AN EXAMINATION OF THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE WOVEN TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN CORK, 1996.

by

AIDEEN RUSSELL

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

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INTRODUCTION

"You'd easy know a weaver
when she goes down to town
with her long yellow hair
and her apron hanging down
or her scissors tied before her
or her scissors in her hand,
you'll easy know a weaver
for she'll always get her man."

This is one of many songs that was composed and sung in mills throughout Ireland in the nineteenth century[1]. The history of weaving in Ireland starts much earlier than this and through the centuries it has been forced to change direction on numerous occasions in order to survive. Its history is long and chequered, spanning many centuries in which it sometimes thrived and was sometimes threatened.

This thesis concentrates on weaving in the southern county of Cork in the present day.There are several well known sources for a study of the Irish woollen trade which I have examined. I have also based this research on interviews and what is currently being produced in this area. It gives an overview of the existing woven textile industry in the area and discusses the designs of the products being produced. In an area that was once home to woollen and linen mills, bleach yards and flax ponds, spinners and weavers, there now remains little evidence of such a thriving industry. This thesis concentrates on a cross-section of those who continue the tradition of producing or working with woven textiles in Cork. Those discussed range in scale from a single-person operation in craft production to a larger company producing for the corporate business. Each company adopts a different approach to design. The design of sample products from each company will be analysed.

[1] Messenger 1980 pg 62

Today's buying public may not be very aware of the importance of good design but the Irish of the pre-1960 years were even less so.In 1960, Bord Failte drew the Government's attention to the poor standard of design in Ireland and Coras Trachtala, the Irish Trade Board, were instructed to address and improve it. For inspiration they looked to Scandinavian design which in the 1960s was renowned for its simple and functional qualities.

In 1961 six Scandinavian industrial designers and design teachers came to Ireland, assessed the design standard and compiled a report called **The Design Report.** It identified the most successful Irish products as those based on traditional craft industries like Donegal tweed or Aran knitting. These products had a strong national identity and were produced primarily to satisfy a local demand. Scandinavian designers produced for the home market initially and established their export market when foreign countries became familiar with and sought their native work. The report recommended that Irish designers should concentrate their efforts on designing something out of the ordinary with a distinct Irish quality. This, they believed, would give Irish goods a distinct selling advantage.
Many Irish companies at the time were producing imitations of foreign products and in doing so, entered into competition with foreign companies who were able to undersell them. A lot of companies in Ireland failed to recognise the importance of this point and when they could no longer compete on price, were forced to close. The closure of one such business, Dripsey Woollen Mills, will be discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Each company that I have looked at adopts a different approach to design, from focusing on colour and texture, to taking patterns from the Book of Kells, to having design instructions sent from England. None of the companies are surviving solely on good design. They are surviving because they are addressing the market's needs, because they are flexible or because they have done market research and can target specific markets with confidence. Some are motivated by genuine interest in their product, some are motivated by an interest in the creation of employment but all are motivated by making a profit. So there are a variety of combinations that are the key to survival for the companies discussed in this thesis.

Chapter 1 briefly traces the history of weaving from pre-Christian days to the twentieth century. It outlines the changes that weaving was forced to make in order to survive and the impact some crippling laws made on a once thriving woollen industry. Sometimes cloth production here reflected market tastes, sometimes it did not due to English laws excluding Ireland from exporting fabrics that were too successful. Irish cloth had to be competitive on international markets in order to survive. As weaving advanced technologically in the nineteenth century, those who did not invest in updated machinery were forced to close. Many mills throughout Ireland went out of

production at this time. Those who survived into the twentieth century enjoyed a sheltered economy until the 1960s and 1970s. The Open Trade Agreement and entry into the E.C. put an end to the tariffs that were enforced on foreign companies thereby keeping Irish goods at a competitive level. Many mills could not compete in this more competitive trading environment and were forced to cut back on production and staff, seek new markets or close down. Dripsey Woollen Mills closed in 1988. It closed for financial reasons and I would argue because it did not target one specific market but spread itself too wide. The reasons for its closure as well as the designs of the cloth of the company will be analysed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 discuss a number of the companies currently working with woven fabrics in Cork county. The work of two carpet companies will be looked at - Couristan Carpets in Youghal and Munster Carpets in Douglas. Both companies agree that they survive in business because of their production-flexibility. In order to satisfy a customer they will work around the clock to fulfil an order. Both companies have little design input. Couristan's design team is based in England and design to the customers specifications. Munster Carpets produce carpets with very simple designs and it is the lack of design in the carpet that is its selling point. Chapter 4 looks at the work of Mary Barry, a craft weaver who produces ladies scarves and jackets. It also discusses the work of Corabbey and Clonakilty Linen who both work with ready woven linen cloth. To these companies marketing has an important part in their success. The role that trade fairs, packaging and labelling play in the promotion of the product will be looked at and sample designs from each company will be analysed.

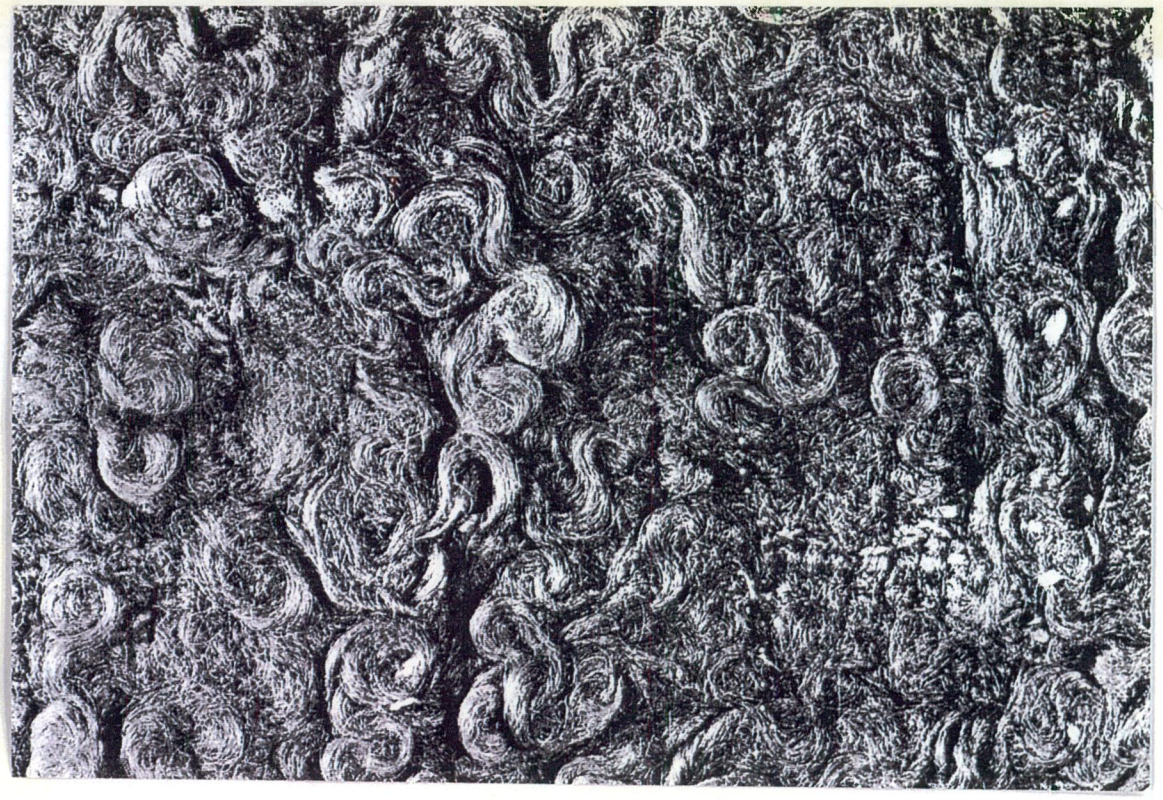


FIGURE 1 - A section of a shag mantle.

FIGURE 2- Overton Mills, Bandon.

CHAPTER 1 : A brief history of weaving in Ireland

Weaving in Ireland has a very long and turbulent history in which it had to change direction many times in order to survive. Archaeological finds have provided us with evidence of woven goods in Ireland throughout the centuries. The oldest piece of evidence dates from 1600 B.C.and is a piece of pottery on which there are imprints of woven cloth. This was found in Co. Meath.

What makes the history of weaving in Ireland extraordinary and unique is the way that it played a central role in the social and political developments of this country. Before the coming of the Normans in the thirteenth century, weaving was practised in rural homes using fleece from the weavers sheep. Fabric was woven solely for home use, for the weaver and his neighbours. Weaving was as much a part of the working day and as important as agriculture was to the people.

With the Norman invasion, towns were established and some weavers re-located themselves there to avail of the newly introduced tuckmills to finish the cloth. Fabric began to be woven in the towns for both domestic use and also for the export market. Cloth was exported to England, France, Spain and Italy. Irish goods were in demand and renowned for their good quality on foreign shores. Garments such as shag-coats and friezes were exported in large quantities. Records from the port of Bristol for 1559 and 1560 show that 26,556 yards of Irish frieze was imported from Ireland as well as quantities of shag mantles. *(Sutton 1980 pg 12)*

Figure 1 shows a section of a shag mantle. It is made of wool with one curled side and was both windproof and waterproof. Most of the cloth being produced in Ireland at that time was made for domestic use and for export.

In the seventeenth century, the major export for Ireland was textiles. Ireland's economy was largely dependant on the continuance of such a business. In 1683 the list of Irish exports in order of importance was made up of wool, tallow. linen yarn and lambskins.*(Foster 1988 pg 126)* The last decade of the seventeenth century brought with it, however, a blow from which Ireland's textile industry was never to fully recover.

English woollen traders became concerned that Irish weavers and wool merchants could undersell them on foreign markets. The then Lord Deputy to Ireland forbade Irish weavers to export wool and goods made from wool to foreign countries. Trade continued however and Irish goods were smuggled abroad. The Irish woollen trade was eventually virtually destroyed by the passing of a bill by King William III which prohibited the export of Irish woollens to any country except England and when exporting there, high duties had to be paid. Even when the ban was lifted in 1779, Ireland's woollen industry never returned to the level at which it had earlier operated.

The English authorities encouraged the Irish to weave and grow linen flax instead of weaving with wool and while the woollen industry was in decline at the end of the seventeenth century, linen manufacturing was growing rapidly.The Huguenots who arrived in Ireland in 1685 brought with them the knowledge and skill needed for linen weaving and many Irish weavers changed from weaving woollen goods to weaving with linen.

Cloth was woven in mills and homes throughout the country. The fabric made was sold at local fairs, woven for home consumption and also exported, but not at the same scale as previously. When linen was no longer in fashion, Irish weavers concentrated on weaving in cotton and producing calico and corduroy which were popular in the 1800's in England and in Europe.

Mills in England in the nineteenth century were equipping themselves with newly invented powerlooms and spinning equipment and Irish mills found it difficult to compete against them without equivalent machinery. Many English mills were able to undersell their Irish competitors and many Irish mills were forced to close as they could not afford to update their machinery.

Figure 2 shows a derelict mill in Bandon, Co. Cork. This mill once employed 600 people and produced spun yarns and woven cotton and corduroy. The owner, George Allman, started production at a smaller premises in the town in the 1780's, employing 40 weavers and 100 hand-spinners. By 1808 Overton Mill was built, costing £10,000. Shortly after, a second mill was built adjoining the first. Overton Mills enjoyed great success until the 1820's when the yarn being produced there could not compete with the yarn from mills equipped with the latest technology.

Allman was unwilling to invest in updating his spinning machinery and introducing powermills to the floor and the mill closed in 1830.

Mills that did survive at this time were those who had invested in technically advanced machinery. Blarney Woollen Mills, five miles north of the Cork city, is such an example. Timothy Mahony, the founder, was the first to introduce the spinning of worsted wool by steam power to the south of Ireland. The worsted yarn that was produced there was very successful and Blarney Woollen Mills was extended to cater for the growth in trade. After a fire destroyed the mill in 1869, it was rebuilt and equipped with the most technically advanced machinery and labour-saving devices. The new machinery made the mill more competitive and the business prospered through the decades and expanded again in 1948. In 1975 the mill closed and the tweeds, worsteds, woollens. stockings and knitting wool which were its products were no longer made. It closed as it could no longer compete on price with cheaper foreign imports. This was the reason why many mills closed during this century and will be discussed at a later point in this thesis.

Organisations were established at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of this century to aid employment in rural areas in Ireland. These organisations encouraged households to develop a cottage industry of woven goods. The Congested Districts Board was set up in 1891 and it encouraged rural people in West Connaught, Clare, Kerry and Donegal to weave and sell their goods locally. The Irish Homespun Society was formed in 1936. It concentrated its efforts on Irish-speaking areas and encouraged people there to use fleece from their sheep, dye it with natural dyes, card it, spin it and weave the homespun yarn into cloth. The weaving of homespun fabric prospered in Connemara and Kerry but especially in Donegal. The fabric produced captured a niche in the market and homespun cloth and mill produced cloth co-existed as they had in earlier times.

As outlined in this chapter weaving was a large component in the Irish economy in the past. It suffered due to Britain banning importation of Irish woollen textiles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The non- industrialisation of the nineteenth century led to an inability to compete on international markets. The opening of the Irish economy in the mid-twentieth century resulted in difficulties for labour intensive industries of which textiles was one.

CHAPTER 2: Dripsey Woollen Mills

An examination of a once thriving weaving mill which closed in 1988.

The Irish economy was, in the pre-1960 years, a sheltered one. Companies that wished to import goods to Ireland had to pay a tariff thereby stopping them from underselling Irish manufacturers. The textile industry was protected by these tariffs and imported carpet companies, for example, had to pay tariffs of 40%. This protected Ireland's market share.

The Open Trade Agreement of the 1960's and Ireland's accession to the E.C. in 1973 brought a more competitive trading environment to Ireland and problems for Irish companies that had benefited from a strong policy of protection. This move from a sheltered economy to wide open trading, coupled with Irish inflation rates running ahead of most European competitors, resulted in a struggle for survival in the 1970's and 1980's for many Irish mills. Ireland and other European countries were also being hit by an adverse trade balance between E.C. countries and non-E.C. countries. Between 1973 and 1980, the share of European textiles and apparel consumption taken by non-community imports rose from 21% to 44% (Sectoral Consultative Committee1983 pg 23). Many mills throughout Europe could no longer compete on price with cheap foreign imports and many were forced to design new ranges of products, search for new markets, reduce their workforce or close down. The more recent years have been more positive for the textile sector in Ireland. The turnover of the textile industry has increased by 18% in the years 1988 to 1992 and the total number of textile exports have also increased.(Dr. Anne Walker 1992 Pg 26)

Dripsey Woollen Mills, in north Cork, closed its doors to production in 1988. It closed because it could no longer compete in price with its competitors due to the higher level of inflation in Ireland than in other countries to which Dripsey supplied.

Some designers who had experience with Dripsey suggest that Dripsey closed because it produced designs that were out-dated. I believe that Dripsey closed for financial reasons and because it did not specialise its product or target a specific market.

Let us now discuss the work done at Dripsey. In the closing years the mill had hired a consultant designer, Beryl Gibson, from London who visited four or five times a year. In the past there had been resident designers but none stayed for very long. In her thesis on Dripsey Woollen Mills, Mary Connors suggests that this occurred because the designers were not happy with the mills isolated site.

The cloth produced by Dripsey had always been recognised as being of a high standard. In 1965 and 1966 Dripsey was awarded eight hold medals for fabrics at the International Textile Exhibition held in California. Many European fashion houses bought fabric from them. Designers such as Missoni from Italy, Hartz of U.S.A., Emmanuelle Khan of France and Wendy Dagworthy of London worked with cloth from Dripsey. It was a "vertical" mill which means that it manufactured from fibre to fabric having complete control of all the stages of production. Fleece of three qualities was sorted, scoured, carded and spun. The spun yarn was suitable for weaving carpets, blankets, rugs, heavy and fine apparel tweeds. Yarn was also spun for knitting. On the premises, blankets, upholstery fabrics and both heavy and fine apparel tweeds were woven. Yarn was spun and dyed for knitting and weaving and could be bought in small quantities for domestic use or for small craft industries. Dripsey also offered the services of dyeing and finishing of cloth. As well as supplying Irish and European fashion houses with its fabric, it ran a small factory shop where knitting yarn or lengths of fabric could be bought.

Beryl Gibson concentrated primarily on designing for the fashion side of Dripsey Woollen Mills. Fashion fabrics change much more rapidly than furnishings. The cloth produced was made from 100% wool and was produced on Dubcross looms. These were old and only capable of doing 100 picks per minute using a shuttle, while a modern loom, which is both automatic and shuttleless, can do 300 picks a minute. The cost of installing modern looms to a mill would be enormous and the mill owner, Andrew O'Shaughnesy declined investing in the updating of his machinery. The type of weave structure possible to create on Dripsey's looms was limited. To compensate for this, they concentrated on using colour and textural contrasts in their cloth.

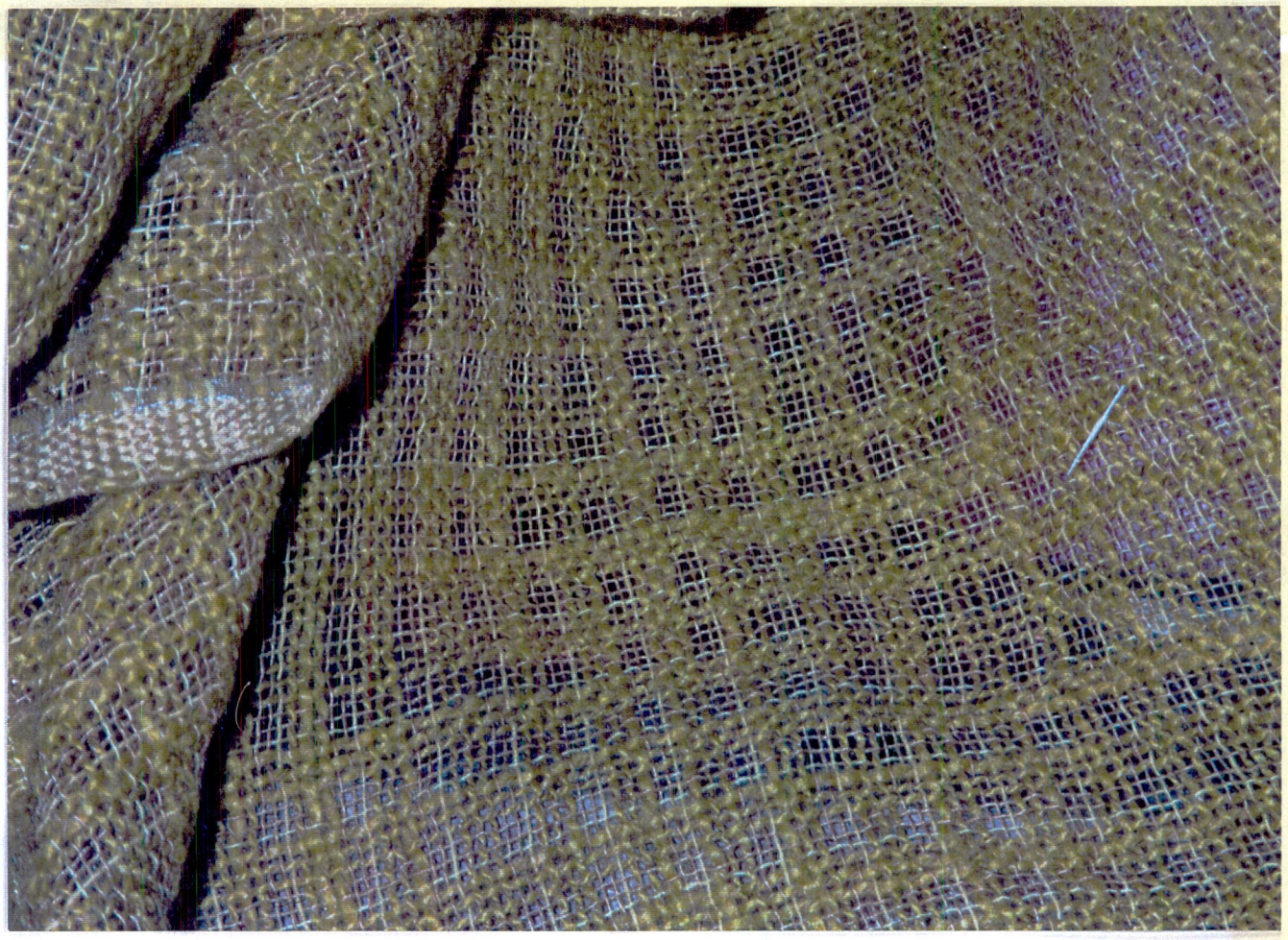


FIGURE 3 - Curtaining fabric from Dripsey

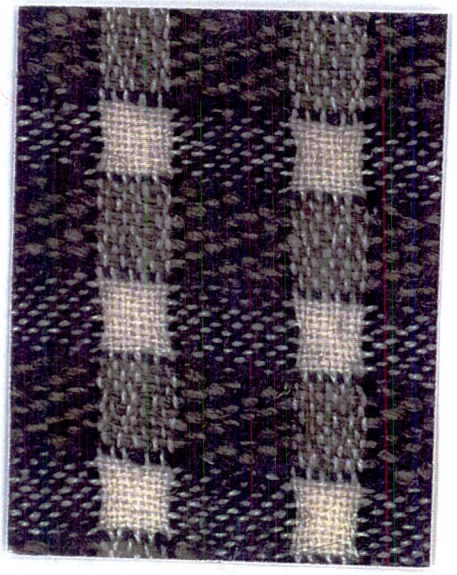


FIGURE 4

FIGURE 5

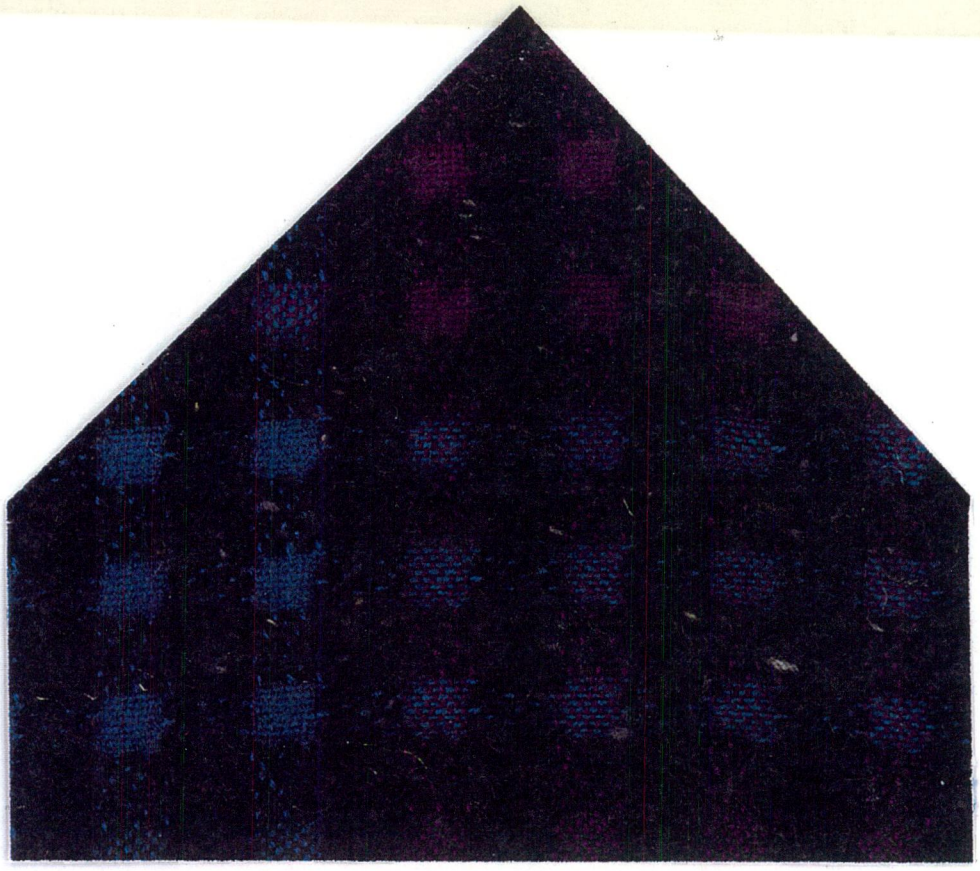


FIGURE 6

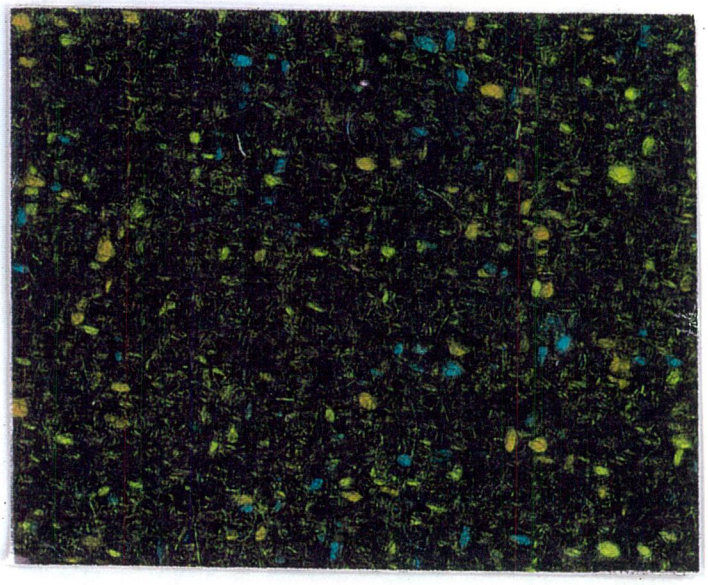


FIGURE 7

Let us now look at a selection of cloth designs produced at Dripsey Woollen Mills. They range from curtaining to fashion and from heavy to light weight fabrics. **Figure 3** shows a curtaining fabric woven and dyed at the mill. It is plain weave, widely sett in areas, thereby giving a translucent nature to the fabric. The contrasting texture and density of yarn used is what makes this an interesting piece of cloth. The design is very simple and uses a warp of three thick loosely spun ends and three thin tightly spun ends which are loosely sett. The weft sequence is the same. This results in areas that appear as opaque and others translucent.

The juxtaposition of thick and thin yarns is favoured in a number of designs from Dripsey. The weave structures in all the fabrics are simple with emphasis on texture and colour.The same warp is used in **Figure 5** as in **Figure 4** but the weft insertion is changed. This design is not as successful in its use of colour, in my opinion. The pink weft gives the cream warp a spotty quality and the two dark tones in the design - the pink weft crossing the brown warp and the brown warp crossing itself are too similar. **Figure 6** is an interesting sample as it creates a different mood through the use of colour. In this design, each band of colour is divided into three by a dark black stripe of thicker yarn. The warp is a stripe of turquoise, a stripe of black repeated three times and a stripe of pink and a stripe of black repeated three times. The weft insertion is the same as the warp. This results in an unusual fabric with subtle colour changes and textural difference. The design has a three dimensional effect with a dark grid in the foreground and areas of turquoise, purple and pink in the background. It is the clever use of colour that gives the cloth of plain weave such an intricate appearance.

Figure 7 shows a section of a cloth made using the "homespun" yarns produced at Dripsey Woollen Mills. Princess Diana wore a suit made from this fabric in 1982.

> *"One of the biggest boosts was a Dripsey Woollen Mill suit worn by Princess Diana. There is no doubt that the quality of Dripsey Woollen cloth for apparel is extremely high in terms of design and craftsmanship."*
> (Cork Examiner 12/4/82)

The weave structure is again plain weave. The dominant feature of this cloth is the homespun yarn used. The speckled nature of the yarn is produced by mixing loose

FIGURE 8 - The carding process

FIGURE 9

FIGURE 10

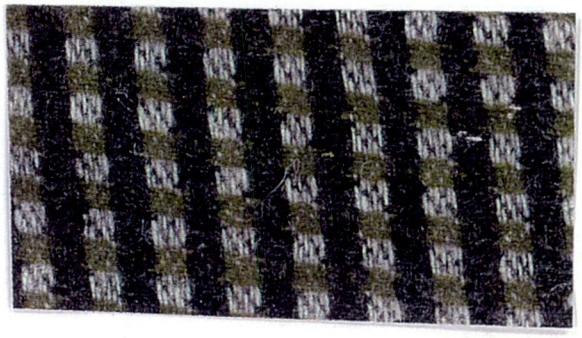


FIGURE 11

FIGURE 12

stock and dyed fleece when in the carding process. This is shown in **Figure 8.** This fabric has a home-made appearance and I believe that this was its selling point. The following set of sample designs differ to those already discussed. They are fine apparel tweeds suitable to tailoring. They are light weight and would drape very well in suiting, jackets and skirts. I believe that this type of fabric would appeal to a different market than the previous samples seen. They are more classical in design and do not have the home-made appearance already mentioned.

Figure 9 shows a woollen cloth with a colour and weave effect pattern. The structure of the cloth is very simple but the patterning makes it look intricate. In the warp two cream ends are placed next to two brown ends twenty times then four brown and four cream are repeated eight times. To add to this, the designer has introduced an overcheck in blue. It is a traditional design favoured by many textile apparel companies. **Figure 10** shows the same cloth in a different colourway.

Figure 11 shows a checked pattern similar to those discussed earlier. This is a 5:1 twill pattern but the distinguishing diagonal line produced in a twill weave is barely visible because of the shrinkage that occurred during the finishing of this cloth. To touch, it feels almost like felt with the yarn fibres locked tightly together.

A selection of knitted and woven samples from the 1987/1988 range is seen in **Figure 12.** The homespun yarns produced at Dripsey are used in both knitting and weaving to produce a co-ordinated range of samples.

In 1987 Beryl Gibson, the consultant designer was exploring the use of lighter fibres in the mill. She had suggested the production of lighter-weight fabrics using wool and linen, wool and cotton and wool and silk. There were many advantages and disadvantages to producing these cloths. There were no finishing facilities on the premises for linen and re-training of the weave staff would have been necessary in some instances. The advantages included a more varied range of products which would increase turnover in slack months.

Having examined samples of the fabric produced by Dripsey Woollen Mills, I believe that their range of products were already too varied. Their cloth varied in appearance from home-made (Fig. 7) to sophisticated (Fig. 11). Furnishing fabrics were also

produced on the premises and dyeing and finishing services available. Knitting and weaving yarn was spun and a factory shop sold lengths and yarn to visitors.
In my view, Dripsey was spreading its talents too wide. Perhaps if they produced one type of product with a specific market in mind they would not have run into difficulties in the 1980's. The Dubcross looms used by Dripsey limited their design scope but they overcame this by cleverly making colour and texture the dominant feature of their cloth. The dated machinery was not a major disadvantage to them but failing to specialise their product was.

The mill also experienced financial problems. Mr. O'Shaughnesy, in an interview, blamed the inflation rates for pushing the price of his cloth out of reach to his buyers. In Ireland in 1978/1979, he said, the inflation rate was 18% to 22% while in France for the same year it was 11%. this had a cumulative effect and Dripsey's prices were pushed up year after year. In a statement on the closure of the mill in 1988, Mr. O'Shaughnesy explained why the company had experienced losses.

> *"Due to the general recession in the textiles industry in Ireland and Europe and due to the cutback in Government expenditure which has resulted in a major reduction in Government contracts and Health Board purchases which comprised a significant portion of our turnover, Dripsey Woollen Mills Ltd. has suffered significant trading losses over the last eighteen months." (Cork Examiner May 18 1988)*

Dripsey supplied many hospitals with yardage of curtaining material. It supplied Wilton Regional Hospital with 19,000 yards in the 1980's.

The company compiled a financial plan of profit and loss flow projections up to 1990 in order to try to attain a loan from Feoir Teoranta. What is interesting about the projections is that they state that the company would concentrate in the future on key markets and products which they had identified to be possible. The loan application was refused however and the mill closed in 1988.

The closure of Dripsey can be attributed to infexibility of out-dated machinery. The marketing of it's products lacked specific direction at specific markets. The high inflation experienced at this time led to a lack of competitiveness internationally.

CHAPTER 3 : Current Industrial Textile Production

Many factors contribute to the success and survival of the woven textile industry in today's world. Design is important but good design alone does not guarantee the survival of a company. Factors such as location, inflation rates, taxes and marketing can greatly effect the state of a business. In this chapter, the work of two carpet companies will be looked at. One produces intricate designs and the other simple plain and patterned carpets. Both companies believe that their survival is reliant not on the designs they produce, but on the flexibility of their production department. They offer their clients a service of flexibility and this, they believe, is what keeps them in business.

Couristan Carpets of Youghal, Co. Cork, operates on the site where Youghal Carpets once was. In 1973 Youghal Carpets were ranked as the third largest carpet group in Britain or Ireland(Hennessy 1973 pg 29).In the late 1970's Youghal Carpets(Holdings) was formed owning thirteen companies in Ireland, Europe and Britain. In 1984 the Youghal plant closed. The company blamed the closure on the decline in demand in Ireland and Europe for Axminster carpets, the type produced by Youghal. These carpets were also being produced at another one of the company's factories in Ennis and the two factories could no longer be maintained. In 1984, Couristan, an American company to whom Youghal had supplied, bought the Youghal factory. It re-employed the workforce and continued to produce Axminster carpets on the jacquard looms used by Youghal. Today it produces contract carpets for hotels, restaurants and some private homes. It has woven carpets for Donald Trump's casinos, Tom Selleck's restaurant and The Hotel Marriet in America. 85% of its market is North America and 15% is Japan, France and Israel.

Couristan have a sister company in St. Helens, England and it is here that the designing is done for the carpets woven in Cork. There is no designer directly attached to the Youghal factory. The design team in St. Helens work on computer and through the years have designed a collection of designs which their sales staff bring with them when calling to clients. Sometimes a client is happy to chose a design from

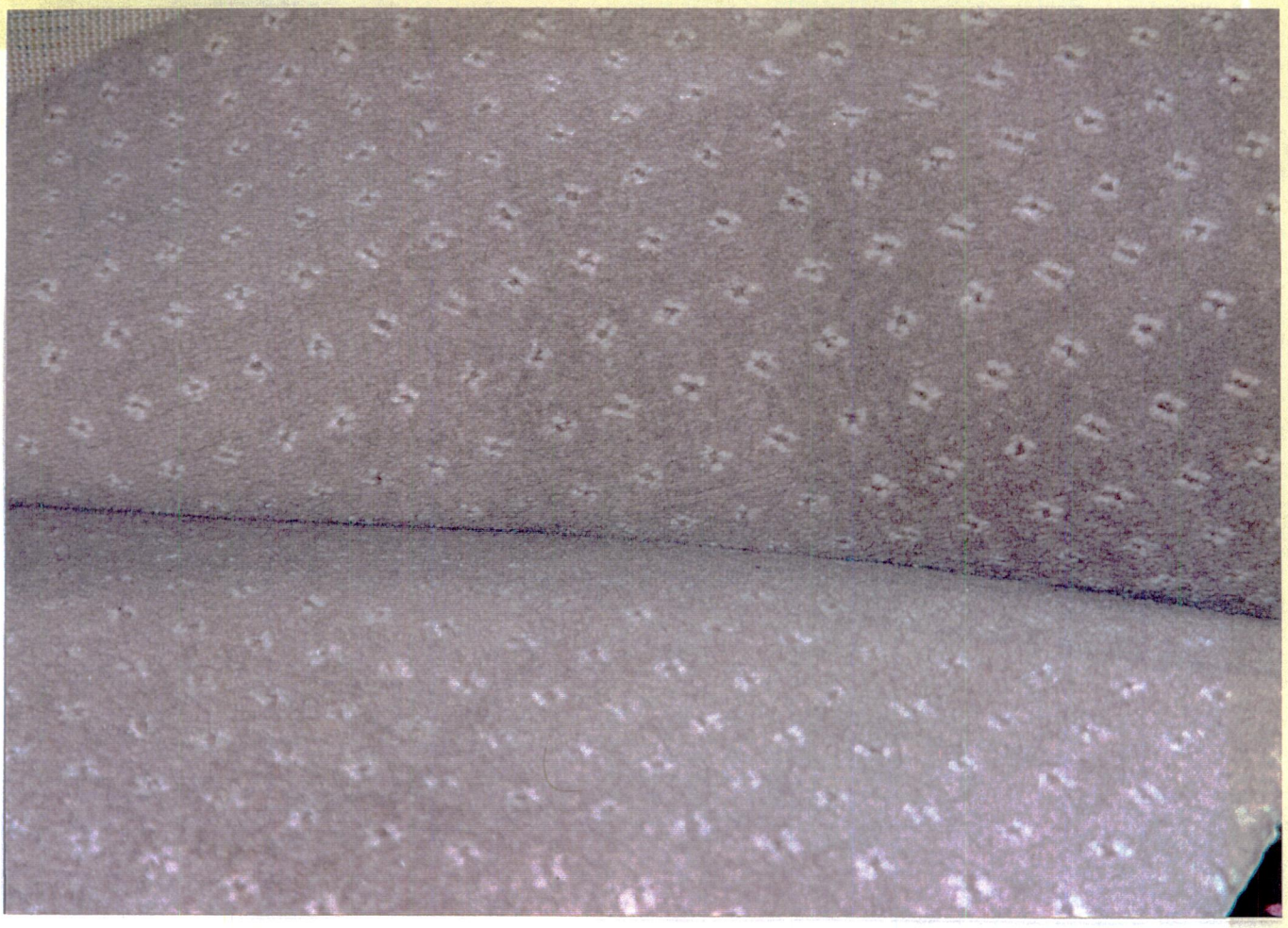


FIGURE 13

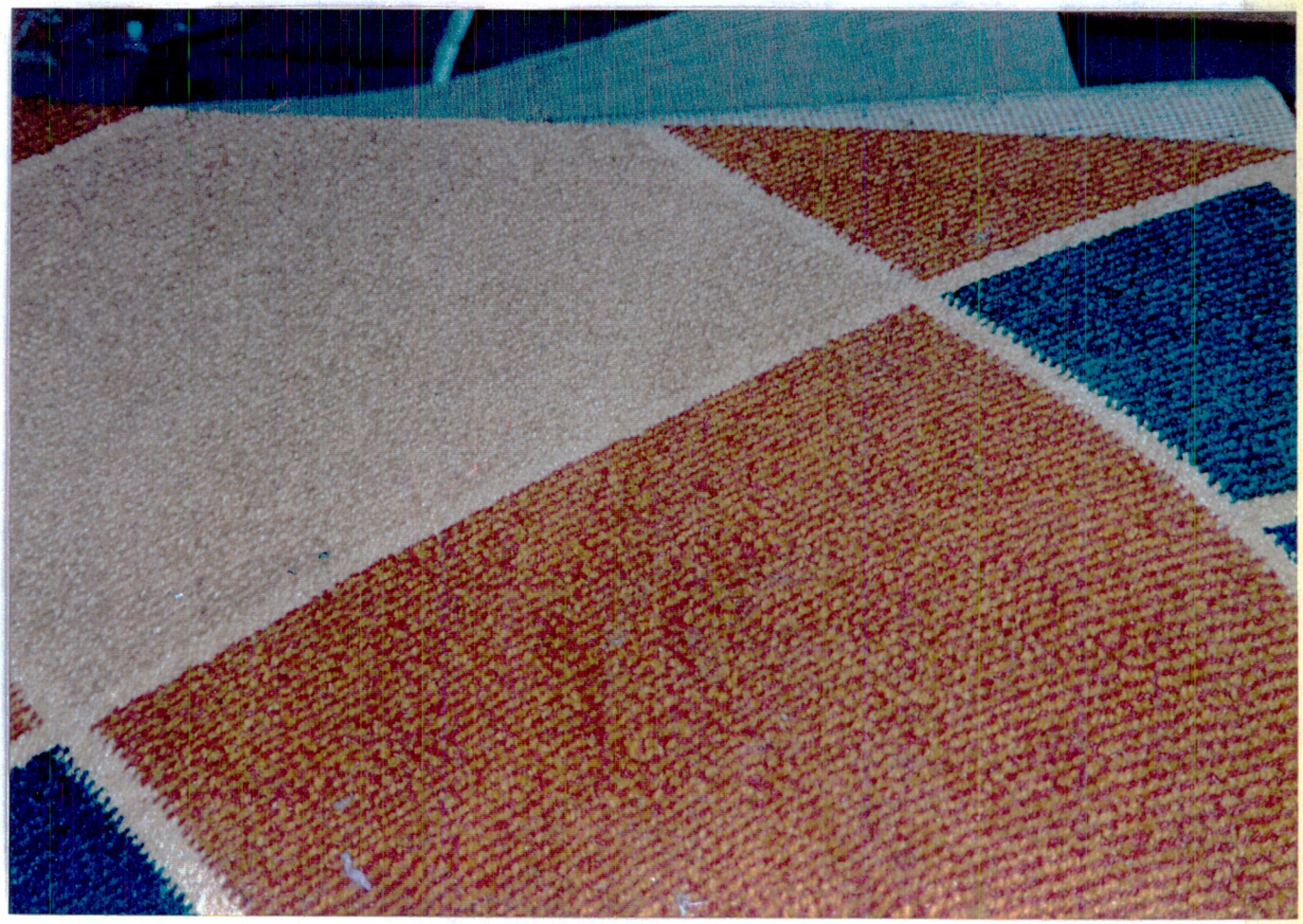


FIGURE 14

FIGURE 15

the portfolio and change perhaps a colour or enlarge a motif but sometimes a design has to be drawn up to incorporate the hotel's logo or colours or to co-ordinate with an existing fixture in the hotel. Once the salesperson has ascertained what the client desires, s/he returns to the design team who produce a computer print-out of the design. Hand-trials are then woven showing a section of the carpet and if the client is pleased, the carpet goes into production.
This is an area where the market has full control over the design of the product. The carpet is designed specifically for the client and the building in which it will be placed.

All of the carpets produced by Couristan Carpets are 80% wool and 20% nylon. Nylon is added to carpets to give them durability. All of the woollen yarn is supplied by Youghal Yarns Ltd. where it is dyed to Couristan's specifications. The jacquard looms used give the designers a lot of deign flexibility and motifs can be created easily and many colours used simultaneously. The carpets created range from simple to intricate, depending on the client's demands.

Figure 13 shows a simple design. It is made up of three colours and it is its simplicity that makes it popular. It allows the client flexibility when choosing other fixtures for the premises. **Figure 14** shows a geometric pattern which differs in scale from the previous carpet.

In fashion, colours change rapidly, season by season, and fashion forecasts are produced twice a year to give designers an indication of the trends for the following years. In furnishings, the colours predicted by the fashion forecasts do affect the domestic side of the furnishing business but at a slower pace than in fashion. Carpet companies that produce for the domestic market must be aware of the changing trends in colour and style. Those who produce carpets on contract can suggest using fashionable colours to their client but at the end of the day, the client has full control over the colours used.

Figure 15 shows a carpet in production on the loom. It is a simple design using four colours - the base colour red, then cream and peach which produce the larger motif and dark green which creates the small dot of colour through the base colour. This type of design is very popular for hotels, offices and shops as it is more serviceable than a plain colour.

FIGURE 16

FIGURE 17

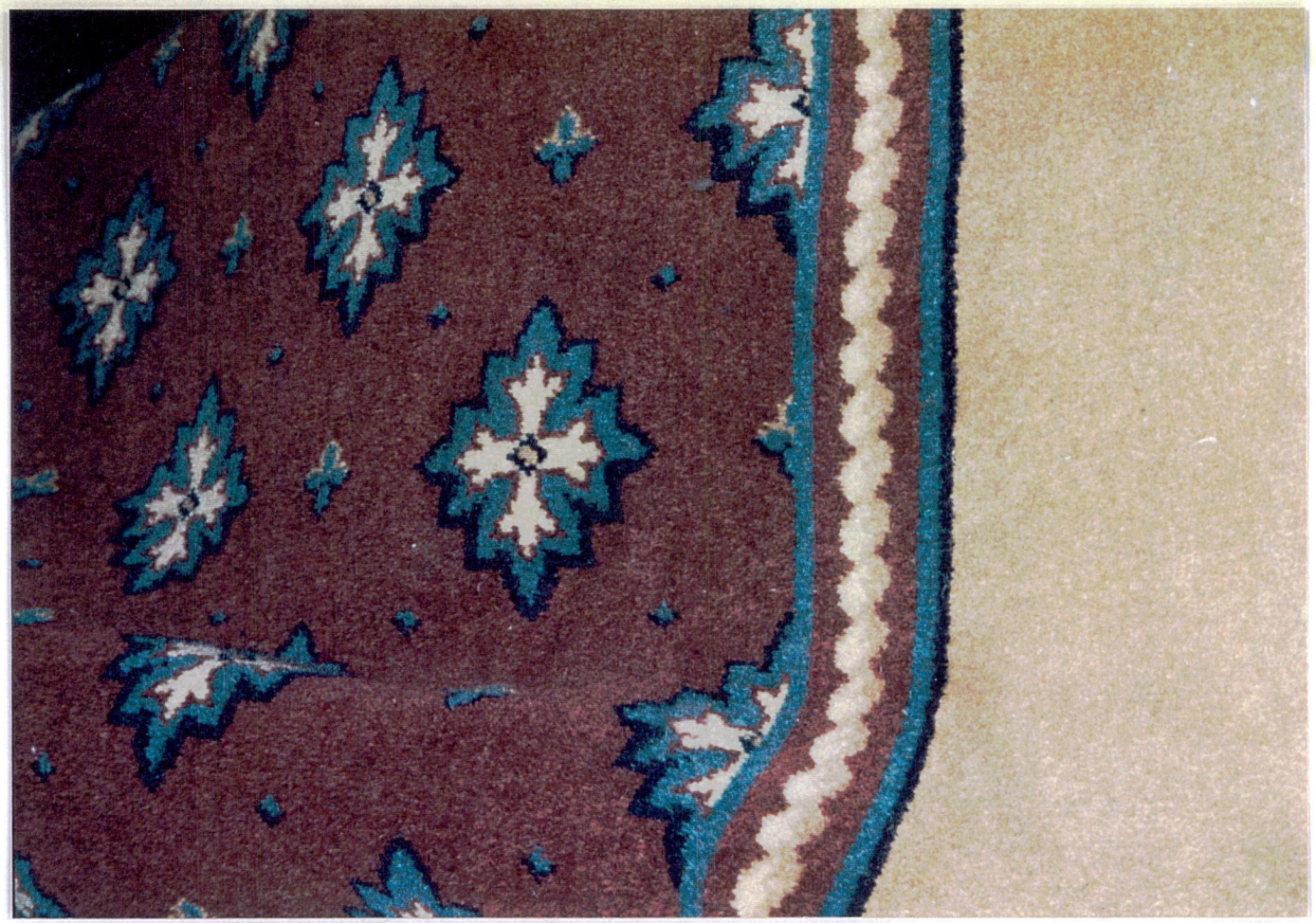


FIGURE 18

FIGURE 19

Floral patterns are always very popular in furnishings. **Figure 16** and **17** are examples of different approaches to this form of design. **Figure 16** is a geometric pattern repeating at very close intervals. It is a flower motif divided into four sections, four petals and four leaves which originate from the centre of the design. Each flower is separated by a trellis of interwoven lines with another smaller geometric pattern at the intersection of the trellis. The colour palette used combines warm and cold colours, red and yellow and blue, green and navy.
I think that the use of colour is very successful in this design. Each flower is created by using four colours - blue, navy, green and yellow and the cold colours are juxtaposed in a manner that gives the impression of colour-blending. However, the close spacing of the repeats creates a "busy" pattern which in my opinion is unsuccessful.

Another floral design is found in **Figure 17**. This pattern is much larger in scale and offers the viewers expanses of unpatterned areas on which to rest their eyes. This floral pattern curves and flows unlike the previous geometric design. Cold and warm colours are again combined. The base colour is light brown and the patterning uses white and light blue and various tones of red and green. There is a good tonal balance in this design. The base colour is medium to light in tone and the pattern has both light and dark tones, the latter adding a weight to the design anchoring the carpet firmly underneath us.

Couristan design specifically for the location in which the carpet will be placed and **Figure 18** shows an example of this. It has been designed for a corridor and has plain and patterned areas. The plain areas of the carpet form a border to the main design and create a feeling of space and length to the corridor. The patterned area is of geometric design and both the large and small motifs are widely spaced. The plain and patterned areas are divided by a rope-like pattern which runs the length of the carpet. The proportions of each area work well together as do the colours chosen. The turquoise motif balances with the greater use of rust and cream. The darkest colour - navy- is used as a highlight and again gives weight to the overall design. Co-ordinated carpet ranges are very popular in hotels, offices and shops. These carpets allow each room to have its own style of carpet while co-ordinating with adjoining rooms.

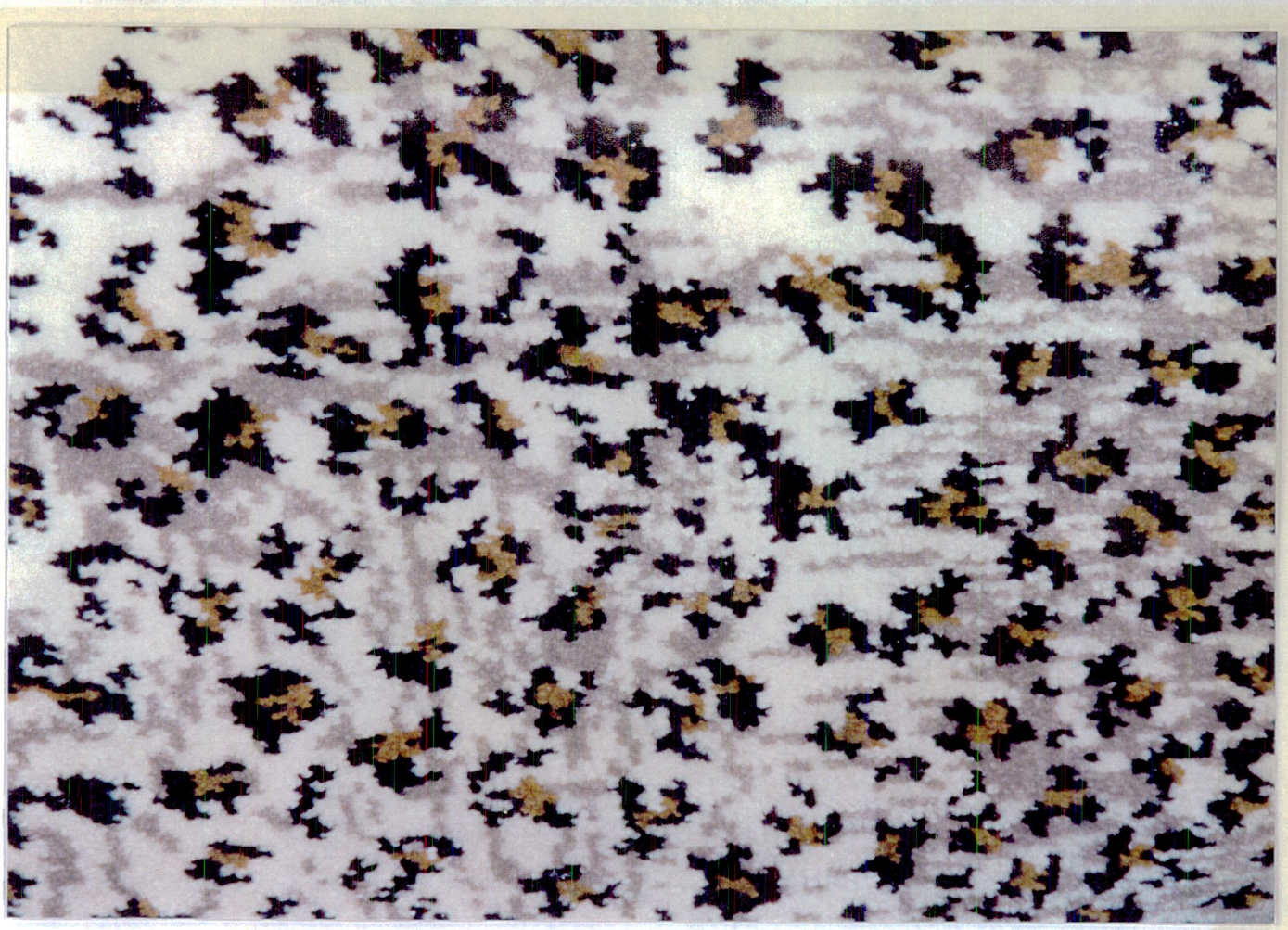


FIGURE 20

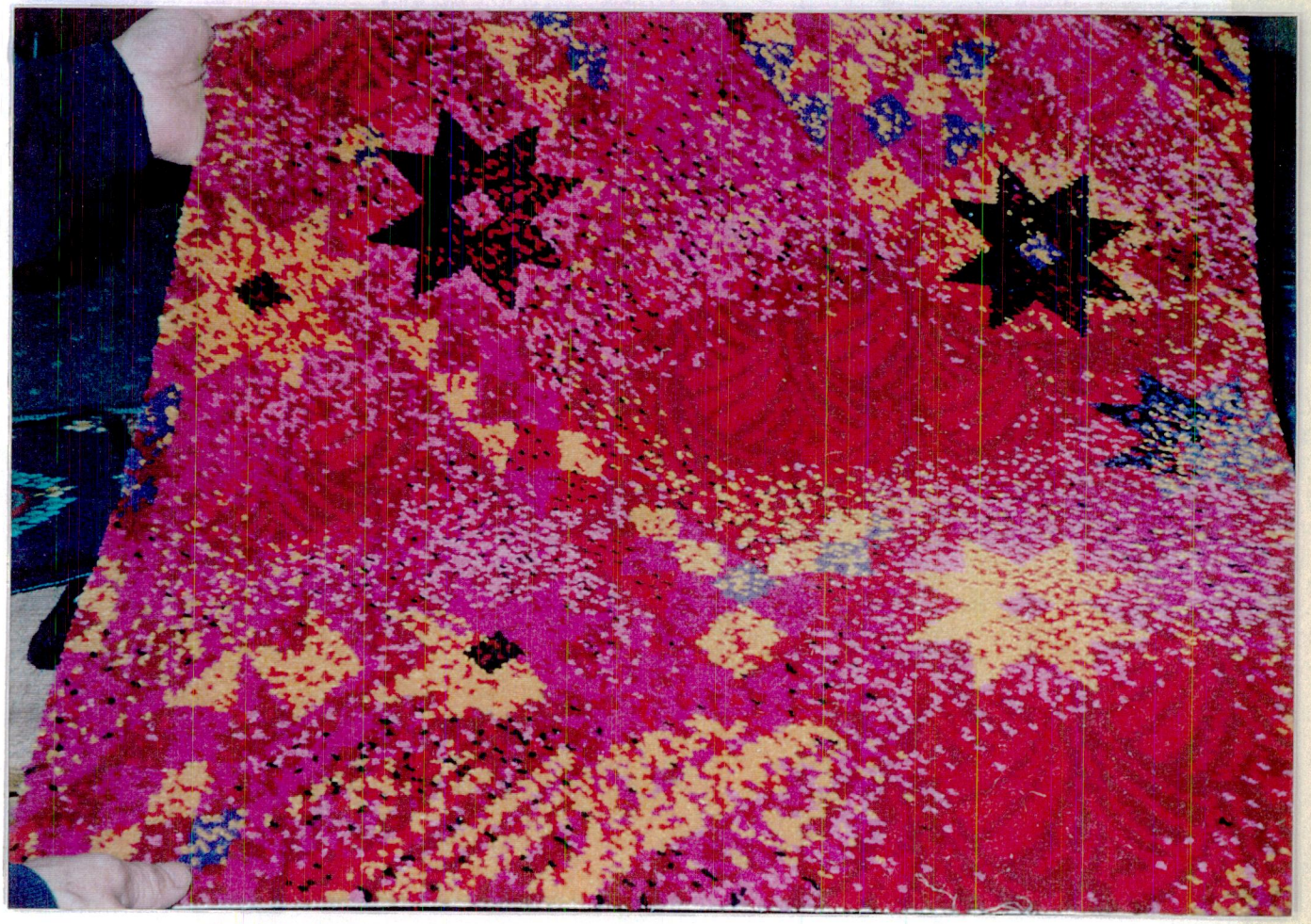


FIGURE 21

FIGURE 22

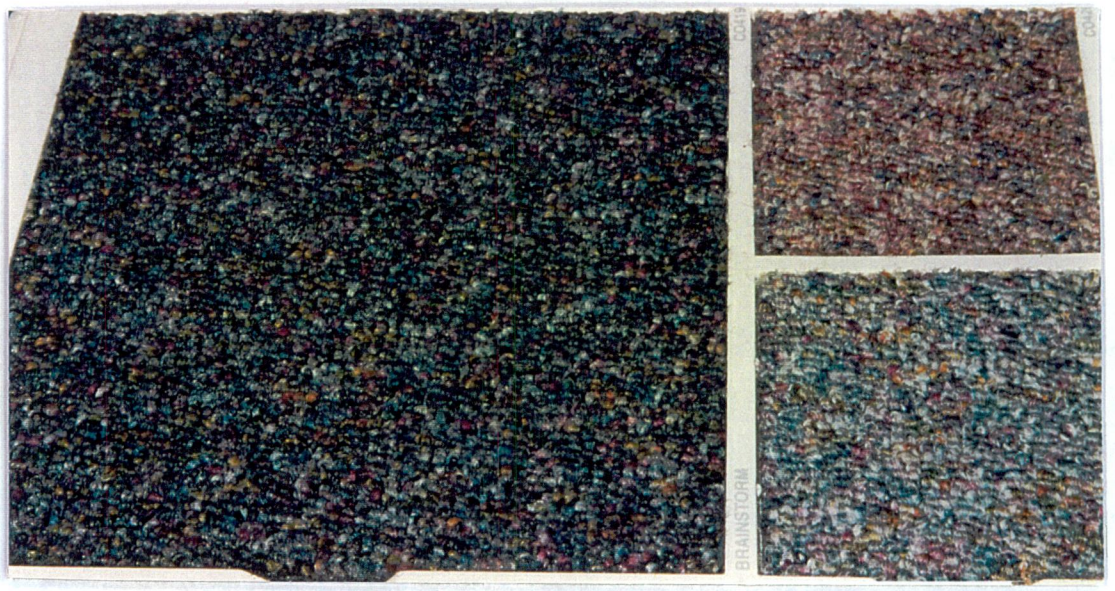


FIGURE 23

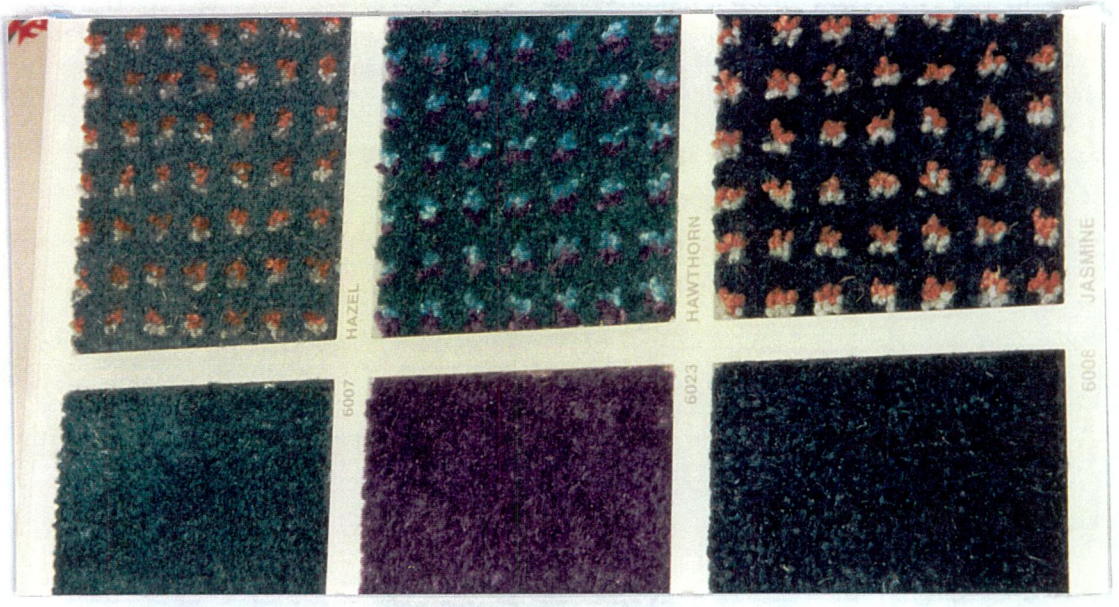


FIGURE 24

Figure 19 shows an example of such a range of carpet. A plain carpet with a small pattern is co-ordinated with one more densely patterned. They could be sold as individual carpet designs or together as a co-ordinated pair.

The carpet designs produced by Couristan vary in colour, pattern and scale. They are designed specifically to meet the client's demands. To show how versatile Couristan's range of designs are, I have included the following two photographs. **Figure 20** shows a section of carpet produced for an Asian client. It is a representation of animal skin. **Figure 21** was created for an American client and varies greatly from all the designs already discussed. These designs underline the point that this carpet company will design and produce whatever the customer desires. It also proves that the jacquard machinery used in this factory, although forty years old, is still capable of producing a vast array of designs suitable to the buyers needs.

The second carpet company in Cork, that also produces for the contract business, is Munster Carpets in Douglas. It also produces carpets of 80% wool and 20% nylon. Like Couristan, there is no design team in Munster, nor is there a consultant designer or a resident designer. In this company the designing is done by its employees, none of whom have been trained in design. When we look at the design or lack design in the carpets produced, it is quite apparent. Their selling point is possibly their lack of design. There are no jacquard looms in this factory. They produce good quality carpets of very simple design. I believe however, that the designs could be improved by consulting a designer who could perhaps work around the limitations of the existing machinery. The manager does not think that the skills of a designer are necessary for the type of carpet that Munster produces.

Figure 22 shows a co-ordinated range. The central fibre-blended carpet is surrounded by plain carpets which could be used to co-ordinate with it. The type of patterned carpet that Munster can produce is limited by their machinery.**Figure 23** shows a carpet of blended-yarn in three different colourways. **Figure 24** displays a patterned carpet in three different colourways with three plain co-ordinating carpets. The pattern is a repeating square which is made up of two colours which contrast with the base colour of the design.

Architects and interior designers are attracted to Munster's designs, I believe, because they are simple and without strong patterns or motifs and this allows them to be more creative in other areas of their design of the building.

Munster Carpets and Couristan Carpets both produce contract carpets. The emphasis that they each give to design differs as do the designs themselves. Couristan have looms that allow them to create intricate designs and they also have a design team in England. The employees of Munster design the carpets they produce, even though they have no formal training in this area. The looms limit the design possibilities. However both companies claim to be able to stay in business for the same reason - flexibility. The success and survival of both seems to depend on the quality of their product and the ability to work around the clock to meet orders. To get an order out on schedule, both companies occasionally work twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. They offer this service to their clients, a service of total flexibility in special circumstances.

Neither company is in the price-sensitive area of the market. Transportation costs certainly add to the price of an order. Couristan transports to America, Europe and Japan from Youghal and the American owner still insists on weaving his product in Youghal or St. Helens. Paddy O'Donoghue, the production manager believes that, despite the extra cost and remote location, the owner continues with them because of the flexible workforce. Munster Carpets imports the raw material from England because they are dissatisfied with the quality of Irish wool for carpet making. The time needed to import the raw material and the time needed to deliver the finished product back to the U.K. means that the price of the product increases. Paul O'Callaghan, the manager, believes that the advantage his company has over its competitors is that it offers a better service in terms of flexibility.

In this area of production we have seen how the market can have direct control over the designing of the product. Each carpet is tailored to suit the customer's taste. In both of the companies discussed, the product is almost secondary to the service each gives their clients. Design and price do not appear to be as important to the client, it seems, as the service of flexibility is.

As Paul O'Callaghan says of Munster carpets ;

" We are in the business of providing a service for which carpet is the end result."

(In interview, Douglas Nov.'95)

As can be seen from this chapter these companies attribute their sucess to an acute knowledge of their market along with an ability to respond to market changes and customer requests. Industrial markets are easier to analyse than consumer markets as the number of customers are fewer and there is alot of direct communication between manufacturer and customer.

FIGURE

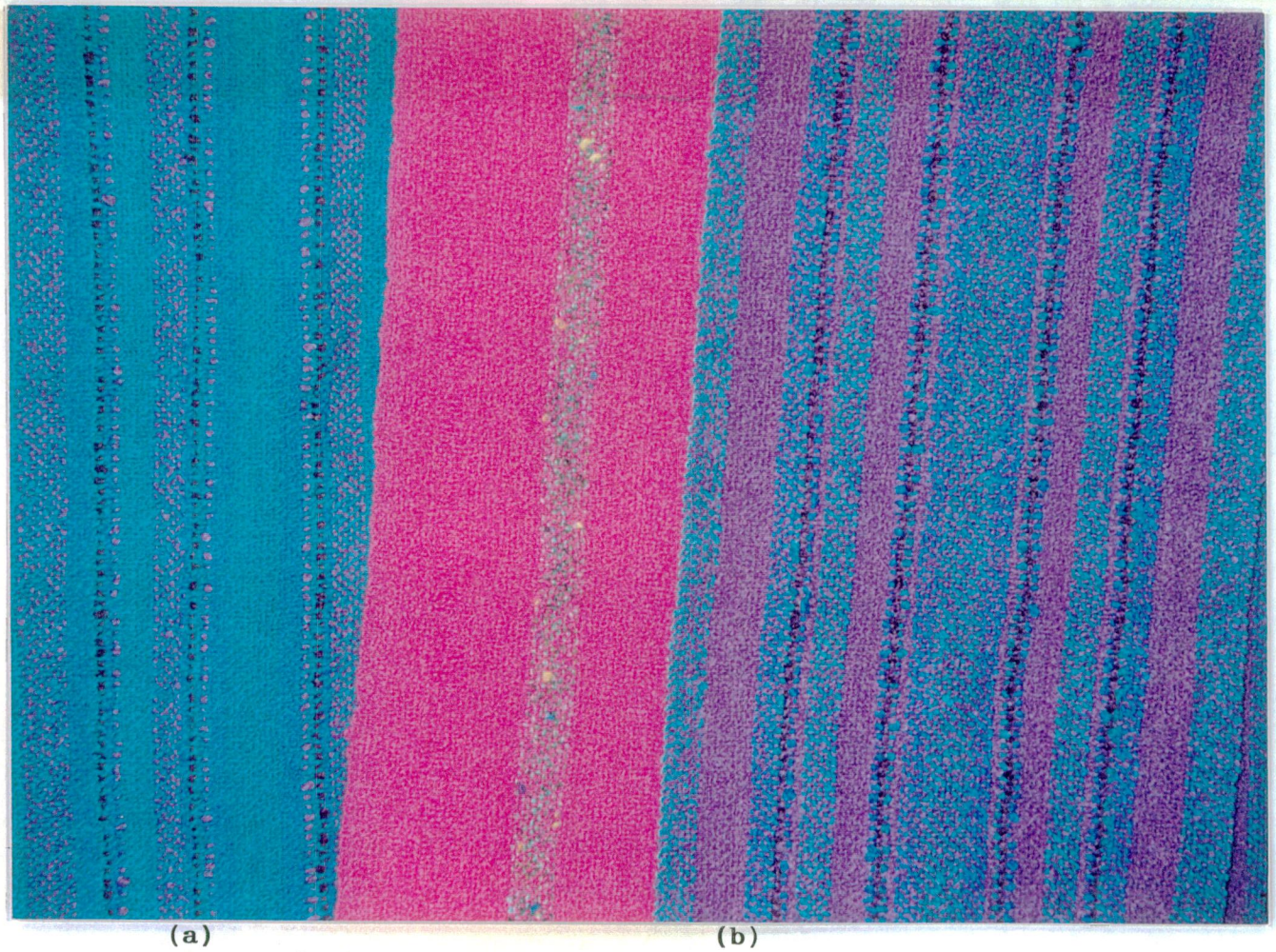
FIGURE 25

CHAPTER 4: Current Consumer Textile Production

The manner in which a product is presented is an important factor in the success of any business. Labelling and packaging in some instances are as important as the product itself. In this chapter, this will be discussed in relation to two Cork based companies that work with linen cloth. Finding a suitable location in which to show the product to the customer is also important. Each year The Crafts Council of Ireland organise an annual crafts trade fair and this has been instrumental to the success and survival of many Irish craft-producing companies.
To two of the companies in this chapter this is the main marketing event in their year and it provides them with the orders that they need to survive.

Mary Barry is a craft weaver who hand weaves cloth which is made into jackets, scarves and coats. She is the only craft weaver in Cork who produces woven garments on a relatively large scale. Mary is a weave graduate of N.C.A.D. and at the moment she designs and weaves all of the woven garments at her premises in the city centre. In the future, however, she plans to spend more time designing and will commission the weaving of her cloth to a mill. Currently she also designs knitwear and commissions rural knitters to knit her designs which she sells in her shop. The neckbands, sleeves and waistbands of her garments are also knitted.

At the moment all of the production is done on a Northrup power loom. Although this has a capacity for using six shafts, Mary only uses two and this limits the possibility of producing more complex weave structures. All of Mary's products are of plain weave. This situation is similar to that of Dripsey Woollen Mills and like Dripsey, Mary uses colour and texture to enhance her designs. All of the yarn used is textured - boucle, mohair and silk mix, tweed and feather tweed. Other than the tweed, all of the yarn is English and is dyed to Mary's specifications. The colour palette used by this designer is very varied as can be seen in **Figure 25**. Each year some colours are added to the collection and some are dropped. **Figure 25** shows the textures that the designer achieves through the use of boucle of two different densities, one thick and one thin. Sometimes both variations are found in one scarf or length of fabric and this results in an interesting textural contrast.



(a) (b)

FIGURE 26

(a) (b)

FIGURE 27

Most of the design work goes into the warp and usually a one colour weft is used throughout the piece. Stripes are very dominant in Mary's designs and vary in thickness, proportion and texture. Colour is very important to this designer and the vast array of colours that she uses attracts a wide range of people. She finds colour sources in natural forms and in paintings of artists she admires like Van Gogh.

What is clever about the work of this designer is the way she creates many different colourways while working with one warp. **Figure 26** and **Figure 27** show examples of this. Both (a) and (b) on each photograph originate from the same warp but by changing the weft colours, some colours in the warp are intensified and some are muted. This allows the designer produce cloth of different colours without having to change the warp. Colourways which are very different to each other can be created because the designer often uses warm and cold colours in the same warp and either can become the principal colour of the piece.

Mary Barry exhibits every year at "Showcase", the craft trade fair which is organised by The Crafts Council of Ireland. Buyers from Ireland, U.S.A., Europe and Japan visit "Showcase" and according to a spokesperson for The Crafts Council, 50% of the orders taken in 1994 were for the export market. This is the main marketing event in Mary Barry's year. She obtains orders there which make up most of her business. She has been exhibiting at Showcase for ten years and believes that her business was launched by exhibiting there. This is also where she conducts her market research. Each year she tries to introduce a new item to her collection and exhibits it first here. This could take the form of a new colour story, a new garment or a new texture. She records the reaction to her products mentally at the fair and this helps her to make decisions on whether to continue with some lines of products or to drop or modify others. At Showcase Mary secures orders from craftshop owners in Ireland, U.S.A. and Europe.

For a designer, Mary Barry feels that it is important to be able to constantly find new sources of inspiration. She attributes her ability to do this to her formal training at N.C.A.D. At college, she believes she learned how to work with colour and texture, to develop design ideas and obtained the technical skills needed to be a good weaver. Although none of her designs are done on computer, Mary understands the importance of keeping up with changing trends and technology.
"To survive you need to be versatile to all the resources available. You must keep abreast of the times and these days that is working with a computer. As a designer, one needs to be open to it."

Like Dripsey Woollen Mills, Mary Barry has overcome the limitations of her machinery by using colour and texture and I think that she does this very successfully. However, unlike Dripsey, Mary produces one range of products which is aimed at one market. She adapts her designs to suit the changing trends in this market and this is what has helped her to survive in business.Her success is also largely due to Ireland's tourist industry and the public's appreciation of traditional crafts.

An explanation as to why there is such a large American tourist industry for Irish craft goods was made by Anco, in their Report on Crafts for The Crafts Council.
They believe that the American-Irish generations that developed after the famine looked to the past to develop a sense of community and identity which they lacked in their adopted culture. They created a mythological Ireland where simple peasants hand-produced items for most of their needs. They then sought to buy items that continued to create this image for them - hand woven goods, linen, lace and Aran knits. Anco warned that this type of buyer is a diminishing one and as the memory of Irish-Americans fades, there will no longer be such a large captive market for these goods.(Report on crafts Ireland. Anco for the Crafts Council of Ireland. January 1985).
This report is over ten years old yet there is still a demand for these types of products. The difference, I believe, is that the market is no longer limited to America. Europeans and Japanese primarily are eager to buy tweed, linen goods and Aran knits at tourist locations and craftshops throughout Ireland and in their own countries. It is generally understood that Ireland has a long tradition of linen, tweed and hand-knitting.

Buyers of these products believe that they are buying a traditional Irish craft and many businesses survive by using this to their advantage. Many textile goods are bought not because of their good design but because they look hand-made and there is still a respect for hand crafts in our society.

Marketing is a very important and useful tool to a company. Some companies rely on the customer knowing that their product has a long tradition in Ireland. One such company is The Linen Hall in Clonakilty. It produces table cloths, napkins and placemats in a variety of colours. The linen cloth is bought in Northern Ireland and is cut and sewn into tableware in Clonakilty. Each piece is very simple in design. Labelling and packaging are very important to the marketing of this range of products. Clonakilty has a long history of working with linen and this is conveyed to the buyer by use of an information sheet which is found inside the packaging of the product. Each item or set of items is contained in a box covered in brown paper which is very fashionable in these days of environment awareness. On the cover of each box is a print of a town scene dating from the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of this century. The words "The Linen Hall" and "Irish Linen" are printed in black ink on the cover. The packaging is important in getting the point across that linen is natural and has a long history and tradition in Clonakilty. The simplicity of the product is important and appeals to or at least does not offend the greatest number of people. The packaging allows them to believe that they are buying something natural and something which has a history in the town. The customer is told that the town has a long history of linen making and "Made in Clonakilty" is printed on the box implying to some that the linen they are buying was made there. In this case, the packaging has helped to create an image for the product and I would argue that the product is sold on its created image rather than its design.

Another company that relies on the customer knowing the history of linen making and lace-work in Ireland is Corabbey Ltd. in Midleton, Co. Cork. Corabbey has an advantage over The Linen Hall in that it is a direct descendant of linen embroidery in the area since 1832 when a convent and school were opened and linen cambric work and lace-making were part of the curriculum. This teaching continued to be an integral part of the school up to the present day and in 1984 Corabbey became a commercial venture and continues to operate out of the convent building. Marketing plays a large role in the success and survival of this business.

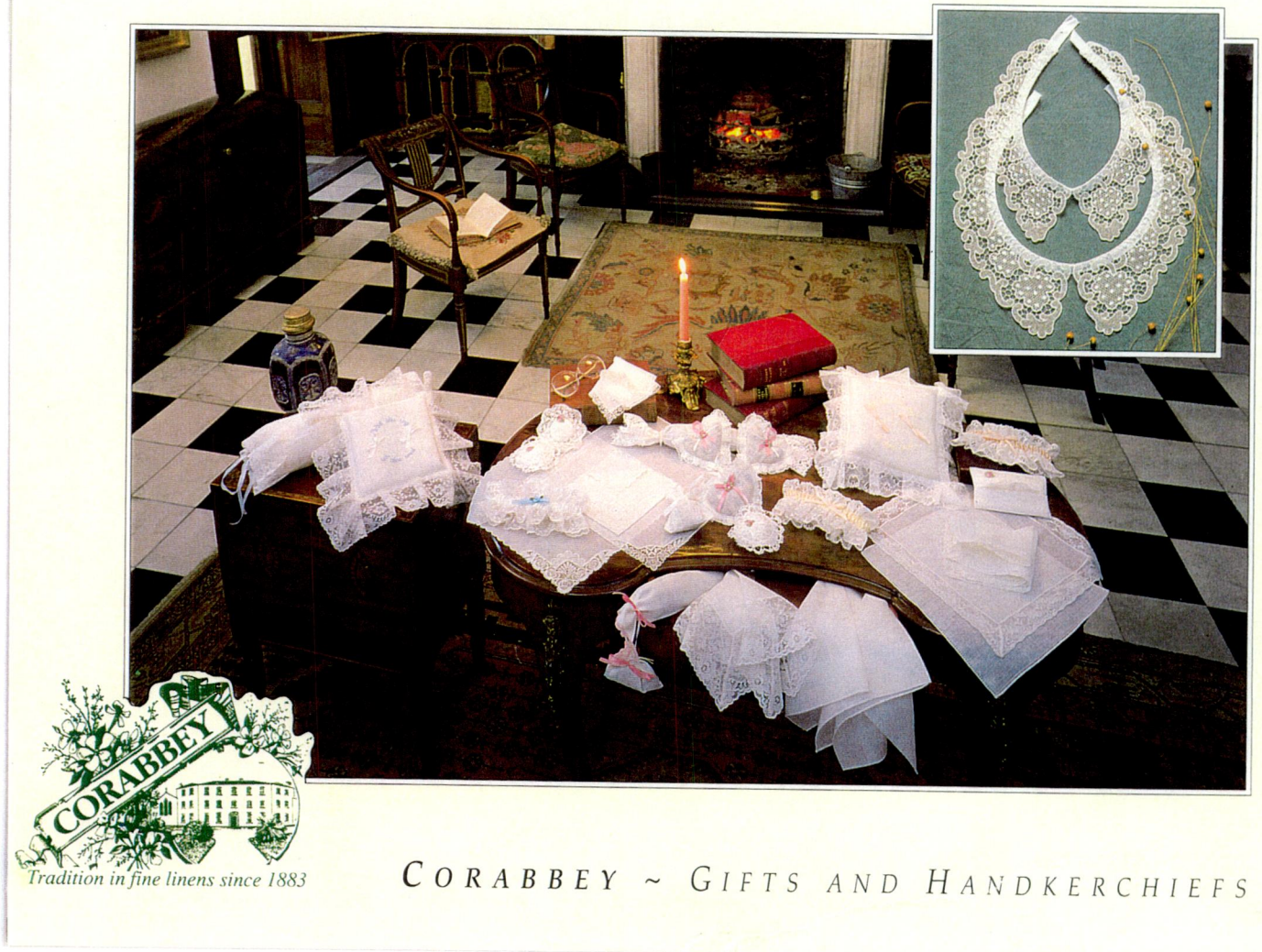

CORABBEY
Tradition in fine linens since 1883
CORABBEY ~ GIFTS AND HANDKERCHIEFS

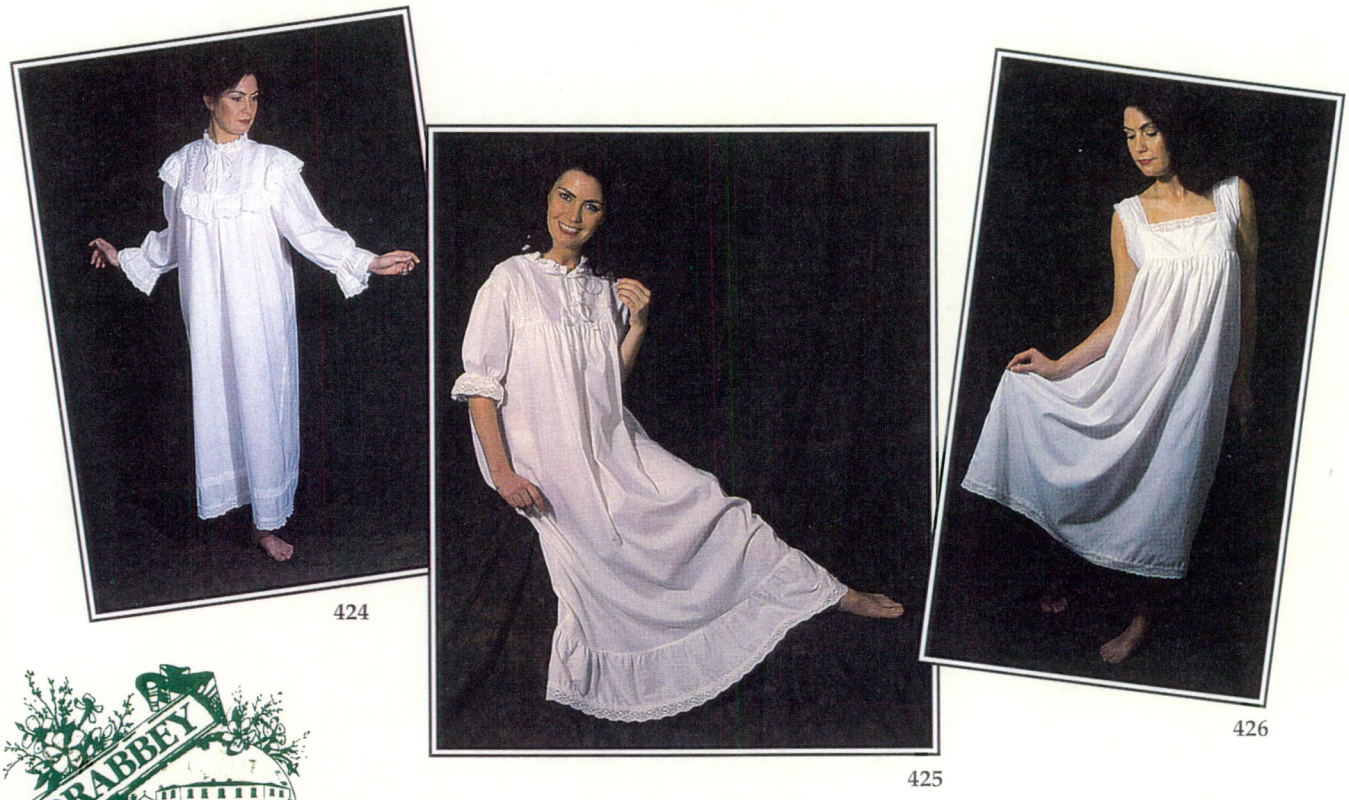
FIGURE 28

CORABBEY

Tradition in fine linens since 1883

CORABBEY ~ TABLE SETTINGS

FIGURE 29



CORABBEY

Tradition in fine linens since 1883

C O R A B B E Y ~ N I G H T G O W N S

FIGURE 30

Corabbey also give the customer an information pack which traces the history of linen in Ireland and the history of Corabbey since 1832 as well as giving information on the types of products they produce.

The company sells embroidered linen tableware and giftwear . 100% linen is used which they buy from Northern Ireland. The cloth is woven in the North but the flax is imported from Holland as very little is grown in Ireland today. Very little of the embroidery work is done by hand. It is done instead by a computerised machine which is programmed to store the required designs. Most of the designs are Celtic in origin and many come from sources such as The Book Of Kells. The type of design on each piece largely depends on the market to which it is aimed. Corabbey supply to America, Europe, Japan and Ireland and each market requires a different design approach. Through market research, Corabbey have discovered, for example, that the American market likes a lot of lace-work in the design and for this market, Corabbey produces items such as those seen in **Figure 28.** In these products, heavily worked lace serves as a border to pillows, handkerchiefs, napkins and garters. The European market requires designs which are simpler and more classical like those in **Figure 29**. With the help of The Irish Trade Board, Corabbey recently broke into the Japanese market. They helped the company to put together a marketing plan and identified what would appeal to the market. **Figure 29a** which has a scalloped edge is a particularly popular design in Japan.The Irish Trade Board also advised Corabbey to employ a consultant designer who would help them to develop new lines of products. This they have done and she is responsible for the introduction of ladies wear which can be seen in **Figure 30.**

Like Mary Barry, Corabbey believe that exhibiting at "Showcase" has helped their success and survival. Each year this fair provides them with orders from their various markets. Successful marketing has provided this company with new markets. Even though the design of these products is much more intricate than The Linen Hall, packaging also creates an image for their products. Again they want to convey to the customer that their products have a long history in Ireland and they do this by photographing them in scenes of wealth and opulence. Originally the convent produced linen goods for wealthy people in England and the Continent and to display the goods they make today they chose one of the finest stately homes in Ireland, Bantry House. I believe that this is done to create the image that they still produce for the upper-class and to give them credibility in terms of heritage, class and taste.

CONCLUSION

This thesis highlights the decline of the textile industry in Ireland as a major economic contributor in the last two centuries. The first question it prompts is what caused this decline?

Certainly among the major causes for the decline, can be included the banning in the eighteenth century by the British authorities of the importation of Irish woollen textile goods. This removed the demand for Irish wool in it's biggest market and led to a severe decline in its production. Ireland's failure to industrialise in line with the rest of Europe during the nineteenth century made it impossible to compete internationally. The opening up of the Irish economy in the late twentieth century, led to the end of the protection of inefficient production.

As can be seen from Chapter 2, the failure to control inflation and the lack of clear target marketing led to the closure of Dripsey Woollen Mills in the late 1980's. It's story is a microcosm of the industry in Ireland for that period where many labour-intensive industries were unable to compete with cheaper imports.

The second question is why have the textile manufacturers still in operation in Cork succeeded ?

As can be seen from Chapter 3, Couristan and Munster Carpets both attribute their success to an in-depth knowledge of their market and an ability to respond to their market requests promptly. In industrial production, products are only made to order to customer's specifications. This contrasts with the consumer market discussed in Chapter 4 where a range of products must be produced and brought to the market for the customer to choose. This requires a greater design skill. As can be seen, all the companies discussed in this chapter rely on the image of traditional Ireland to help them to sell their products. This traditional Irish image is visible in the design, marketing, labelling and packaging of their products.

Finally, what is the future of textiles in Ireland?

My research leads me to concur with the Scandinavian Design Report that Irish textiles must use its distinct traditional quality so as to differentiate itself from international competition and thereby avoid direct price competition.

A worrying trend that is apparent from my research is that of companies not employing qualified designers. Surely to compete on an international market, Irish textile producers must have designers equal to their international competitors. It is also interesting to note that some designs for Irish production are done abroad. It would be difficult for these foreign designers to incorporate the traditional Irish qualities in their design.

The final disturbing aspect of my research was the lack of technological advances being used in the companies examined.
"One of the keys to success is constantly updating your technology."
(Willie McCarter, Fruit of the Loom, 1994).

I believe we must learn from the historical failures discussed in the opening chapters. Primarily the Irish textiles industry is faced with the same dilemma as that of the nineteenth century. It must update technologically in order to compete internationally with textile producers using computer aided design and updated technology. It is my view that the current textiles industry is far better equipped to face this challenge than it was in the nineteenth century as current technological advaces are now as readily available in Ireland as anywhere else in the World.

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