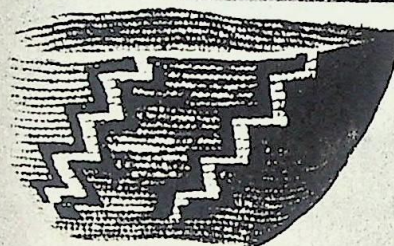
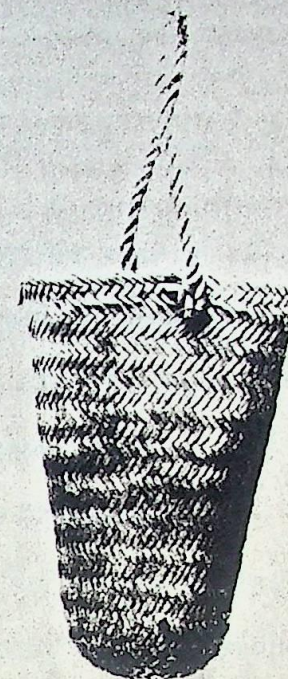




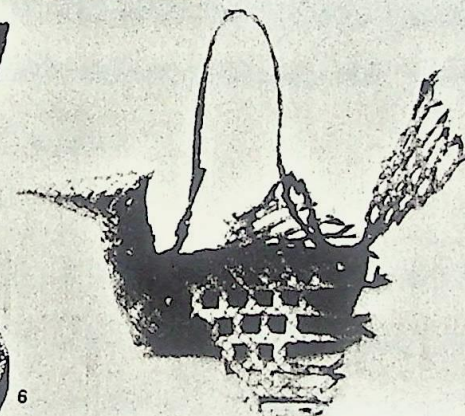
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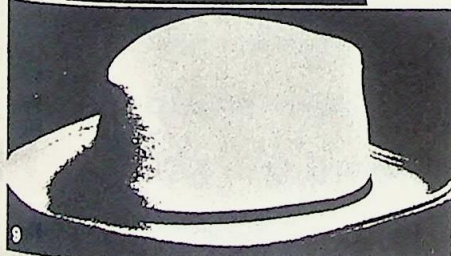
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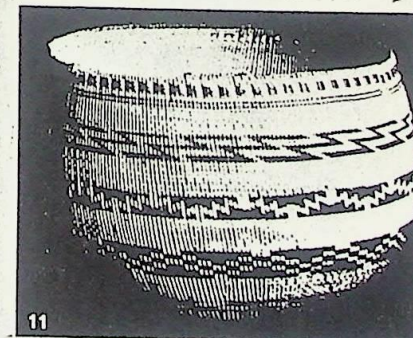
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## CHAPTER 2

### BASKET MAKING

Basket making is one of the oldest and most primitive nearly universal crafts of primitive man. That basket making appears in rudimentary as well as in the early stages of civilization is indicated by the fact that in historic times baskets of high quality were produced in some of the worlds most backward areas. Pomo Indian women of North California were skillful basket makers and gained the reputation of the world's most expert basket makers. Not only was their coiled basketry more complicated than any made in the old world but their twined basketry was remarkable for its fineness and evenness of weave.

It is not extravagant to claim basketry as the earliest artifact. The first human being who wove branches together to make a shelter began it. Basketry has been called "the mother of pottery" since baskets were used as moulds for cooking pots by the North American Indians, and from the imprints on the clay it is possible to learn the patterns and weaving of their very early examples. No person can date the first basket, since some climates and soil have proved poor preservers. Prehistoric graves of the basket makers - Indians of Arizona and New Mexico have yielded quantities of baskets. Museums throughout the world show specimens of early and prehistoric basketry, and a brief study of the collections in local museums will show one of the salient factors of the history of the craft.



Baskets have always been made of any material available and design and type have depended largely on this. In the first instance baskets are made for domestic use and decoration, and colour secondary, but a study of the North American Basketry will provide an example of one of the wonders and mysteries of the human race - the creation of pure art forms by primitive people - in this case always women who turned a chore into an art.

#### USES

Primitive people have used basketry in home construction and furnishing for walls, roofs, doors, partitions, rugs, chairs, hammocks and mattresses, as household utensils for preparing cooking and serving foods and for storing food, clothes, trinkets, jewels, in transport rush balsas, mat rafts, sails, carrying and collecting baskets, cradles and coffins, - in hunting and fishing corrals, traps, fish weirs, dip nets, creels, bait baskets. As clothing, hats, collars, capes, skirts, arm bands, belts, footwear. In warfare shields, helmets body armour and as musical instruments, rattles and drums. They also have made gambling trays, cult symbols and ceremonial bowls of basketry. Women made toys of almost perfect symmetry little larger than  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in diameter. The greatest triumph of the primitive basket maker was the perfection of the water-tight container.



Hupa Indians of California made a pot-shaped cooking basket so closely turned that they could boil soup or acorn mush in it simply by dropping hot stones into liquid.

#### MATERIALS

A greater variety of plants are used by people of the temperate zones. In 1902 the botanist Frederick V. Colville identified 87 plants employed by North American Indians in making and colouring baskets. Some of these plants such as reeds, rushes and sedges flourish in marsh areas in many parts of the world and have been widely used since early times.

Cultivated plants also furnished some materials e.g. wheat, straw, flax stems and corn husks.

Plaited work - all basket work is either plaited, woven or coiled.

#### DECORATIVE DESIGN

Because the elements cross one another at angles and at regular intervals, designs tend to be straight-lined geometrical ones, steps diamonds, zig-zags - triangles and hollow squares. Some primitive basket makers give naturalistic names to their geometric designs thus the Chitimacha Indians of Louisiana call a meandering line "worm track". A black spot in the centre of a white cross "Black bird's eye" Small Chevrons "Mouse tracks" and a diamond-shaped motif "Little Fish".



Quote from J. Arnold - "In consideration of the demand of our time, and of modern techniques and materials a craftsman must possess the following qualifications. From some of these qualifications I would apply the same to teaching crafts in the Art Class, one of which to start with basketry. He quotes "An appreciation of that can and cannot be done with the materials of a craft". In this case the material being willows, rushes etc. It would be good for the student if the material is grown locally to have the experience first hand in seeing it in its natural habitat and understand the different stages in preparation of willows etc. for use in the making of baskets. Going to all this trouble he would appreciate the task involved in making baskets and basket forms. Quote "A knowledge of the processes involved". Having learned some of the processes involved he would then begin to learn techniques, also the historical and cultural background of the craft. I would see this link between History and Arts and Crafts as a very important factor, giving the Art class an equal standing with other subjects on the students timetable, and also a beginning to further developments in linking with other subjects, Science, Modern Languages etc.

Looking at the whole range of basketry it is clear that there are many lovely forms and different techniques and ways to create them. I have applied some in the class room - some examples of the work are clearly illustrated here. The students on making sampler coiling pieces soon progressed to making their first three-dimensional shapes. They are very successful for their first attempts, and this introduced the students to new approaches in this very primitive craft.



How to apply this craft in the class room presented some problems. I had to think of materials that could be used and easily managed by the students - what they would be capable of doing with these materials and how I would introduce the craft of basketry. Being in the process of learning some of the basket techniques myself, I have applied some in the Art class. Coiling, twining and knotting, and hope to further develop these techniques and more in the future.

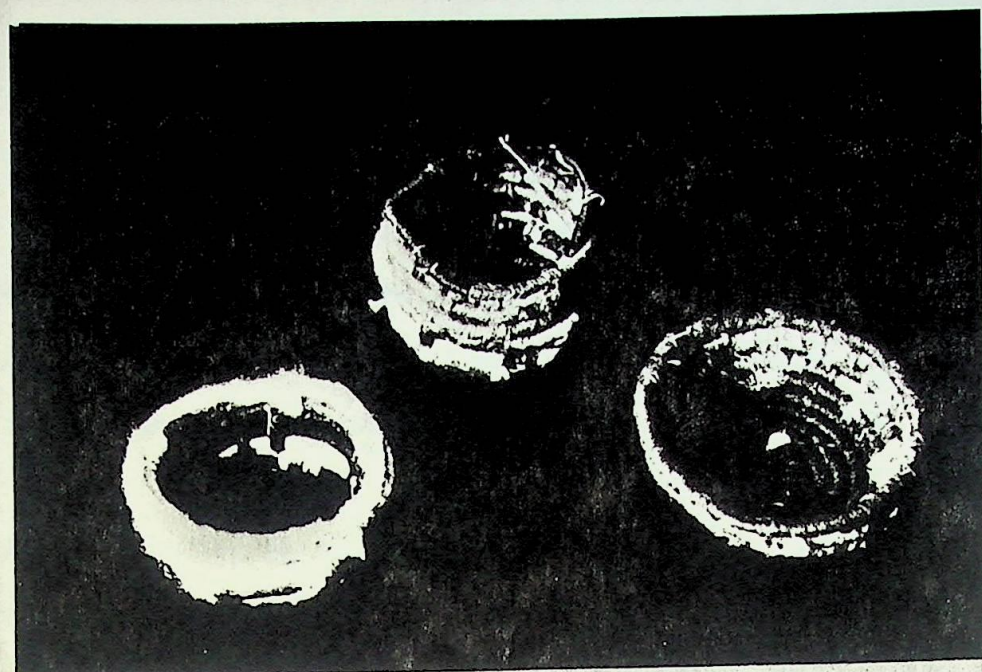
The materials used were Sisal, wool and jute. The students were familiar with all of these fibres. Being soft and easily manoeuvred fibres, the shapes evolved without much difficulty.

#### COILING

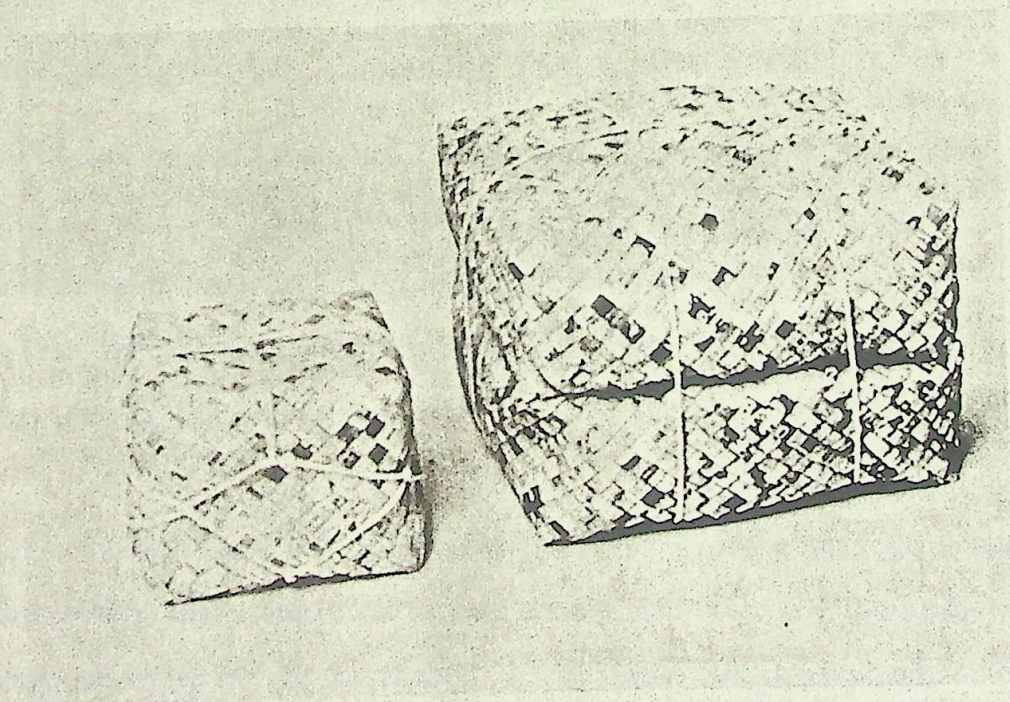
The coiling method for making baskets has been employed for centuries in almost every culture but it is a relatively new skill for the majority of modern craftsmen who have been accustomed to weaving, macrame, crochet and knitting. Those who have discovered the versatility of the technique are excited about the variety it offers, not only for making baskets but also for sculptural forms, that can employ basketry and other techniques.

Introducing coiling to the class, the pupils made a "sampler" to learn the various stitches and what they do. Once you know the basic techniques you realise how simple it is to shape and to add colour and decorative items. You can study how stitches work more easily with thick smooth cords than with thin threads or with soft fuzzy and textured yarns.





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To motivate interest in the craft I showed the students sampler pieces I had made and a collection of baskets from other countries. When the students have experienced for themselves the basic techniques and have made a finished piece, slides could be shown where basketry is applied to masks, sculpture and jewellery, and a gallery of basket ideas. This would give further interest and the students will discover the versatility of basketry.

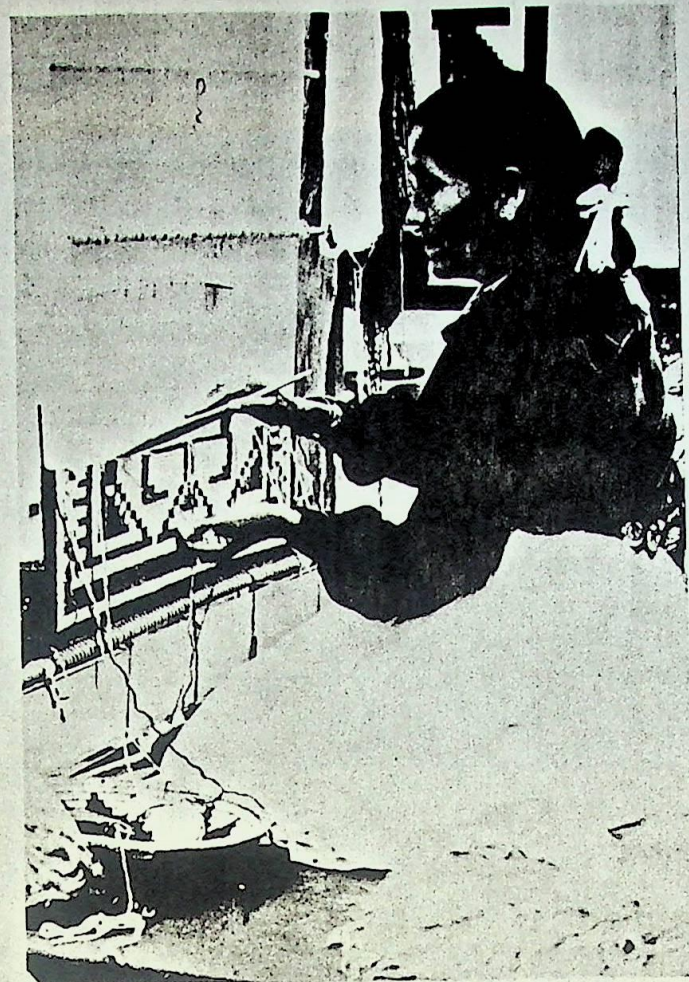
A demonstration on the basis techniques of coiling - how to begin the coil - how to make stitches to secure coil, how to add weft and splicing core - adding colours, finishing the end of coil. It would be necessary to give individual demonstrations to assure confidence in the student in what he is doing. You can shape a coil in anyway you like, circular, square, oval and so forth.

#### TWINING

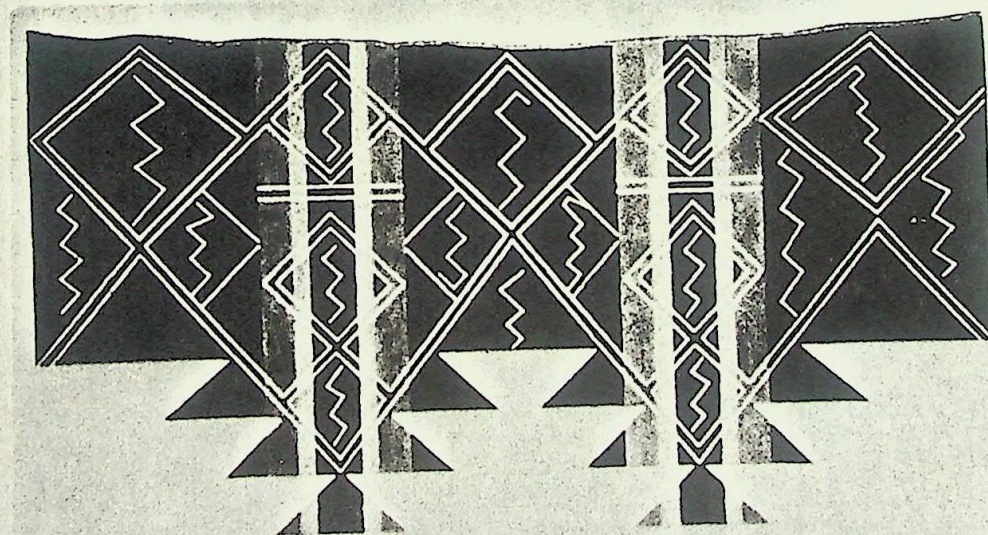
Also called weft, twining is believed to be older than weaving and involves at least two wefts enclosing a warp. Twining examples dating back to 2,000 B.C. have been found in Peru and later throughout South America. It appears in textiles and baskets of many cultures.

From my own experience of twining string to make baskets I would introduce this simple technique in the Art class. The materials used are similar to that used in coiling. To start with the students could once again make sampler pieces, not using colour at first so as to learn a few variations in twining, introducing a textured surface. As they become adept in twining they will understand how colour can be used and controlled, making solid patterns and mosaic appearances.



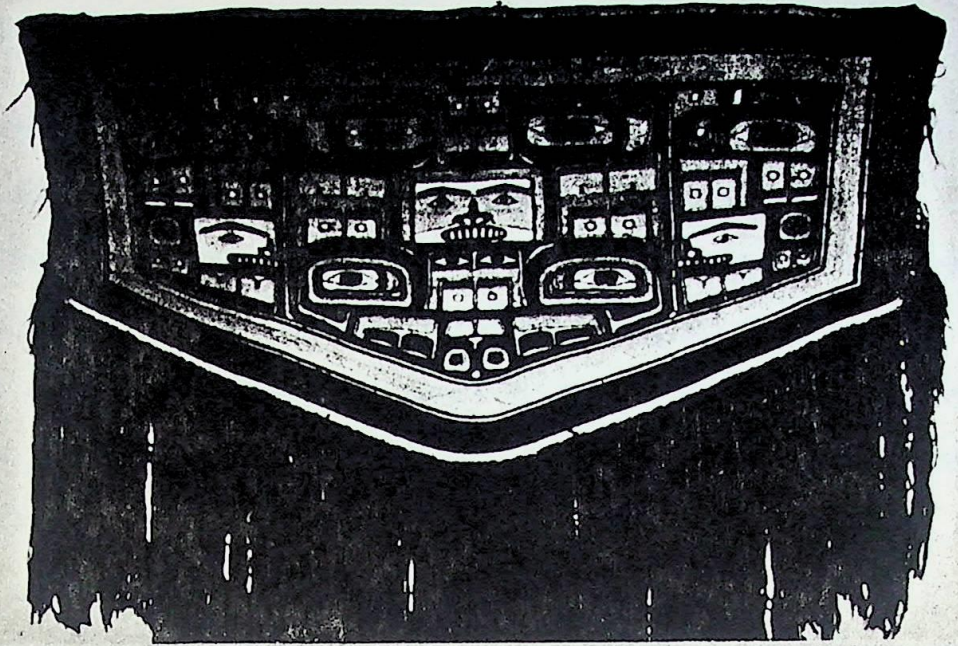


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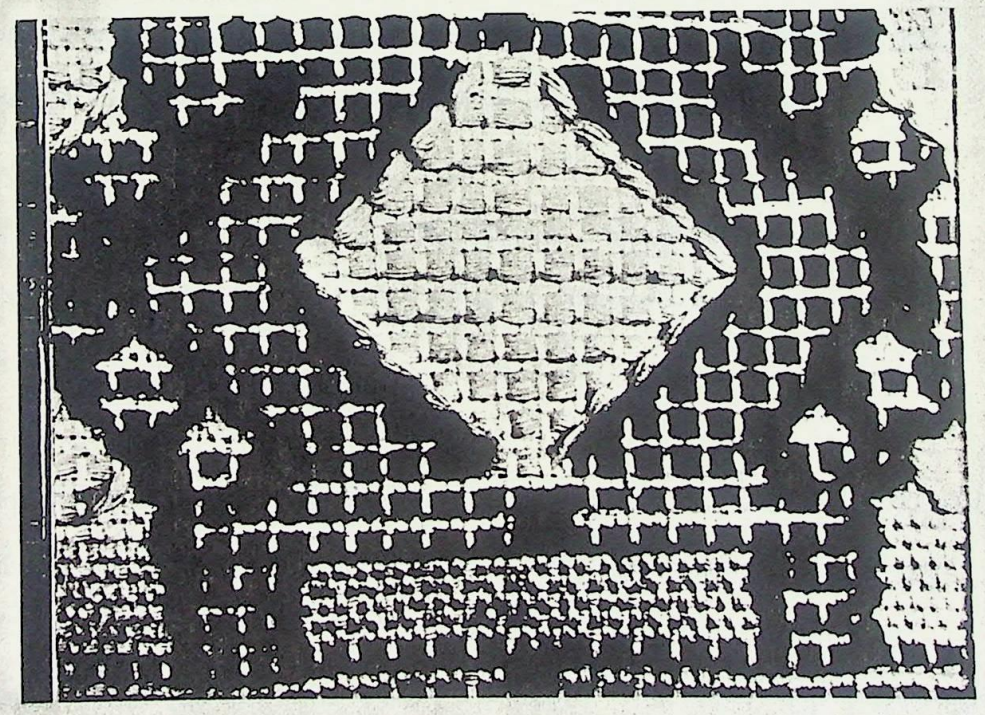


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### BASIC WEAVING

Weaving on any extensive scale requires a fixed abode, since a loom tends to be large and heavy and therefore difficult to transport from place to place. The ideal situation for development was a small settled community surrounded by grazing lands for sheep. The fleece was clipped off by methods closely resembling those in use today; the resultant bunch of fibre was then spun off and the thread woven into cloth on a loom.

Having arrived at spinning wool I would introduce to 1st and 2nd year how to make a spindle. A very simple method would be to make a potato or apple spindle. All you need is a stick with 2 or 3 spikes at one end, a potato or apple about the size of an egg and a penknife. This kind of spindle is easy to make but it does not last long as the whorl will shrink. Perhaps the students could think of other ways of making spindles.

Another simple method - Palm spinning - Palm spun wool is rough and uneven but all you need is some sheep's wool and your hand.

The best way of finding out how to weave is to unravel some cloth. Find an old piece of sacking or hessian and cut out a square. Pull several threads from the sides of the square and look carefully to see how the cloth is made. You will see that the threads pass under and over each other. Weaving on the cardboard looms would be one simple method in showing the students how to weave a piece of fabric and also make them understand that it takes a long time to weave when you pick your way under and over the



warp thread using a bodkin. They would then make a heddle and shuttle using lolly sticks. The heddle will help to separate the alternate threads and a shuttle will hold larger lengths of yarn. For these different projects it would be necessary to have an interesting collection of things to weave with. Wool, string, strips of rag, reeds, grasses, wood shavings, tendrils from honey-suckle and whatever else that could be thought of. For the 1st and 2nd year students, waist looms and shoe box looms would be their first introduction to a loom. However, weaving on cardboard looms or simple frames is not an end in itself - it is a means to an end. These small looms are merely tools for learning techniques.

Paper weaving is accepted as a useful introduction to teaching the basis principles of weaving. Teachers have found that very young children can manage wide paper strips more easily than they can manage yarn when they first try weaving, and in addition paper weaving is useful as a design tool on all class levels. A pattern can be designed and woven in paper with easy change of colours and interlacement, as a study of a weaving project. All the following and more can be done in paper weaving, straight strips in one direction shaped strips woven through. Both warp and weft strips can be cut into curving, angular and diagonal strips.

\*Extra strips of other colours can be woven in over wide strips.

\*Coloured tissue paper in layers can build up colours and you may find a brand new colour.

\*Small areas of added pattern shapes can be pasted on.



I can see paper weaving as a good beginning for colour relationships and proportion. Sampling can be kept to a minimum or expanded as time and interest permits. Then at a certain time it is important to make something. A class banner would be fun, each one weaving a section. This would include planning and design, colour, weaving, sewing, decorative stitchery and team work. Colours and yarns can be planned for harmony, a general idea or theme worked out and then each weaver will go on his own. Some will want to weave plain areas, some will be ambitious to try patterns and textures and pictorial weaving.

Weaving became sophisticated early. The weavers realising the possibilities in the use of various materials, design and colours. Constantinople received a rich inheritance in the textile arts and by the 6th Century A.D. was a centre of silk manufacture. Weaving later developed all over Europe. The wool cloth trade became the mainstay of medieval England. In Italy during the Renaissance, glorious silks and velvets were produced. Flanders excelled in woollen tapestry weaving. France not only created great tapestries but also developed at Lyons a centre still noted for its brocaded materials and silks. When showing slides of these developments in weaving, visits to museums and galleries would be a first hand experience for the students, and would also help them to become more aware and recognise the different periods in painting and works of art through the ages.



The 18th Century saw the invention of the power loom and the 19th the development of the commercial textile industry. A characteristic of the 20th century has been the widespread use of synthetic threads. The crafts of hand weaving are today enjoying a revival, being chiefly used to make fabrics for decorative purposes. It is mainly practised on the medieval loom which is used with a few harnesses. Increasingly though, industry is turning to hand weavers for new design ideas, worked out on hand looms to be taken over for machine production. Hand weaving is included in the curriculum of many art schools and art departments of colleges and universities. It has survived through the ages as an art form in tapestry.

Hand weaving has also been taken up in the field of occupational therapy, having though as its aim neither an educational nor an artistic end but solely that of rehabilitation.

It should be realised that the development of weaving is dependant also upon the development of textile fibres, spinning and dyeing - each a part of the interplay resulting in a fabric. Recent advances in the production of synthetic fabrics and new textile finishes are having profound effects upon the weaving of cloth.



### MAKING BRAIDS AND PLAITS

From the earliest times man has made braids for both functional and decorative purposes. The majority of textile constructions have evolved from working small areas of fabric, and similarly braids are an excellent introduction to the textile construction crafts.

For 1st year I would introduce simple plaiting and braid techniques that could be used for making textile jewellery, wall hangings and textile constructed pictures.

More advanced classes could be introduced to one of the oldest techniques for constructing a narrow strip of fabric.

### TABLET WEAVING:

The construction would involve the use of a set of cards or tablets.

They would learn how to construct patterns on squared paper and during the process of making the braid they would learn that intriguing variations can be made.

### BRAIDED RUGS

The first braided rugs were probably made of straw and were used to keep feet off damp earth floors. Later when fabric was woven and used for clothing, worn scraps of well used coats,



suits and dresses were saved and cut and wound into balls to be used for the rugs.

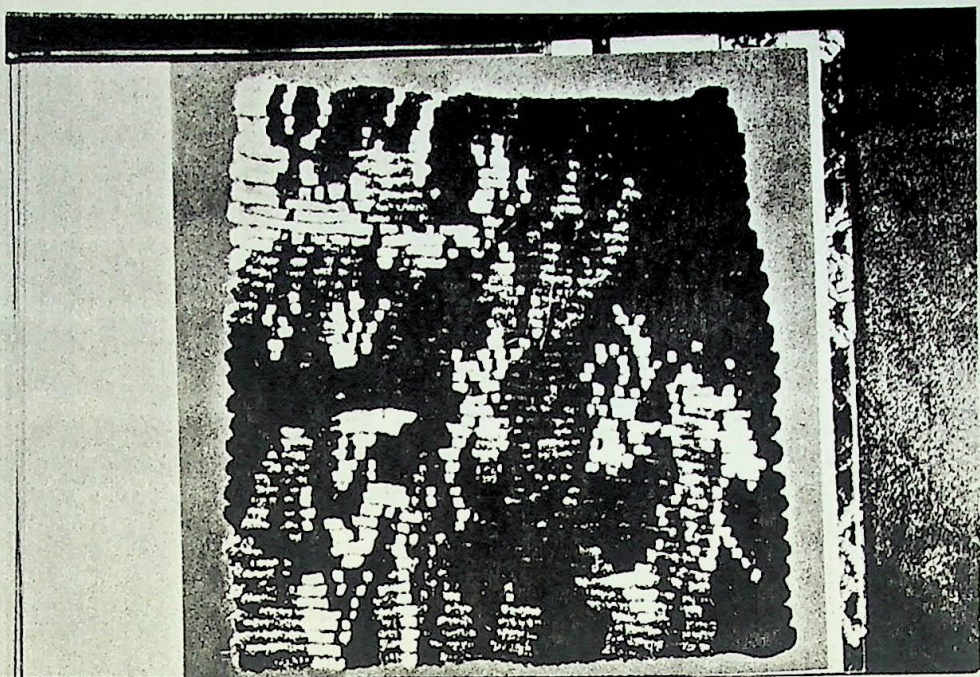
The oldest braided rugs are round. The students could start making rugs in the simple form, as they became more adept they could experiment with other shapes, such as oval and square rugs, also using colour, they could make designs with tones and shades, bright and dark colours.

Rug making has many more techniques which the student could study having an unlimited choice of patterns and designs. They could develop their ideas and become more aware of the Folk heritage in different countries.

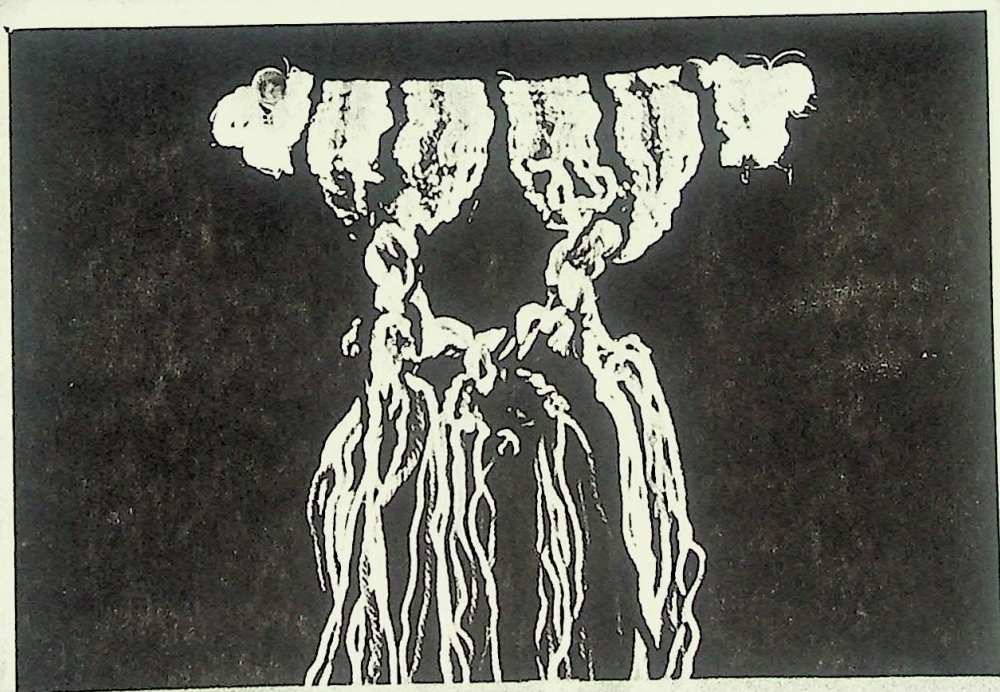
#### MACRAME

With two basic knots a great variety of shapes and patterns can be made. I introduced Macrame to the class by showing slides of work done by artists today and many centuries ago. Of artists work today there are samples of soft sculptures, wall hangings and masks, using string and rope to create very imaginative shapes, also a slide of an Assyrian sculpture where macrame was used as a fringe on a costume, thus forming a lacy patterned finish instead of an abrupt ending such as a hem.





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To learn the two basic knots, the students made sample wall hangings which for a 1st year class was a good beginning. They used colour and form without first having to prepare a design. Their finished pieces were imaginative and original.

A more advanced class could be set problems such as - design a wall hanging for an office block foyer. The student would have to put more thought into the design and would experience architecture today, and question how the building blends with the environment. If not, what could be done to improve the situation.

Many artists use macrame today to create soft forms, such as three-dimensional sculptures, containers and also as costume finishes, as seen in the slide of the Assyrian sculpture. All these elements could be introduced in the art curriculum.

#### TEXTILES AND EMBROIDERIES

In as much as textile is a general term for all woven fabrics and embroidery is the ornamentation thereof, it is well in treating the history and development of the two subjects to consider the two together.



EMBROIDERY:

Like all other crafts, embroidery had origin in the daily needs of humanity. The problem of how to join two edges of fabric together must have arisen very early, and even a seam, as so many oriental embroideries show, may be treated decoratively. Once the needle was invented, whether a sharp fishbone, a thorn, a pointed stick or a metal wire, the natural instinct to pass the limits of mere utility and to indulge in decoration would make itself felt.

All embroidery is based on a few simple stitches which anyone who likes needlework can learn to do. I would not place too much emphasis on techniques and craftsmanship with first year students. The important thing is the opportunity embroidery offers them to explore and develop their own creative sense. Their craftsmanship would improve as they go along.

Fabric collage would be a good starting point. They will realise that it is impossible to hold some fabrics and threads satisfactorily with glue. Then again you may find that you want to add a greater variety of texture by the use of hand or machine stitching, so that as the exploration develops it comes further into the field of embroidery.

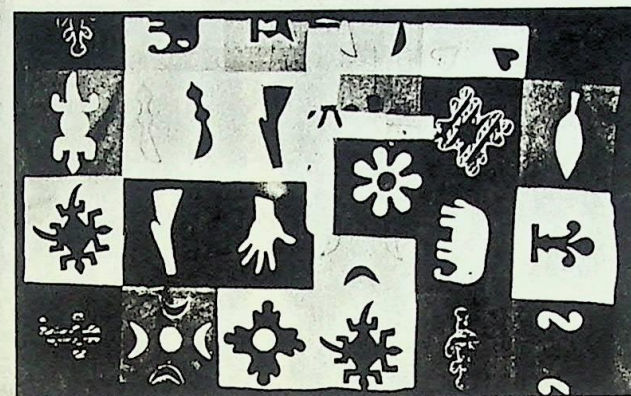
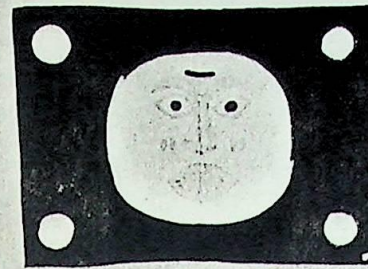


Another experiment, they could make a simple design by just arranging a group of circular shapes, using one colour only but making use of varied shades and textures. In this way you can learn how to use textures to good effect, as the development of the design will depend on texture rather than colour for interest or emphasis. The exploration of the qualities of fabrics in this way can itself lead to further ideas for design.

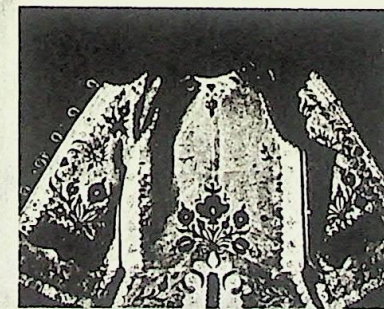
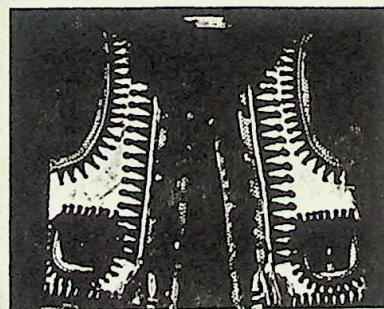
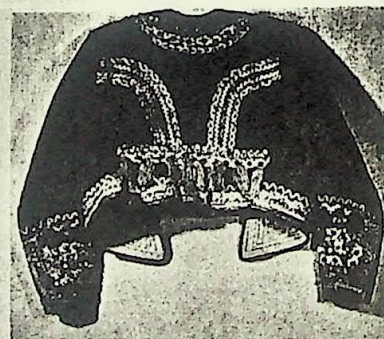
Sometimes the idea for a design evolves from a process of experiment with fabrics, but more often it will come from some particular source of inspiration. There are many good starting points; Natural forms, plant forms, rubbing of barks which simplify designs. Animal forms, manmade structures - the human form may also be used, but because of the limitations imposed by working in fabrics it is easier to find ideas where the figure has been treated very simply with emphasis on the patterns made by garments. Romanesque and other early forms of sculpture, medieval paintings, mosaics, primitive masks and figures will all prove useful sources.

From this development of looking for design information, the lessons would introduce slides showing the different ways embroidery has been used which can be seen in the paintings of ancient peoples, and this would provide a natural link with Art history.

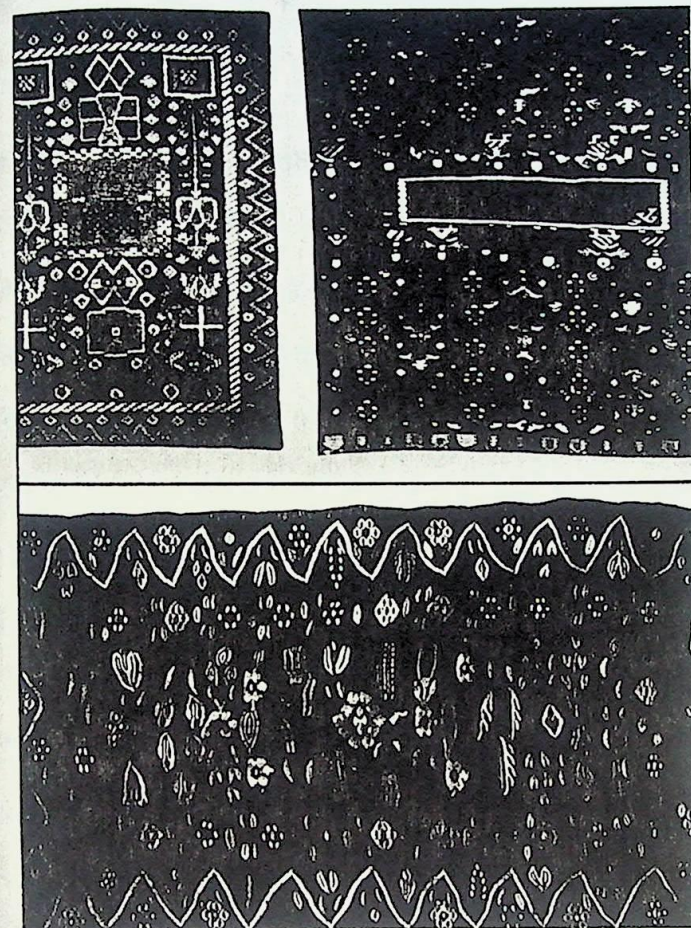




Two: Above: Shaded, white, and black. Below: A black and white photograph of a piece of fabric with a grid of various white symbols and patterns on a black background. The symbols include stylized faces, hands, and abstract shapes.









In the Netherlands the work of the great schools of painting which arose in the 15th Century is reflected in embroidery. In Turkey and Persia embroideries followed a parallel course to woven fabrics and similar motifs were used.

It was during the middle ages that the craft of embroidery was at its best in Europe. In Italy the robes worn by priests were richly embroidered with pearls. The famous Bayeaux Tapestry was made in France at this time. Most of the finest embroidery then was done on church robes;

Very many beautiful examples of hand embroidery worked in the past can be seen in museums and some of the old kinds of fine embroidery are still being worked today - among them are Italian cutwork, Jacobean, English and Italian quilting, smocking, applique, drawn thread work, Gros point and petit point.

#### DYES

Although it is not known when or how they were first used dyes are very old and the first ones were probably stains rather than true dyes. Most early dyes were natural - they came from plants or animals.







As an introductory to dyes I would start with natural dyes. Onion skins, lichens, blackberries, coffee grounds and tea, can be used for dyeing wool that later could be used in weaving and tapestries etc. Samples of fabrics dyed naturally could be seen in the Museum and work shops where weaving and fabric printing is done by craftsmen today.

Direct dyes are a class of water-soluble colours that transfer directly to the fibre. All that is required is the immersion of the fibre in a hot solution for a short period of time with chemicals added to promote transfer of dye molecules from water to fibre.

Direct dyes are very easy to get and the time involved is much less than with natural dye methods. There is a good variety of colours to choose from, some of which are colours that cannot be obtained from natural dyes. Using these dyes, I would introduce some resist dye methods. Tie dye and batik - both require little equipment and can be easily managed by younger students.

#### TIE & DYE

Tie and dye or tie-dyeing is a resist dyeing process. It consists of knotting, binding, folding or sewing certain parts of the cloth in such a way that when it is dyed the dye cannot penetrate into these areas.



This craft has been practised from early times by people in many parts of the world. It is uncertain when or where it originated or whether in the first place resist dyeing was discovered accidentally.

Samples of tie and dye have been found in different countries across the world, some dating back to the sixth and seventh centuries A.D.

The craft is still flourishing up to the present day in the West African countries of Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Dahomey and the Cameroons.

The Yoruba women of West Nigeria where the craft is known as "Adire" produce magnificent cloths dyed with indigo.

These are elaborately patterned by the clump, folding and batik methods. Raffia and bast are used for sewing and binding.

The students could see samples of tie and dye, in the class, through looking at slides made from West African fabrics.

They would see the beautiful use of colour and techniques employed by these people.

A short demonstration to start the craft would be necessary, showing how to bind and knot the cloth and using direct dyes for fast results. Work cards illustrating some different techniques



could be shown for the more advanced student who would be interested in learning more about the craft. Trips to museums and exhibitions would show good examples of the craft and also how a lot of artists use the medium in a very painterly way. That would be called fine Art.

#### BATIK

To introduce Batik I would show slides and reproductions of Indonesian Batik done today. The student could compare the new techniques with Tie and Dye. They would see the different images that can be got with applying wax with the Tyanting, a tool used in Batik to draw fine lines of wax on the cloth.

To start with samplers could be made using different fabrics to see how they can influence a design. Fine lines look best on silks and fine woven cloth. Strong patterns with large unbroken areas of colour look effective on heavier cottons.

The students' first designs could be imaginative shapes to speed up the process of knowing and understanding the medium. Later projects could be set, while the student would plan a design using different sources near at hand - sketches in portfolios, photographs or old techniques already used - to better understand the medium.



### SILK SCREEN

Harvey Daniels mentions in his book "Printmaking", "the first examples of the stencil like the first relief prints were made by prehistoric man. He would place his hand on to the wall of the cave and blow colour or ground pigment on and around the hand, possibly on to grease. When the hand was taken away a negative of the shape remained. These stencilled hand prints can be seen in caves in France and Spain".

The initial change from the simple stencil to the stretched silkscreen was developed by the Japanese in the 17th Century. The discovery was by Ya-Yu0Zen whose prints can be seen in the British Museum.

Screen printing is now one of the main processes used in industry for the decoration of material. The variety of objects that can be decorated with screen printing range from decorative wall hangings and greeting cards through clothing materials and head scarves to household objects such as curtains, bedspreads, wallpapers, table cloths and napkins.

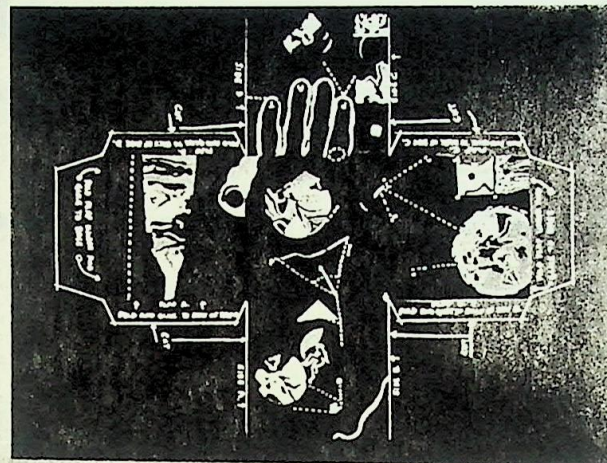


Silkscreen is not only used today as a commercial reproduction for showcards, posters and notices. Many artists realise the potential of seregraphy for the images they want to create Seregraphs are included in most major international exhibitions of printmaking.

To introduce "What is a stencil" I would use the same technique prehistoric man used to make the image of his hand on the cave wall. The students would make the same hand print on paper, later on making more intricate paper stencils to promote confidence and facility in the use of cutting tools and paper.

The simplest stencil for a screen is made with thin torn or cut paper, such as newsprint or dressmakers pattern paper, To print a design on a small piece of fabric would take about six lessons for the student to understand the methods and materials used in printing the fabric. Each lesson would have a short demonstration in how to use the materials, interpreting the design with coloured tissue paper, as this method would closely resemble the finished piece.





IN THE BEGINNING, 26 by 20 inches, by C. Ford T. Chubb, 1968. Medium: silk screen on post-metallic paper. Photograph by Neil Hall.

IN THE BEGINNING, 26 by 20 inches, by C. Ford T. Chubb, 1968. Medium: silk screen on post-metallic paper. Photograph by Neil Hall.



- 2) How to trace areas of design to make a reasonably accurate stencil, also registration marks.
- 3) The most convenient and most useful types of ink would be cold-water paste with dyes and poster paint.
- 4) How to use a squeegee to fix the paper stencil on screen, and position paper on fabric to be printed on.
- 5) To take the first print and clean screen.

This is one method in Silkscreen that could well be introduced to a 5th year class, and projects related to design, education or Fine Art could be followed through, using this medium in the classroom.

#### TAPESTRY - HISTORY

Tapestry weaving is an ancient art. It goes back at least as far as the Egyptians of the 15th century B.C. In the early middle ages in Europe it was carried on chiefly in the monasteries and convents where the monks and nuns made altar cloths and hangings for church feast days and festivals. One of the most famous tapestries of the middle ages is the Bayeux Tapestry in France, though it is not a woven tapestry but made by embroidery.



### THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY

This is a piece of needlework made in the time of William the Conqueror. It is a long narrow strip about 20 inches wide and 230 feet long, and the pictures on it tell the story of the conquest of England by the Normans.

The Bayeux Tapestry is important and interesting as a record of history. It shows the weapons and armour used at the time of the Norman Conquest. It has the only known picture of Edward the Confessor in Westminster Abbey which was pulled down in 1245.

Looking at the Bayeux Tapestry, the student will see how the Artist in the middle ages composed his pictures, historic legends or religious matter. The figures of the background were almost as those in the front of the picture - little shading or perspective. This is an important detail of mediaeval art. Later in the 17th century one can see how the tapestry designers wanted tapestries to be as much like paintings as possible, giving the impression of distance lights and shade. This would require more skill for the student. However, he will see the beginnings of tapestry merging into fine art, not serving just a functional piece to keep out the draughts, but a tapestry, being a decorative art to serve the same function as a painting.





Illustration of a scene from the Nuremberg Chronicle, showing a man and a woman in a boat, with a dog and a cat in the foreground.



In the Dublin National Museum there are fine tapestry samples, among these are the Coptic Tapestries. The individuality of the Coptic weaving has a great deal to teach the students. Many of the designs the Egyptian tapestry makers introduced almost two millenniums ago are thoroughly applicable to modern design.

I would very much encourage the students to look more closely at the arts and handicrafts of the civilizations of the past. Not only should they look at these crafts to recognise the different centuries but use some of the designs to better understand the techniques used.

#### TAPESTRIES FROM EGYPT

"Woven by the children of Harrania". The tapestry work shop in Harrania was founded by Prof. Ramses Wissa Wassef. A professor of Architecture - weaving - pottery - glazing and educator.

He did not select the children to work in the workshop for their outstanding creative ability but because he had to limit the intake of children to the space and learning techniques the workshop would provide.



The tapestries illustrated here have been woven by some of those boys and girls who started making tapestries at the age of 8 years. They composed and wove these tapestries by improving them at the loom, and this was the method practised from the very first days of their apprenticeship.

Quote: Prof. Ramses "I chose weaving as a medium of expression because it seemed to me to have certain essential advantages, though it takes a long time before the techniques of weaving can be fully mastered, from the very beginning a child is able to enjoy using the loom. There are numerous difficulties to be overcome; but the greater the difficulties the richer the sense of achievement when they are conquered".

If tapestry and basic weaving techniques were introduced as early in schools, the same results would be achieved. However, that possibility does not arise where an art class could be so one-craft orientated, but a compromise could be made where some of the same techniques used in Harrania would be introduced. The looms are similar

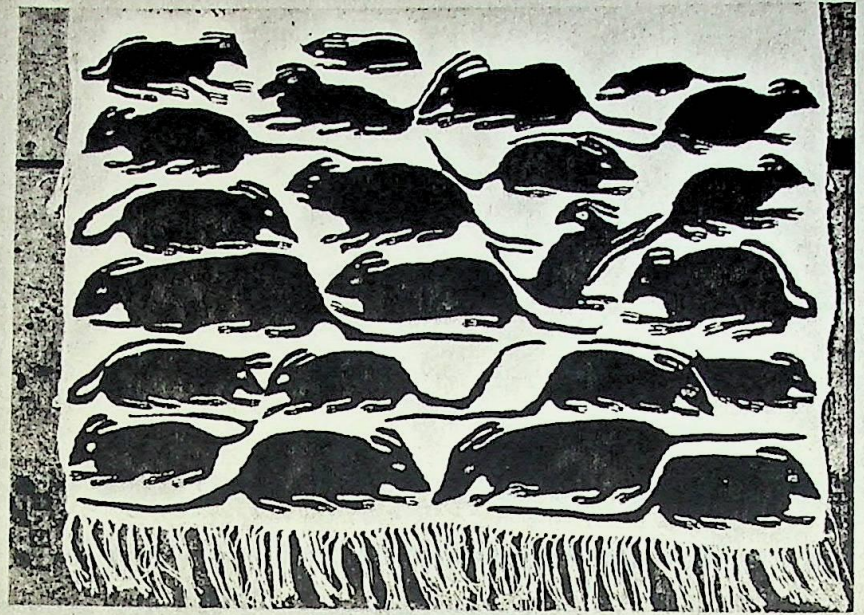


to what was used in prehistoric times. This means that they could be made in the classroom and worked on without great difficulty. The dyes used are natural. A balance would have to be thought of here. Industrial yarn, pre-dyed, would be more accessible and less time consuming for the art class. The variety of colours also would be more varied.

For the children to maintain direct contact with the loom Prof. Ramses decided to make them weave without any previous drawing. He considered that a drawing would only serve as a detour, an artifice to make the weaving easier. There was difficulty at first but this was overcome and the children's tapestry became more supple, more precise, and motifs evolved slowly and combinations became more subtle.

To enrich their imaginations it was a natural process for the children to go on long walks, taking in what they saw around them. Also visits to gardens and zoos were arranged. This was part of their primary education where they studied nature, animals, plants and the life cycle of the earth. Not unlike our own education in many ways. A similar approach could be made in the art class in Secondary schools. A learning process where the pupil could look more closely and learn to interpret from memory what he has seen, being more selective and to have a more direct experience with what he sees around him. Where Prof. Ramses quotes "that for stimulating and disciplining the creative effort there is nothing like creating out of the material itself". I have found this is my experience and what I can see through the fine samples of craftsmanship around me.





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Through a better understanding of the craft, the students will develop their ideas and become more aware of art and craft as a part of his own experience.

QUOTES

- 1) "The Shell Book of Country Crafts" - James Arnold.  
Publishing firm - Shell - Mex and B.P. Limited 1968 Page 54.
- 2) "Tapestries from Egypt" - Paul Hamlyn.  
Publishing firm - The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited.  
Page 22.
- 3) "Printmaking" - Harvey Daniels. Publishing firm:- Hamlyn.  
Page 97.



### CONCLUSION

Dealing with some areas in art and craft I have highlighted and illustrated these areas touched on during one year's experience in art teaching, but I have not said the last word.

These points have evolved from very simple beginnings. I see my work as an art teacher would undergo a process of development. There are many other ways of starting this way of teaching. Some might prefer to start with here and now. I have chosen a chronological order. Perhaps younger children would prefer other ways.

An example - Presenting the children with a modern piece of fabric, asking did they like it and why - stimulating interest in dyes, pattern, shape and quality of fabric. This could possible ellicit information from the pupils about the work.



In Chapter 2 I have suggested that the best way of finding out how to weave is to unravel some cloth - this I think is a good introduction to basic weaving. These simple techniques would be applied to a 1st year class where they would be in the process of discovering the beginnings of a craft. In place of yarn I would suggest paper weaving as a useful introduction to teaching the basic principles of weaving and also the use of paper would apply to other areas in the art class, folding, creasing and cutting paper to make paper sculpture, to design symbols and motifs used today as a visual communication, also cutting paper to make stencils as an introductory to print.

For a more advanced class, using the same weaving techniques, more design problems would be introduced eg (container design problem) giving the class a brief.

#### ARTS AND CRAFTS CLASS 5TH YEAR

Make a container big enough to hold three apples.

Having learned the following techniques, use one to make a container

Twining

Coiling

Looping



Colour: Make use of three colours. Introduce pattern making suitable to the technique.

Time Limit: 6 lesson periods.

Presentation: of work with notes and sketches.

#### ARTS AND CRAFTS CLASS 5TH YEAR

Design a tea towel to be used during Dublin Arts Week using this year's theme (Medieval Dublin).

Develop a design in three colours and white. Silk screened (flat colour).

Size: approximately 18"/24".

Time Limit: 5 lesson periods.

Presentation: Sketches and notes should be submitted with finished design.



The method of silk screen, would introduce the students to colour, not only as the above brief suggests for a fabric print but to be followed through, as colour is used for posters - silk screened canvases - silk screened perspex as a three dimensional piece - silk screened signs, symbols, motifs as seen in advertisements, book illustrations and book covers.

I feel students should be made more aware that Arts and Crafts are as important a subject as other subjects on their timetable, and that in fact all subjects overlap. The art class would serve as making these subject visually better understood.



ARTS AND CRAFTS 5TH YEAR. WALL DECORATION

A new shopping centre has been opened in your own locality. The entrance to the building on the ground floor has a wall space to be decorated. A thorough research of the surroundings will be necessary in order to furnish a decoration that would be in keeping with the architectural design of the building.

With your design describe the method you would employ and the materials you would use in the execution of the finished piece.

Time Limited: 5 lesson Periods.

Presentation: Must include notes, diagrams, drawings, photographs and any other suitable information to your method of research

(Specific shopping centre would be named according to locality).



ARTS AND CRAFTS 5TH YEAR

PRINT

From your local environment, choose one aspect to translate into verse or prose and then into a printed illustration, that could be used in your English verse book.

Shelly in his day wrote this poem of his surroundings.

"Within the surface of the fleeting river,

The wrinkled image of the city lay.

Immovably unquiet and forever it trembles, but it never fades away;".

(From Shelly" by Percy Bysshe Shelly).

Method of print is optional.

Colour use suitable to time given.

Time Limit 5 Lesson Periods.

Presentation: Must include way of research, sketches, notation and completed print.



#### ARTS AND CRAFTS 5TH YEAR MOVEMENT

This month the Modern Dance Festival will be held in your town. Use whatever visual means you find best to record the highlights of the festival.

For final assessment of work at least one finished piece must be presented, that would document what you have seen.

Alongside your finished presentation you could make further suggestions as to how you would expand on the material recorded. This information would be presented with notes, sketches and photographs etc.

Time Limit: 4 lesson periods.

Presentation: must include ideas which lead to final piece of work.

(Name of the particular festival would be incorporated with the school).



BOOK LIST

- 1) A Concise History of Costume - James Lover.
- 2) Batik and Tie and Dye - Marjorie Bowen.
- 3) Baskets and Basketry - Dorothy Wright.
- 4) Creative Design in Wall Hangings - Blumnean.
- 5) Design in Fabric and Thread - Aileen Murray.
- 6) Tie and Dye - Anne Maile.
- 7) Macrame - Virginia I. Harvey.
- 8) Weaving is Creative - Jean Wilson.
- 9) Textiles and Threads - Kerstin Sjödin.
- 10) Tapestries from Egypt - Paul Hamlyn.
- 11) The Complete book of Rugmaking - Cecelia Felcher.
- 12) Print Making - Harvey Daniels.
- 13) Screen Print on Fabric - Valerie Searle.
- 14) The Shell Book of Country Crafts - James Arnold.
- 15) Baskets and Basketry - Dorothy Wright.
- 16) Introducing Tablet Weaving - Eileen Bird.
- 17) Making Plaits and Braids - June Barker.
- 18) Lets Weave - Dora Wigg.



### THESIS ILLUSTRATIONS

- A) PRIMITIVE BASKETS ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANIA.
- B) COILED BASKETS. PEMBROKE PREPARATORY IST 1978.
- C) SOFT CONSTRUCTION - BY ED ROSSBACK.
- D) NAVAJO WOMEN WEAVING A CLOTH.
- E) NAVAJO WOVEN CLOTH.
- F) AMERICAN INDIAN WALL HANGING.
- I) MACRAME WALL HANGING BY IST YEAR STUDENT.
- J) MACRAME CEREMONIAE PLATE. RON FRANKS (PEMBROKE PREPARATORY 1978).
- K) APPLIQUED PILLOW COVER FROM GHANA.
- L) EMBROIDERED JACKETS. EAST EUROPEAN.
- M) EMBROIDERED RUGS FROM HUNGARY.
- N) TIE AND DYE FROM NIGERIA.
- O) IN THE BEGINNING BY CLIFFORD T. CHIEFFO 1966.
- P) BAYEAUX TAPESTRY.
- Q) "THE RATS" BY RAWHIA ALIA.
- R) "THE VISIT" BY GARIA MAHMOND.