SOME SELECTED CONTEMPORARY TEXTILE DESIGNERS
OF THE UNITED STATES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

by

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Beauty in some form is a fundamental human need. The use of fabrics which have beautiful color, texture, and design is one way of satisfying this need. Fabrics for clothing and the home are human necessities, and to provide these necessities, and to satisfy this need for beauty is the function of the textile industry and those who are associated with it.

Today the textile industry is one of the largest industries in the United States. Many factors are responsible for this tremendous growth and progress. Because design, whether woven or surface applied, is one of the important factors, the influence of the designer is highly significant.

The twentieth century presents a challenge to every designer. No longer is the general public satisfied with traditional patterns and colors which have been repeated over a period of many years. Excessive ornamentation and decoration has no place in the present mode of living nor
in the contemporary style of architecture. Designs placed on the market must satisfy these new interests and needs of the public.

This problem also faces the manufacturer, and he is becoming well aware of this situation. As a result, the relationship between the manufacturer and the designer is rapidly changing from one of independence to one of closer harmony and interdependence. If this relationship is to result in the greatest benefits to all concerned, both the manufacturer and the designer must understand each other's problems. The designer must not only be a trained specialist in the principles of design, but he must also be familiar with the problems of production - handling of materials, suitability of the design to the fabric, suitability of the fabric to the use for which it has been designed, problems in color application, and the techniques involved in the actual production of the design by the manufacturer and converter.

In hand weaving, where the designer is primarily interested in adapting his designs to power looming, his problem becomes that of using yarns which can be successfully used on a power loom.

The growing importance of the designer of textiles is a fact which is generally recognized.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to bring together information concerning a selected group of textile designers of the present time. The type of information here included is the character of design for which he is best known; special techniques, if any, which he uses in his work; the kinds or types of fabrics with which he most often works; the purpose these fabrics are to serve, such as for upholstery, drapery, clothing, or others; the philosophy of the designer in relation to his work and to design in general; and influence the designer may be exerting on design trends, and upon those with whom he comes in contact, such as students and helpers.

Since the background training of designers today is far more varied than in the past, some information concerning these facts is included. This situation is indicative of a changing "state of affairs" in the field of textile designing.

Sources of Information and Illustrations

Information and materials used in this study were obtained from the following sources: illustrated magazines of art, home furnishings, interior decorating,
and architecture; trade journals; daily and trade newspapers; books; The Oregonian Hostess House exhibit of contemporary home furnishings, Portland; De Young Art Museum, San Francisco; individual designers, retail stores, and interior decorators for the fabrics; correspondence with directors of textile divisions of many museums, directors of home-furnishing departments of magazines; editor of *Everyday Art Quarterly*, and individual shops specializing in contemporary art.

Procedure Used in the Study

Since design trends change rapidly, 1940 was the date set as the limit for research in magazines. The chief sources in this category were *House and Garden, Interiors, Arts and Architecture, Textile Colorist* and *Upholstering*. A very careful search was made, since magazines proved to be practically the only source of information available.

The visits to the two exhibits were especially helpful in giving the writer an opportunity to see the work being done by several designers. A few samples of their work are included in this study.

The following stores were visited in person for information and particularly for fabrics which would be

Individual designers, manufacturers and converters, and interior decorating shops were also contacted, through correspondence, in search for fabrics, as well as any information which would be authentic and therefore usable.

Pictures which were not available for cut-outs were photostated. This proved necessary because of the difficulty, and in some cases, the inability to obtain the desired fabrics.

A general outline of the points to be included in the discussion of each designer was set up, and the information organized accordingly.

Since the number of designers that can be included in this study is limited, a bibliography for additional textile designers is included.
Limitations of the Study

In many of the drapery and upholstering fabrics, the unit of design to be repeated is too large to be seen in its entirety in a sample size that can be used in this study. Therefore, pictures were taken of these fabrics and a swatch has been included to show the fabric texture and the colors used.

First-hand information is not available to any extent, because of distance from the places where the designers live, and the necessity of relying on correspondence, which is often a retarding factor.

It has been exceedingly difficult to obtain designer-named fabrics for designer names seldom appear on the fabric as proof of the source. Often designs have been altered in some way before they reach the public, and the original creation no longer exists.

Sample lengths available to the interior decorator are often not obtainable by individual purchasers.

The lack of information, or interest in the individual designer by persons handling these fabrics has also been an obstacle in securing information.
CHAPTER II
A BRIEF HISTORY OF HAND WEAVING IN THE UNITED STATES

The Art of Hand Weaving

The art of weaving is one of the great arts which nature has taught man, and its range is worldwide. It is satisfying and practical, offering a form of creative art within the reach of nearly everyone. It serves to fulfill a normal human desire for self-expression.

Weaving dates back to pre-historic times and is one of the earliest evidences of culture. No matter how utilitarian the material, there was always a desire to avoid monotony. Color and pattern were introduced into textiles even though the design was very simple and the workmanship crudely executed.

Hand Weaving in the Colonial Period

The Colonial period in this country's history will serve as the starting point for the discussion of hand-weaving development.

In New England, every home had a loom, and carding, spinning, and weaving were common household occupations in which the entire family took part. Since the colonists came from various parts of Europe, the influence of their
respective countries was a marked characteristic of their weaving.

The ruggedness of their physical environment, their struggle for existence, and the simplicity of their living conditions, were factors that influenced the type of weaving done during that period. The cloth was mainly utilitarian, and such colors as red, blue-green, black, blue, and grey were commonly used. The coarse woolens and linens which these housewives wove served to fill their clothing requirements and household needs. The designs were usually simple and structural in type with checks, stripes, and plaids predominating.

The wool and flax needed for the weaving were produced on the farms of the colonists.

In the South, there was a strong tendency to import household linens and material for clothing. Instead of growing flax and cotton, these people found it more to their liking to grow tobacco, which was both easier to grow and more profitable.

Perhaps the most coveted American heirlooms were the coverlets which adorned the beds of our ancestors. Since beds were then usually found in the living rooms, the beauty of the coverlet lent dignity and charm to the furnishings. Added interest was found in the matching
designs of smaller coverlets which were used on cribs and trundles.

Families often inherited their particular coverlet drafts. These had been brought from Britain, France, Holland, Germany, and Switzerland and included many popular patterns such as Whig Rose, Pine Tree, Chariot Wheels, and many others.

As the colonies grew, coverlet weaving became more specialized. Professional weavers from abroad came here, set up their looms on carts and traveled from place to place. Coverlets were made up until the Civil war period.

The Decline of Hand Weaving

Following the Revolutionary war and the subsequent improvement in machinery and dyes, weaving began to change from a home craft into a commercial industry. Improvements in looms and the quality of dyes had a devastating effect on the hand weaving craft. Looms were put away into garrets to remain for many years.

Following the Civil war, some weaving was done on hand looms in country districts, such as the isolated communities in Kentucky and Tennessee. Rag rugs continued to be woven. Drafts handed down and carelessly
copied became faulty patterns producing less beautiful designs.

In New England the craft died out almost completely. Credit for its survival at all is given to Weaver Rose.

The Revival of Hand Weaving

In recent years a rapid-growing interest in weaving together with a keen appreciation of textile art has taken place. The hand loom today, however, is a luxury rather than a necessity.

Revival of hand weaving received the greatest stimulus in the South. Charitable and educational agencies came to the aid of this worthy movement and training in hand weaving was provided for many who otherwise could not have provided their own means for this opportunity.

In 1915, Mrs. Mary Meigs Atwater organized a class in hand weaving at Basin, Montana. For many years previously, she had carried on research and had constructed drafts of over three hundred Colonial weaving patterns.

During World War I she volunteered to aid in occupational therapy work in Pacific Coast army hospitals.

She has traveled extensively and visited many libraries and museums, and is known for her expertness in working out instructions that can be used to reproduce
some of the old patterns.

In the East, Weaver Rose of New Kensington, Rhode Island, was an outstanding personage during this phase of hand-weaving history. His importance is expressed by Mrs. Atwater in the following words: "He had the old tradition, kept it pure and handed it on. Weavers today owe him much. In fact Weaver Rose may be said to have done more than any other one person toward the modern revival of hand weaving in New England." (1:18)

For much more recent influence, credit should be given to Marianne Strengell, Anni Albers, and Dorothy Liebes, all of whom are well known in the field of hand weaving.

Contemporary Hand Weaving

Hand weaving today is a living, growing art, ready to meet new needs in new ways. The American people have a special interest in art; associations and sentiment are important in our philosophy of living. We like to feel that our textiles are beautiful; that they are suitable for our needs; that they express our individuality in beautiful clothes, and add beauty to the environs of our homes, places of business, and public structures.
It is color interest and variety in yarns and their combinations that make contemporary hand weaving uniquely different from that of the past.

What has brought about this new emphasis in our present day weaving? History has proved that textile fabrics and designs are readily influenced by economic conditions, mode of living, styles of architecture, dress design, and even art exhibits. Considering these factors today, their influence is readily discernible. Modern design in architecture is steadily growing in popularity and public acceptance. Houses have large expanses of wall space, spacious windows to enjoy a beautiful view and to "bring the outdoors in". Furnishings in general suggest simplicity, and an air of pleasing orderliness. Textured fabrics harmonize well with contrasts of smooth finishes of furniture, and with the various materials, such as wood, plaster, metal, and plastics, that are commonly found in modern architectural structures.

Texture today is not limited to rough and uneven surfaces. Rather, it suggests greater variances such as would be obtained by using shiny and dull, coarse and fine, smooth and rough, soft and thick, irregular yarns and unusual weaving materials. The heavier and nubby fabrics of this type are practical and are in harmony
with the atmosphere of freedom and casualness that pre-
dominate in modern architecture.

The strength of threads today makes feasible the
practice of gaining textural and pattern interest through
the use of warp variations. A minimum of weft shuttle
changes is required by this method and a greater yardage
is produced. Speed is therefore gained.

The sources of weaving materials available now have
increased tremendously since Colonial days. In addition
to the traditional yarns of cotton, silk, wool, and linen,
are the novelty yarns made from them as well as in
combinations with other fibers. Synthetic fibers, except
rayon, and plastic materials are definitely new. The
following suggest a myriad from which to choose today:
raffia, twine, reeds, grasses, bamboo strips, cork, oil
cloth, leather strips, fabric strips, ribbon, braid,
loop fringe, ball fringe, chenille, boucle', novelties,
sequins, beads, metallic ribbon and cords, plastic-
covered aluminum in a variety of colors, cellophane, spun
glass, plastics such as tensolite, and braided metal
foils which seem to be the most recent addition.

Color has come to the fore. It is clear, often in
full intensity in lighter colors, and can form unusual
and sometimes startling combinations. Dress fashion colors
have a strong influence in setting the color palette
in fabric colors used for decorative purposes. This is true because of the practice of coordinating decorative and dress fabrics as will be noted elsewhere in this study. Dorothy Liebes is no doubt the greatest exponent of vivid colors and color combinations.

The scope of hand weaving today is indeed broad and includes designers of general weaving, designers of custom weaving, designers engaged in power loom adaptations, those who teach, those who practice its use in occupational therapy, summer-camp activities, vocational weaving by the blind, and weaving for personal enjoyment.
CHAPTER III

FOUR CONTEMPORARY DESIGNERS OF HAND WEAVING
Figure 1

Robert Sailors
ROBERT SAILORS

Robert Sailors began his venture into the business of hand weaving in 1947 in the small town of Bitely, Michigan. A cottage, housing two hand looms, served as his studio.

Just previous to this, Mr. Sailors had taught weaving at Cranbrook Art Academy, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. During that time he had woven many samples of drapery and upholstery materials. A large number of these samples were gathered together and sent to a Grand Rapids furniture house where they were so enthusiastically received that requests for more samples came in. These were soon followed by orders for yardage.

At midwestern furniture shows the display of his fabrics attracted much attention and decorators from various large cities who saw them are now his regular patrons for whom he does custom weaving.

With this rapid growth in orders, Mr. Sailors found it necessary to find larger quarters. He built a cement block house and about a year later added a room. He now has six hand looms and one power loom in operation. The present personnel includes Mr. Sailors, six weavers, one person who takes care of the orders, correspondence, and bookkeeping, and seven salesmen.
Mr. Sailors weaves all the samples on a small sample loom, designing them as he goes along, experimenting with colors and textures as the weaving progresses. He also supervises the orders filled by his weavers, and when there is time, he teaches inexperienced weavers how to master the loom. It is interesting to note here, Mr. Sailors' view in regard to teaching and learning the art of weaving:

It's not an easy thing to teach, he says. Weaving requires mental and muscular coordination, and a certain rhythm that can't be taught. You either have it, or you don't. A beginner can weave one yard a day, a moderately fair weaver, three yards a day, a good one, five yards, and an exceptional one, ten. (14:12)

He uses not only the more usual yarns and materials but also some very unusual ones: burlap, awning canvas, torn cloth strips, rope, bamboo, chamois, and even corn husks. Before the present plastic-covered aluminum yarns and threads were on the market, Mr. Sailors introduced metal into some of his fabrics. The metal came from the lowly Chore Boy type of pot cleaner which was tediously unraveled. Now, non-tarnishing threads and yarns come on spools and are obtainable in a variety of sizes, colors, and textures.

Mr. Sailors uses various methods to obtain variety in his fabrics. He subordinates pattern when there is
much interest in color or texture. Smooth and textured, heavy and fine, or shiny and dull yarns are combined in pleasing colors and harmonious proportions. Usually he includes at least two basic yarns, sometimes more. The following are some of the combinations used: loosely woven plaids composed of cotton, rayon, wool, and metal threads; wool, rayon and torn cloth strips; wool yarn combined with horizontal strips of leather; plaids in natural tones; open lacy weaves for draperies; roller blinds of bamboo held together with strands of deep red, chartreuse, and blue yarn; white painted wood slats with flame colored yarns, gold foil, and bright green strands. The roll-up blinds come in varying weights and textures, with reeds, wood slats, or bamboo as the base.

Fabrics are now made according to customer specifications. Colors are matched, and textures and weights are worked out according to the wishes of the clients. Since most hand woven materials are limited to forty-two inches in width, fabrics that must be wider are woven on the power loom. When extensive yardage is required, the power loom is used. Hand weaving yardage per day varies according to the skill of the weaver and to the complexity of the weft color and texture changes. The weavers are paid according to the yardage they produce.
Drapery and upholstery materials make up the bulk of the fabrics produced, but Mr. Sailors also designs tweeds, suitings, coat materials, and has done some rug weaving. Ed. Rossbach in his article, "Hand Weaving as an Art Form," has the following to say concerning Mr. Sailors' rug designs:

Robert Sailors reveals in his rugs a direct, straight-forward use of materials to create texture within bold-patterned areas. The designs are always natural to the medium; never do his rugs seem to be paintings of printed textiles which have been adapted to weaving. The rugs emerge from much experience and experimentation, out of recognition of the "form" inherent in sisal, rag, yarn or whatever material he proposes to use. He does not force his materials - rather he follows them. His patterns are bold and geometric, with the slight variations in repeats which contribute to elevating his rugs to works of art. (19:21)

His art training in water color, oil painting, pottery and sculpture was taken at the Art Institute of Chicago where he received his degree of Bachelor of Art Education. Weaving developed into his speciality while he was working for a degree of Master of Fine Arts at Cranbrook Art Academy, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. He taught general art in the Evanston Illinois High School; later, life drawing, design, and weaving at the Grand Rapids Art Gallery, and finally, weaving at Cranbrook.
His fabrics have been exhibited far and wide. The following are only a few of the many places: Museum of Modern Art, 1944, 1945; San Francisco Museum of Art, 1945; Royal Museum of Art, Toronto, 1945. (20:402)

Various awards were presented to him in the 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, and 1948 International Textile Exhibition, held yearly at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina. (18)

Designing weaves that can be readily produced on the power loom is also one of Mr. Sailors' contributions to the field of good design in power-loomed fabrics. (16:50)

The following five plates show examples of his work.
Plate I

Fabrics With Metallic Interest
Plate II

Drapery Fabrics
Plate III

Drapery Fabrics
Plate IV

Roll-up Blind of Split Bamboo
Plate V

Upholstery Fabrics
Marianne Strengell

Figure 2
MARIANNE STRENGELL

Marianne Strengell, whose name and work are synonymous with contemporary art, is an outstanding figure in the textile field today. At present she is head of the Textile department at Cranbrook Art Academy, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, where she has taught weaving since 1937.

Her training and experiences have been influenced by cultural surroundings which have developed in her the qualities of a sincere artist.

Miss Strengell, a native of Helsingfors, Finland, is the daughter of one of that country's outstanding architects and art critics; her mother was known for her work in interior design.

Marianne attended school in Helsingfors, and then worked as a designer from 1931 to 1936. During this time she did extensive designing of power-loom fabrics in both Sweden and Denmark.

Her work has been exhibited in such important European art centers as Helsingfors; National Museum, Stockholm; Barcelona; Antwerp; Brussels; and Paris. She has also exhibited in the United States at the Golden Gate Exposition, the New York World's Fair, the Newark Museum, and the International Textile Exhibition, in 1944 and 1945. (28)
At the La France Fabric Design Contest in June 1944, she was awarded one first prize and one fourth prize for her woven textiles. (25:18)

Besides her interests in teaching, she is busy with other activities. Many power-loom fabrics have been designed by her for various companies in this country. (23:50) The hand-woven textured rug for the Small House of Great Merit, designed by her, is pictured in the House Beautiful magazine. (31:61) All the hand-woven fabrics for the Terrace Plaza Hotel, Cincinnati, were her designs and included drapery and upholstery fabrics, table linens, bath linens, bedspreads, and rugs.

Miss Strangoli was also a contributing member of the Saarinen-Swanson Group. (29:152) Six designers, each representing a different field, and all either staff members or alumni of Cranbrook Art Academy, worked together in planning a coordinated group of home furnishings. (30:156-157) She worked out hand-woven fabric designs which were later duplicated on power looms. Texture was an outstanding characteristic of the fabrics which were made available in a variety of colors in varying values and intensities, ranging from neutrals to brilliant hues.

One of her latest ventures has been experimentation with Fiberglas combined with other fibers such as mohair and
vinyl-coated fibers. Fabrics resulting from this experimentation were made into satisfactory upholstery cloth for the Fiberglas Corporation. The term "satisfactory" means here that the tendency of Fiberglas to break under friction had been satisfactorily solved. Fiberglas is being used in drapery fabrics because of its non-inflammability. Its fire-resisting qualities are of considerable importance in the safety factor of public buildings.

She has combined Fiberglas and cotton for curtains. In the Fiberglas House (22:116) even the walls are covered with fabric made from Fiberglas, cotton, asbestos, and silver yarns giving the effect of silver white damask. The recent development of covering the Fiberglas with plastic is significant.

Miss Strengell is a strong believer in the concept that the home and its furnishings should serve as a background for the people in it. For instance, she believes furniture upholstery should be interesting and flattering rather than dramatic in effect.

Miss Strengell is also a practical person. She sets up good standards for upholstery fabric. She says that it should be closely woven so that it will not snag; it should be firm so that it will not break when fitted over
edges; it should be color fast and soil proof, neither hot nor cold against the skin, and pleasing to the touch. Lastly, it should suit most people, and be within a given range of prices.

Subdued or neutral colors with pure color for accent is her color preference. Black warp and clear color weft is often used. Many of her color combinations are subtle gradations rather than strong contrasts.

The tendency to conservativeness may be seen when one checks the colors she used in the fabrics shown in the Decorative Arts Today exhibition in 1948. Six pieces were shown with these respective colors: yellow; brown and black; red with gold thread; green with silver thread; gray and black and white; ivory white and gold. (27)

Her primary fibers are cotton, mohair, and wool. She advocates variety of yarns in relation to their texture, such as heavy and thin, plain and novel, shiny and dull. She says that the striking color effects and the extensive use of metal places a fabric in the category of custom built.

The yarns which she uses may readily be adapted to power loom weaving. She insists on excellence in quality even when less expensive fibers are used. Her emphasis is on texture rather than pattern.
Aside from hand weaving, this designer has also worked on printed textiles, two of which are "Shooting Stars" and "Propellors". The latter is included in this study.

Miss Strengell expresses her enthusiasm for designing in these statements:

Designing fabrics today is an extremely exciting and joyous experience. There is an open mind and ever present interest in experimental work on the part of the manufacturer. New fibers exist and new ways of combining them can be found. Invaluable technical progress in the finish of fabrics has been achieved and the tremendous demand for good products makes this a golden era for the serious designer who is aware of this responsibilities. (26:58)

Miss Strengell has a forward point of view and her influence in the development of contemporary art is an outstanding contribution. She has instilled many students with the appreciation of simplicity and good taste in design, and a desire to move forward to seek higher levels of artistic accomplishment.

Plate VI and figures 3, 4, 5, and 6 are examples of her designs.
Figure 3 (top)

A textured upholstery fabric.
Reproduced in original scale.

Figure 4 (bottom)

"Devil" - the first of her designs to be produced in mass quantity. (20:50)
Figure 6 "Propellors"
Plate VI

"Propellors"

Swatch showing texture and colors.
Figure 7

Henning Watterston and some of his fabrics, a light open weave of white mohair; below, a hand woven swatch of yellow cotton Kinkomo plisse with gold highlights, and its counterpart in deep green.
HENNING WATTERSTON

For consideration of a craftsman who has created unusual textures in the field of hand weaving, let us turn to Henning Watterston. Mr. Watterston is highly interested in producing beautiful fabrics for the volume-priced market, and this fact should be kept in mind as one studies his accomplishments.

Again we find a person who has had training in the fine arts and has left that field to enter the textile industry by way of hand weaving.

According to Mr. Watterston's statements, there are only four things to be considered in order to gain the final effect desired in cloth, namely:

a. the degree of opaqueness or transparency, or both.

b. the occurrence of texture on the surface of the cloth.

c. the kinds of textures combined.

d. the colors combined. (38:22)

The above points were taken from an article written by Mr. Watterston entitled, "Technics and Techniques in Weaving." Just what is meant by technics and techniques, in relation to weaving, should be made clear at this time. Techniques refer to the threading order of the heddles; to the treadling combinations of the harnesses when they are threaded; in other words - set formulas and rules to be followed by weavers.
In contrast, there are technics to be considered. What are they? They are the four principles to be applied in fabric making as already indicated in a previous paragraph. Mr. Watterston continues:

These fundamentals of cloth making are still the technics of weaving. The difference between technics and techniques is the difference between principle and rule. Principle governs all occasions, rule only one. That is what is wrong with technique; it only applies once for a prescribed effect. Technics are not understood through drafts and numbers, but through trial and error experience. (38:22)

Color and texture are Mr. Watterston's primary interests. This interest in texture is influenced by that characteristic in human beings which seems to compel them to feel a fabric expecting to find variety of depth and hardness. Surface interest therefore becomes important.

We are reminded by this designer that the fundamentals of cloth making were well known by the ancients and that they knew and practiced the four principles listed on page thirty-eight. The art of using tight warp and loose weft, a characteristic of some contemporary weaving, was practiced by the ancients also.

One of the problems of machine weaving is that of subordinating the texture of the thread or yarns used. As an example, any diagonal weave becomes more outstanding than the identity of the yarn. Mr. Watterston suggests,
"A warp float is one of the most satisfactory methods of texture application." (38:23)

Mr. Watterston states his views regarding today's fabrics:

Identifying the nature of a thread in a fabric is today's fabric, as compared to pattern production of damask and more graphic expressions of times past. This is due directly to the production by the spinning industry of the huge vocabulary of threads that are bumpy, slubbed, seeded, looped, and curled out of the even more amazing filaments produced by science. We are no longer limited by the three standbys, linen, silk, and cotton for elements of texture. Throwing these threads, new and old, over a surface so that they are not swallowed up in the construction itself is one of the most difficult and most direct expressions of the loom. (33:34)

Mr. Watterston produces interesting variations of transparency by grouping threads, and by varying the weight of materials. By this method striped effects may be produced. If similar variations are also used in the weft, a plaid effect will result without the use of colored yarns. Open, film gauze weaves are typical of many Watterston fabrics. The threads appear irregular in arrangement, yet the fabric is strong and does not seem to pull apart or lose its shape. These materials are ideal for softening the sun's glare and yet provide transparency for light and air, and an opportunity for semi-privacy.
Some other attractive textures are made of heavy natural or white cotton yarns with smooth, dyed rayon threads for interest in color and contrast in texture. Their weight suggests upholstery use.

The magazine *Interiors* describes this weaver's "gold gauze" as a "sumptuous, off-white fabric of metallic, boucle', silk and mohair." (35:118) Another issue of the same magazine describes some of Mr. Watterston's fabrics as "some strange and richly textured gauzes." (37:69)

In relation to texture combinations, this weaver suggests the consideration of contrasts of separate textures. The degree of contrast may vary from little to much, depending a great deal upon the yarns used.

As to color, Mr. Watterston suggests experimenting with tabby weaves only, using one or possibly two textures, and selecting a dominant effect such as red, blue, or yellow-green. He says, "The technics of color and weaving must be experienced and seen, rather than talked about." (38:38)

The following statements may be used in summarizing this designer's approach to weaving:
So out of a pursuing and creative approach to the technics of weaving, rather than the techniques and technicalities, the weaver will gain knowledge of principle rather than of specifics. This approach must be used if the art itself is to remain active in modern times. Otherwise it will soon become devoted only to historical reconstruction. (38:38)

Mr. Watterston has designed many custom-made hand-woven fabrics for Menlo Textiles, Menlo Park, California. Since his interest lies in bringing fine textiles into the volume-priced market, he does much designing of hand-woven fabrics that can be translated successfully into mass production. He is now associated with Henrod Textiles, New York City.
"Albany" Upholstery fabrics; tweedy texture combines natural color cotton yarn with pre-dyed rayon slub.

Linen gauze designed by Henning Watterston for Henrod Textiles.
Plate VII

"Sculptured Mohair"
Plate VIII

"Fantaisie"
Figure 10

Dorothy Wright Liebes
Beautiful colors and unusual textures are found in the hand-woven fabrics of Dorothy Liebes.

Mrs. Liebes has many and diversified activities and interests. For many years she lived in San Francisco and eventually she established a hand-weaving studio there. This is where she designed many sample fabrics from which her clientele could make their selections. The assistants in her studio wove the yardage, as they continue to do at the present. The San Francisco studio is managed by a former student, and Mrs. Liebes designs her samples in her New York studio.

She is the consultant for many individuals and companies. She designs fabrics on the hand loom which are interpreted on the power loom by the Goodall weavers. This was her first venture in designing for the power loom. She pioneered in the use of aluminum yarns and is now consultant for the Dobeckmun Company, manufacturer of plastic coated aluminum yarns. She has just recently become consultant for the Textile Division of the Rhode Island School of Design. She is one of the directors of the American Craftsmen’s Cooperative Council. She assumed the responsibility of director of the decorative art exhibit at San Francisco World’s Fair in 1939.
Also, several museums have been under her direction.

Mrs. Liebes uses an interesting, but simple and practical approach to her fabric designing. After deciding the type of material to be woven and the yarns that might be used, she makes a cartoon, or working sketch on rough paper. Slightly rough paper is used because it lends itself well to the blending of pastel chalk. Any number of color combinations might be tried before a satisfactory one has been obtained. Mrs. Liebes often uses nature and some of the well-known paintings as a source of inspiration for her color schemes.

After a color combination has been selected, the next step is to work out a full-sized sketch to show the color and material or yarn placement. If the design is composed of repeat motifs, only one sketch of the unit is necessary. The final sketch, showing the colors, weaving materials to be used, and sometimes an indication of the weaves, serves as a guide during the weaving process.

Mrs. Liebes has no inhibitions as to the use of color, or the introduction of unusual materials into her fabric designs. She uses natural fibers and such materials as lace, ribbons, braids, sequins, fringe, cellophane, metallic yarns, braided metal foil, leather, cork, oilcloth, string, bamboo, wood strips, reeds, plastics, and pine needles. All of these produce varying degrees of texture
in fabrics. With this variance in texture, it is possible to produce a quality of scale such as smooth and fine, rough and coarse, thus making them suitable for various sized rooms. Texture is produced by various methods: pile formation; variety in weight and size of yarns; surface decoration. Since texture rather than pattern is the outstanding characteristic in contemporary woven fabrics, the variety of weaving materials available makes it possible to produce textures never before considered possible or feasible. Mrs. Liebes often uses metallic interest in her present fabric designs.

Reference is made here to Mrs. Liebes' statements concerning fiber and material combinations:

As a matter of fact, I was the first textile weaver to insist upon the use of combinations of fibers and materials in fabrics and implored the textile mills to do this, my contention being that a richness and depth of quality is achieved through this blending process that was unobtainable through the one-fibre method of old. (40:51)

Mrs. Liebes is known for her lavish use of color. Several years ago her guide for color combinations was simple, but effective. Usually only two or three colors were used: one light, one bright, and one dark. An example of such a combination is lime yellow (light), lacquer red (bright), and deep turquoise (dark). Such combinations as the following are typical of her fabrics:
magenta and chartreuse; beige, salmon pink, and brown; pale green and bluish pink; chartreuse, turquoise, violet, and black. Mexican pink, orange, corn yellow, lacquer red, and grass green are often used.

The exhibit of Dorothy Liebes fabrics at the De Young Museum, San Francisco, which the writer had an opportunity to see in June, 1949, was a fascinating example of her use of vibrant colors and her ability to handle them deftly.

Mrs. Liebes' fabrics are found in homes, hotels, stores, clubs, theatres, and ocean liners. Some are hand-woven and others are power-loom adaptations of her original hand-woven samples. Hangings and altar cloths for liturgical interiors, drapery, upholstery fabrics, suiting, coating, cloth for evening wear use, lamp shades, and window blinds indicate the range of this designer's creative ability.

The San Francisco Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and many others have featured Dorothy Liebes' hand-woven and power-loomed fabrics in their exhibits of contemporary textiles. (47:286)
Mrs. Liebes' influence is wide spread because of her diversified activities. Her teaching, writing, and lectures have given inspiration to many. She has been instrumental in developing a new attitude toward the possibilities in hand-weaving and the acceptance of a new trend in textiles.

Figures 11 through 28 illustrate her work.
Figure 11  Roll-up blind.
Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 14

Fabric Textures
Figure 15

Figure 16
Figure 17

Fabric Textures
Figure 18 (top)

Coat material with metal thread.

Figure 19 (bottom)

Heavy wool drapery material combines intense blues in conventional plaid.
Figure 20 (top)

Fabric combining rayon, silk, and wool.

Figure 21 (bottom)

Roubault painting inspired fabric of somber tones with gold accents.
Figure 22 (top)

Reed strips used in lamp shade.

Figure 23 (bottom)

Wood slats used in roll-up blind.
Illustrations of power loom adaptations of Dorothy Liebes' fabric designs.

Figure 24 (top)

"Allegro" Wool and rayon frieze.

Figure 25 (lower left)

Rayon and metallic tweed.

Figure 26 (center)

Wool frieze.

Figure 27 (lower right)

Horizontal striped wool and rayon frieze.
Figure 28

Wallpapers

Designed by Dorothy Liebes
CHAPTER IV

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TEXTILE DESIGNING IN THE UNITED STATES

During the nineteenth century, fabric designs with a traditional character predominated. The manufacturer remained the dominant factor in establishing design trends, with the result that safe, but tried-and-true, designs appeared year after year, often with some added embellishment from season to season. Public acceptance of a design one year served as a stimulus to change the basic design, usually by adding details. As an example, a rose bud design developed into full bloom after several seasons.

Colors also remained more or less conservative and many monotones and subdued colors were used.

During the first twenty years of the twentieth century, a revolt started against traditional design practices that had existed for so many years. Bold, gaudy colors and startling, often overly large, designs made their appearance. This sweeping change marked the beginning of modern design in this country. Modernistic was the term applied to this new type of design.

The depression period, beginning around 1930, brought about many changes in textile designs and in designing practices. Prices dropped to a low level; less
equipment was available; living conditions changed drastically for most people. As a result, designs became simplified, and a general revival of classic motifs printed in limited color combinations appeared on the market. (4)

While this period of our country's history presented these new problems to the designer, it also provided him with new opportunities. Development of new fibers and improvements in printing and dyeing techniques presented him a broadened field. During this period also, a new relationship between designer and manufacturer was in its beginning stages. In reference to the manufacturers, Paul T. Frankl says, "They are still reticent however, to work on a basis of equality with creative artists. Instead of repelling the suggestions formerly made by artists, they are now taking the initiative in seeking the more conspicuous talents, accepting their designs and educating public taste to the new spirit." (7:107)

Travel to Europe in search of inspiration for designs no longer offered the prestige of former periods, when such travel was considered an absolute requirement for the American designer. American people were becoming more interested in American designers who used American sources of inspiration, and who were ready to progress from the traditional type of design and who were ready and willing to give
them something new and stimulating.

Modern design has passed through many changes since its infancy. The terms modern and modernistic must not be confused. The gaudy, extremely colored modernistic designs, many of them distorted, which appeared in the very early stages of its development, are far different from the designs which are classified as modern today. Paul T. Frankl expresses briefly the basis of modern design in these words:

Modernism has been called the style of reason. Its appeal is an appeal to the intelligence. Its emphasis upon forms, its return to mathematical axiom and the fundamentals of form, confer upon it a classical rather than a romantic beauty. Romanticism relies upon associational values, upon the stimulation of suggested memories. By line, proportion and inherent relations, the new classicism makes a direct appeal to the vision of the mind. Modern forms are simple: the square, the circle, the horizontal line, skillfully and dynamically coordinated -- these are a return to the Greek ideal. Their success is due entirely to the correlation and the coordination of elements. (7:31)

Garnet Warren in his book The Romance of Design, describes the rise of modern art in these words:

Modern art was born of a spirit of protest against the romantic artificiality of too-sweet figures and too-saccharine landscapes; against the too-smooth satin finish of the represented objects. The foundation of modernism was laid by Monet who was the representative impressionist. He discovered that the blue of the sky could really be yellow, and that pink-and-white complexion of young ladies, could under certain circumstances, be, if the painter chose, green. (13:149)
The growth of modern design in America has progressed slowly. Its development has passed through stages of extreme modernistic designs to the abstract types seen today. The effect created by the use of color, line, space, and mass need not represent a realistic object as we know it, but rather the impression of the designer as he portrays it in whatever medium he chooses. The all-over effect of pattern and color becomes an interesting design, if it stimulates in the observer a feeling of satisfaction and if it suits the purpose it is to fulfill.

The general character of modern design and its justification is stated in the following quote:

There is a striving for simplicity and functionalism today, rather than for richness and luxury. Primitive designs have a strong appeal because of their simplicity and strength which suggest security and stability. They are free, uninhibited, and become a natural part of the uncluttered rooms with their modern furniture. (5:20)

Some of the practices in modern designing today show the changes which are gradually being accepted. Industrial graphic designers, architects, and painters have entered textile designing (8). Manufacturers and artists are working more cooperatively.

The public acceptance of modern architecture has changed the requirements for suitable drapery and upholstering materials. New dress fabrics have been designed to satisfy the desire for colorful and interesting
No doubt there will always be some individuals who will wish to continue living with and enjoying the traditional, but for those who have a liking and appreciation for the modern, the work of several print designers will be discussed and shown in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V

EIGHT DESIGNERS OF CONTEMPORARY PRINTED TEXTILES
The Tillets at Work.

Figure 29

Doris and Leslie Tillett
DORIS AND LESLIE TILLETT

From the small but complete sample textile-printing and pilot mill on East 40th Street, New York City, come the original designs of Doris and Leslie Tillett.

That both Mr. and Mrs. Tillett are designers is logical. Leslie Tillett, born in London, came from a family of textile workers, his father having operated the first hand-screening mill in England. Mrs. Tillett studied painting in Paris, and attended the Art Students' League in New York City.

Their method of designing is unique in that it is done directly on cloth which is furnished by the manufacturer. The final product is made up for display purposes to determine its acceptance by the public. This procedure saves the manufacturer a vast amount of yardage, should a design prove not to be popular.

Since their technique is purely trial and error in nature, the design is never preconceived, but rather evolves. It is possible to build up a series of colors and designs until the desired result is produced. At least four to six yards of fabric are designed for each experimental length.

Either roller or screen print methods may be used. Many are multi-colored screen prints. The chief uses for
their fabric designs are for draperies, women's wear, men's wear, and tablecloths. Printed sweaters have also been designed for some of the exclusive shops. At present they are working on a line of fabrics suitable for teenager clothing for three junior-dress houses.

At first individual designs were sold to fabric houses, but now they create designs in special groups such as "Decorator's Collection," a group of 18 roller print cottons having a brush stroke effect with a textured look. This group includes some unusual florals, stripes, and monotones.


The development of their textile printing and designing venture, now known as D. D. and Leslie Tillett Inc., with Leslie as president, has an interesting history.

The first establishment of its type was set up in Tasco, Mexico, in 1946 by Leslie and his brother George.
In 1947 Mr. and Mrs. Tillett came to New York and set up a similar printing and pilot mill on Spring Street, Greenwich Village. Their present location is on East 40th Street where there are facilities for mixing color, for dyeing, bleaching, screening and rolling prints, drying and setting the color.

While in Tasco, the Tilletts became well known for their "personality prints." These designs were created specially for patrons and proved to be most interesting and popular.

Much of their inspiration comes from their wide and varied travels which serve also as a vacation from their regular working activities. (54:36)

Their last travels took them to Europe where they spent about three months. They found Sicily extremely interesting and most valuable as a source of inspiration for their new group of teen-age fabrics. This influence in terms of textural effects is very decided in their more recent designs, one of which is shown in figure 30.

Even though Mrs. Tillett is a versatile photographer, the designs created by this team are never photographic in nature, nor are they copies of anything. Rather, the public is offered interpretations, usually in abstract form.
One of their objectives is stated by the Tillets: "We don't want cloth to do anything but 'be itself'." The author of the article from which this statement was taken continues: "Although we saw worsteds that looked like velvet, cottons that looked like satin brocade, other flat cottons that looked like thick broadwale corduroy, this isn't necessarily a premeditated result. But the possibilities for promotion and for profitable merchandising become at once apparent." (49:56) That was the approach used by them in 1948. It is interesting to compare this with some of their present designs which are quite outstanding in textured effects, as seen in figure 30. With so much importance given to texture in woven fabrics, it appears logical for the printed fabric designer to enter into the field of textural-appearing, flat-woven materials.

For the Tillets, fine smooth cottons are the present popular fabric backgrounds; along with these must also be considered their printed sheer worsteds which are becoming popular and widely known. Some of these are shown on the following pages.

Here, again, are designers who feel that industry needs to venture forth and be willing to take a chance and to encourage more experimentation on the part of fabric
designers. The following is their opinion on the subject:

"Advertising of high style merchandise has made the average consumer a shopper of fashion rather than quality. Print styling must improve to meet this alerted taste."

(53)

Figure 30 is a photograph of a print design. Plates 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 show swatches of fabrics designed by Mr. and Mrs. Tillett.
Figure 30

Printed design on cotton fabric.

"We are deeply concerned with textures which we like to translate into design: the surface of wood, the linings of a shell, the feel of tree bark." (51:31)
Plate IX

"Crockelware"
Plate X

"Starfish"
Plate XI

"Pantherpaw"
Plate XII

"Woodplaid"
Plate XIII

Floral Print
"Though born and educated in California (Phi Beta Kappa, Stanford University), she has made her career as a designer of textiles, wallpapers, in England and in the United States. Poised and purposeful, she is guided in her designing by elegance, taste and logic." (61:31)
MARION V. DORN (14)

Marion V. Dorn is an eminent textile designer who was born in the United States, but who established her reputation as a designer of textiles while living in London. She was graduated from Stanford University, studied painting in San Francisco and then came to New York where she studied design at the Museum of Natural History. Six weeks later she won an award—a position with Mallinson Silks. It was this event that made her resolve to continue in the field of fabric design.

Several years were spent studying in London and Paris before she set up her own business in London as a converter of rugs, fabrics, and wall coverings. Many of these became popular in this country. (57:43)

During this time she began weaving and won an outstanding reputation as a result of her rug designing. Credit is given her for creating the first two textured rugs with modern patterns in Britain. (62:90)

She returned to New York in the early years of the war and soon won herself a place as a leading printed fabric designer.

At the present time, her studio is located in New York City. Here she creates designs for Goodall Fabrics; Jofa, Inc.; Arthur H. Lee and Sons; Fisher Plastics
In addition to her print designs for which she is most widely known, Miss Dorn has returned to designing some woven fabrics. These fabrics are available to furniture manufacturers and jobbers. Wool, rayon, cotton, jute, and sometimes metallic yarns are used. The warp is usually of cotton which makes an exceptionally sturdy cloth. Diagonal weaves and variations of stripe combinations are most often seen. (58:140)

Nature is Miss Dorn's chief source of inspiration. She says, "Floral designs, for example, are not finished and never will be finished. So long as people love gardens they will like floral drapery patterns. But flowers will be given a new rendering. One has only to see how each period had its own technique. There is all the difference imaginable between Jacobean floral and the Georgian and the Victorian." (59:51)

The following quotation indicates another source of inspiration: "Her love for Peruvian, early Greek and pre-Columbian art also provide her with ideas. She does abstractions, too, just to clear the air, giving them meaningful titles instead of some of the obscure names that pique the public." (62:38)
Lush floral designs with their vibrant colors are typically characteristic of Miss Dorn's individuality. "She treats as a challenge such basic design ingredients as the rose and leaf, never allowing them to become trite." (60:36)

Most of her fabric designs are screen prints for upholstery and draperies. Loose brush-stroke painting technique is used for many wallpaper designs.

Typical fabric design names include such titles as: "Chestnut Blossoms," "Ferns and Grasses," "Desert Night," "Plantation," "Oleander and Pomegranate."

A design of a different type is seen in a Jofa fabric called Gaytex. This fabric is particularly well suited to outdoor living decoration. Rayon and chintz are often used.

Miss Dorn's philosophy regarding design has been variously expressed: "There is too much talk on modern, abstract, and documentary design instead of whether it is really good design and has some life. Good design is really a matter of order." (62:38, 88) "Vitality is the most important thing in a design. If the excitement the designer feels when faced with his subject is transmitted, it gives an ardent touch of life that makes the design good. Printed fabrics, when used in modern interiors, tend
to soften the severity of line, adding color and interest. I have observed that the type of design that becomes so quickly dated is that which strives to be different, while that which is good lives on, and so a fresh treatment of a rose will illicit more response than will an abstraction." (56:123) "I believe that a classic revival has always, through history, been on the way in and out. It is my opinion that classicism will soon reappear in a new and spirited form." (61:31)

Her big ambition, she confides, "would be to have the best selling roller print in the United States." (62:90)

I believe that Miss Dorn's designs may successfully combine aspects of both contemporary and traditional art characteristics. The popularity of her floral designs proves their acceptance and use in contemporary interiors, probably because of their unique treatment and color, even though the idea of floral motifs is typically traditional.

She has also shown the public that she can create abstract designs equally well, such as are illustrated by "Modern Design from Ancient Masks," and "A Mayan Abstraction." (60:36)
Figure 32

Two fabric designs

by Marion Dorn (56:123)
Figure 33 (top)

"Chestnut Blossoms",
a 27-inch repeat print by Marion Dorn.

Figure 34 (bottom)

"Federal Drums",
an example of a Marion Dorn contemporary design.
A MAYAN ABSTRACTION

Figure 35

MODERN DESIGN FROM ANCIENT MASKS

Figure 36
DESIGNER MARION DORN FRAMED IN HER MATERIALS

Figure 37
Figure 38

Ruth Reeves
To those interested in textiles with Peruvian and Guatemalan atmosphere, the designs by Miss Reeves will offer much interest and inspiration. Not only is Miss Reeves known as an outstanding textile designer, but she is also a painter, writer, lecturer, and teacher. Training for her vocation has been extensive and includes work at Pratt Institute Art School, Brooklyn; San Francisco School of Design; Art Students League, New York; in Paris with Fernand Leger. Varied experiences have served as an inspiration and exceedingly fine background for her designing activities. Travel has given her an excellent opportunity to study in detail the Pre-Spanish textiles which have served as her chief source of inspiration.

Miss Reeves says, "It is indeed possible for an artist to base a highly personal expression on the stimulus received through lively contact with the arts of past cultures." (66:103)

She heartily approves of the modern designer using as ideas the arts of the past to create textiles for our time. First she studies a textile specimen and then concentrates on a small part of it. Or, she may study a
collection, make notations that she will use later to develop an arrangement. The fabric and the room where the fabric would be used are important factors to keep in mind while developing a design. "The result," she says, "is not a verbatim quotation." (66:105) The suggested procedure is to "evoke ideas."

Miss Reeves informs us in her article on "Pre-Columbian Fabrics of Peru," that the prehistoric textile designers were very familiar with the problems and possibilities of designing.

"They were as familiar as any modern designer with the problems of alternating and turning repeated design units so there should be no fixed direction. They also knew all there was to know about straight repeats and dropped repeats; and that the number of colors in a repeated pattern is not so important as their successful manipulation to achieve exciting juxtapositions and contrasts." (66:105)

The beauty obtained from pleasing space relationship or spacial concepts was an inherent part of their designs. They also experimented with texture and color to obtain a pleasing result.

The principles of organic design, as Miss Reeves recognizes them, are movement of dark areas against light
ones and light against dark; importance of shapes and of shapes within shapes; color contrasts; space relations; three dimensional form on a two dimensional surface.

Many of her designs are bold and geometric, such as are shown in figures 42 and 43. One of her Guatemalan document prints on Peruvian linen is composed of Indian figures, fairly large in scale. The coloring is applied in reverse - the design being natural-colored lines surrounded by blocks of brown and gray-blue, which lends a subdued, but pleasing effect. Coloring applications by means of block printing is the usual method used by Miss Reeves.

Illustrations of an abstract painting by this designer and the textile design for which it served as inspiration are shown in figures 39 and 40.

Miss Reeves has informed the writer, through correspondence, that she also designs dress fabrics, scarves, and men's ties.

As to contemporary textile design and colors, Miss Reeves has the following to say: "Decorative fabrics tend to be much more architectural in design than formerly. A natural trend following the newest developments in architecture and furniture design. Color, inspired by the high colors launched by the dress industry several seasons ago,
is becoming more brilliant, with the Mexican palette of bright pastels combined with dusty charcoal tones perhaps the one most favored." (63:125)

If one desires to see Miss Reeves' designs in use the following would be of interest: wall coverings in Radio City Music Hall, New York; hangings in the Children's Room, Public Library, Mount Vernon, New York; murals in the High School, St. Albans, New York; and textiles in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. (67:381)

Her textile designs have been exhibited in the Brooklyn Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Minneapolis Museum of Art, and many others. Three designs on Peruvian linen were specially designed for the Decorative Arts Today exhibit at the Newark Museum, New Jersey, shown from November 4, 1948 to January 3, 1949. (65)

In 1944, Miss Reeves served as one of the judges of the International Textile Exhibition held yearly by the Department of Art at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina.

Miss Reeves has been an instructor in textile design at Cooper Union, New York City, for several years. This summer she is teaching two-dimensional design, and textile design and technique in the Provincetown Art Center.
"Abstract Study at West Point" by Ruth Reeves. "This painting was used by Miss Reeves as her "Start-off" for the hand-blocked linen called 'West Point.' (Courtesy of Ruth Reeves.)" (64:226)

Figure 40

"West Point" by Ruth Reeves. "Hand printed in blue and black on white linen. This fabric shows how the painting in figure 39 was used as an inspiration for a surface pattern and adapted to the technique of block printing. (Courtesy of Ruth Reeves.)" (64:226)

"West Point"

by

Ruth Reeves

The following quotation was taken from "Art in Everyday Life":

"A study of Ruth Reeves' printed linen in figure ... and the original abstract painting of West Point ... from which she took the idea will reveal that the character of a design is determined not so much by the source which inspired it as by its intended use. Observe how the surface repeat was built for the textile design and how the black, white, and blue tones are distributed so that they are beautiful in themselves and do not depend upon any relationship to the forms found in the painting. The reader can follow still another stage in creative imagination if he attempts to visualize the appearance of a photograph taken at the point from which this painting was made. He can then appreciate how much invention and interpretation went into the abstract painting which suggested the still more abstract design in the printed linen." (64:226-227)
Figure 41

Photograph of fragment of Ancient Peruvian tapestry showing double arrow motif, (Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) which became the theme for the author’s design in screen printed linen. (66:106)

Figure 42

Ruth Reeves’ design based on the Ancient Peruvian tapestry. (66:106)
Figs 6 and 7. Fragment of ancient Peruvian tapestry showing double arrow motif (courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) which became the theme for the author’s design in screen printed linen above.
Figure 43

"Abstract No. 1"
A Ruth Reeves' design.
Plate XIV

"Abstract No. 1"
Swatch Showing Texture and Color
Figure 44

"Pacific", a Ruth Reeves' design.
Plate XV

"Pacific"

Swatch Showing Texture and Color
Figure 45

"The Circus", a Ruth Reeves' design.
Plate XVI

"The Circus"

Swatch Showing Texture and Color
Figure 46

John Little
John Little, trained in the fine art of painting, has turned his talents toward fabric designing and thus entered the commercial field.

Extensive promotional activities based on a display of his paintings along with his fabric designs have brought much public attention to his work in textiles. (69:24) Focused attention on the artist's name is a new trend. Both manufacturers and retailers are finding it advantageous to publicize the names of designers. While this has been practiced to some extent in the clothing industry, it is only now beginning in the field of fabric designing.

Mr. Little is well known for his Ranch House series for Riverdale Manufacturing Company. These designs are informal and Provincial in type and each comes in several color combinations that are modern in feeling. They are vat-dyed, pre-shrunk, and printed on durable fabric for drapery uses and are sold at popular prices. They are available through large department stores. (70)

Patterns, that this designer has reproduced, include scenic, floral, stripes, Provincial, early American - all in modern version. "Pasadena," "Golden Gate," "High Gate," figure 49, "Woodland," "Biscay," figure 49, and "Cambodia,"
Figure 50, are typical.

"Ballet," Plate XX, portrays abstract figures in various dance poses. "Eclipse" and "Flight," also abstract in form, are illustrated in Upholstering magazine. (72:59)

Non-objective and impressionistic will describe many of Mr. Little's designs. Occasionally, realism is expressed to some degree. "Oak Leaf" is a good example of this type. (71)

Electric blue, cantaloupe pink, and sea green are some of his favorite colors.

Mr. Little has this to say in regard to abstract design: "I feel there is a distinct trend toward abstract design and pure, strong color in decorative fabrics. Contrary to popular feeling, I believe that fabrics of this kind need not be restricted to use with furniture of modern design any more than a modern painting would be. When sound designs of any period are mixed, the effect produced is timeless and classic." (68:124)
Figure 47

Two fabrics designed by John Little
Figure 48

"Biscay"

A John Little design.
Plate XVII

"Biscay"

Swatch Showing Texture and Colors
Figure 49

"High Gate"

A John Little design.
Style HIGHGATE
VAT COLORS - SHRUNKETIZED
RESIDUAL SHRINKAGE DOES NOT
EXCEED 2%, TEST CCCT 191A
Color 17
Width 48 Inch
Plate XVIII

"High Gate"

Swatch Showing Texture and Colors
Figure 50

"Cambodia"

A John Little design.
Plate XIX

"Cambodia"

Swatch Showing Texture and Colors
Plate XX

"Ballet"

Swatch Showing Texture and Colors
"Against strong family opposition, Stan Taylor stuck to his first love, designing. Now, at 24, he has made a name for the witty, dashing decorators' fabrics on which he likes to sketch themes such as an aerial view of New York, a satire on the painter, Matisse." (98:39)
Stan Taylor Originals mean modern impressionistic all-over prints. Sweeping spirals and curves with emphasis on open line and shade, some bold, others sketchy and almost frothy in lightness - but all of them imaginative - these are the characteristics of Stan Taylor's drapery and upholstering fabrics.

Such designs as "Pipe Dreams," "Carriage Lamps," "Emerald Lyre," "Profile and Flowers," "Persian Shadow," and "Sconces" are indicative of the variety of subject matter from which Mr. Taylor gets his inspiration. To quote: "Mr. Taylor's choice of subjects covers a very wide range. Many of his designs like the Duncan Phyfe Chair and Odalizque, which we illustrate, are a gentle satire on decorating fads, but are just smart enough to appeal to almost everyone - including the faddists themselves!" (77:58)

His favorite background colors are beige, white smoke gray, and antique red. Usually only two or three colors such as: scarlet, mauve, sea green, or lilac on gold satin; emerald green and chartreuse on natural satin, are used in any one color combination.

Antique satins are used for upholstering fabrics.

Heavy cotton textures, such as boucle' and pebble cotton,
cotton and rayon mixtures, chintz, and silk casement cloth are the materials commonly used by Mr. Taylor.

Stan Taylor Originals, by which his designs are known, are designed so as to avoid waste. Match-up problems are eliminated by having the design match from selvage to selvage. Also, there is no up and down in the pattern to be considered.

Designs often require various techniques in the application of color, such as hand blocking some areas, and screen printing other parts. Heavy basic lines or large areas are colored by means of screen printing or block printing. For accents and unusual effects, requiring hand work, such tools as a bath sponge and whisk broom are used.

Mr. Taylor mixes his own colors on a palette which he uses while creating his designs. After the paint has been absorbed by the cloth, a chemist matches the dyes, so that a perfect color matching will result.

Stan Taylor Originals are available through interior decorators. The designs may be selected from stock or may be ordered in special colors and combinations. Fabrics of related solid color texture to match the prints are also available.
In addition to the fabrics mentioned, Mr. Taylor frequently uses his textile designs on wallpaper. "Persian Shadow" is a typical coordinated design of this type.

Mr. Taylor believes that, "the trend is away from the stereotyped toward the greater freedom of expression. This does not mean, however, that restraint should be thrown to the winds. Far from it. The straight lines of modern furniture demand patterns that can be centered in bold, splashy designs, like line to be silhouetted against mass, weight equalized with color." (74:123)
Figure 52

Six Stan Taylor fabric designs
Figure 53

Two Stan Taylor fabric designs (74:123)
Figure 54

"Persian Shadow"

A Stan Taylor design.
Plate XXI

"Persian Shadow"

Swatch Showing Texture and Colors
"The meteoric career of this 25-year old textile designer proves that America is quick to recognize talent that is fresh and inspiration that is different. Testa's bold, often abstract motifs, created in his Chicago studio by the process which he modestly calls "doodling," are in pure, strong color. They support his thesis that prints can make a wall exciting." (86:39)
To the individual with a feeling for contemporary design, the work of Angelo Testa will be most stimulating. Mr. Testa is only twenty-seven years old, but has been designing textiles for seven years. In this short time the influence of his work is strongly evident in the modern trend. Having an architectural background, he expresses in his designs a feeling of appropriateness for modern architecture that finds a ready acceptance by followers of modern design.

When one is familiar with Mr. Testa's philosophy, then there is greater understanding and appreciation of his work. According to him, "The textile designer must start with a piece of plain fabric in mind. He must determine what the function of this fabric is, and what justification he has for putting a design on it. He needs to experiment with line, form, texture, and color, keeping in mind the monotony of most prints. A feeling of clarity and spaciousness must be introduced into his designs. He needs to consider his fabric and refrain from complete coverage, destroying the natural beauty of the textile. Texture should be emphasized where the decorative function of the fabric is minimized,"
and color and form where the function is purely decorative. I am all for abandoning the use of muddy colors in so many of the present day prints, and for experimentation with pure colors and subtle variations. The designer should create designs which, when transplanted on fabrics, will become a related part of the contemporary interior. Then and then only, will the designs of our era take their rightful place, behind glass, in the museums of the future, representing 20th Century expression in design created for people living in the 20th Century." (82:84) "While architects strive to bring the outdoors indoors, fabric manufacturers and interior decorators have achieved what they consider the same thing by transplanting all of nature on wall papers, draperies, upholstery, ceramics, rugs, furniture. At one time this may have been a means to an end. However, now that large areas of glass make visible the immediate planned landscape and distant natural landscape, and since flower beds and potted plants are vital parts in interior planning, walls of roses that have no sensible relation to the contemporary house are no longer needed. Goodbye, Mrs. Minniver." (79:43)

Mr. Testa's designs are typically modern in feeling. One is impressed by the quality of definiteness about
them that is portrayed by clear-cut, bold, often very simple composition. Linear design, both closed and continuous, is the basis of many patterns. "Strings," an upholstery fabric, plate XXIII, is a typical example of a design created by what Mr. Testa calls "doodling." In this instance the "doodling" consists of dropping pieces of string and tracing their outlines in thick and thin lines. "Textura Seconda," plate XXIV, also geometric, is relatively small in scale; "Textura Quatra," plate XXV (25) illustrates the quality of size that is not heavy. Since neither is extremely small nor extremely large, both could be appropriately used in rooms of any size. This is true of most Testa designs, because as he says, "Most people do not own homes of spacious proportions to support large design in drapery. Large pattern in upholstery distracts and often destroys form of furniture." (80:27) Typical abstract designs are "Indian Head," plate XXVII, and "Animal Forms," plate XXVIII.

When designs are relatively simple in composition, bold, clear colors are his choice. Typical examples are: terra cotta and black on beige; yellow, gray, and terra cotta; brown and gray; green and blue on white.
Mr. Testa considers form, line, and color the most important elements of design.

In defense of Mr. Testa's approach to design in his article "Design vs. Monkey Business" (82) as criticized by James Wynborough (84:8) industrial designer Jack Waldheim expresses his views in the following words: "Testa combines textile design with contemporary thought, modifies the result to fit both psychological and architectural problems, and has given much-needed self-respect to American textile design. He has also - in four years of textile designing - become the United States' most copied designer. If Testa arrives at primitivism, he does it for inspiration, because exploration and experimentation have led him to a basic understanding of color, of design, of the spiritual continuity of history and of man's likes and dislikes. Testa employs every tool of our age. His studio is equipped with a machine shop and woodworking equipment, looms, dark rooms, etc. In developing a textile design, Testa explores it as thoroughly as the Mayo's examine a patient." (85:156-157)

In addition to his textile designing, Mr. Testa also paints and designs wallpapers. His work has been exhibited in various places, among them the Boyd-Britton Galleries in Chicago. "The current exhibition of Angelo
Testa's paintings, fabrics and wallpaper designs is representative of his work over a period of years. Mr. Testa has been instrumental in changing the attitude and character of the printed fabric, and has created designs which have an important relationship to architecture's space articulation." (81:26)

Other places where his work has been shown are "Everyday Art" exhibit, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; also "Decorative Arts Today" an exhibition at the Newark Museum, New Jersey, November 4, 1948, to January 3, 1949.

A second award was presented him at the Second Annual Exhibition of Hand Printed Textiles by the Print Club of Philadelphia.

If you should go to radio station WIND, Chicago, you would see there in drapery form the design "Filo," a small-scaled, continuous-line design. The First Federal Savings and Loan Association in Chicago has the "Boston" design for its draperies.

Cohana fabrics has shown many of Mr. Testa's designs. At present his studio is located in Chicago. Mr. Testa is one of the very few designers who prints his own designs.
There is no question, that Mr. Testa has earned for himself the distinction as an outstanding designer of contemporary printed textiles.
Figure 56

"Textura Prima Solida"
Figure 58

"Labyrinth"
Plate XXII

"Labyrinth"

Swatch Showing Texture and Colors
Plate XXIII

"Strings"

Swatch Showing Texture and Color
Plate XXIV

"Textura Seconda"

Swatch Showing Texture and Color
Plate XXV

"Textura Quatra"

Swatch Showing Texture and Color
Plate XXVI

"Filo"

Swatch Showing Texture and Color
Figure 59

"Indian Heads"
Plate XXVII

"Indian Heads"

Swatch Showing Texture and Color
Figure 60

"Animal Forms"
Plate XXVIII

"Animal Forms"
Figure 61

Dan Cooper
Versatile Dan Cooper shows a wide range of interests and accomplishments. He is an interior decorator, architect, and lecturer, the author of *Inside Your Home*, and a designer of furniture, wallpaper, and textiles.

His business establishment is located in New York City, where his designs are available to interior decorators. Furniture manufactured in North Carolina according to his specifications include sofas, chairs, and free-form tables. Mr. Cooper states that his objective is to improve quality at lower prices. (92:130) During the war years he also designed furniture for children. A plywood Baby Bin illustrated in *House and Garden* magazine was designed to solve the problem of providing space for the baby in crowded housing situations. It could be quickly taken apart, packed flat, and easily reassembled making it especially simple to handle when traveling from place to place. (91:41)

Mr. Cooper designed the furniture and all the fabrics used in the Collier's *House of Ideas*. He also worked with the architect in selecting the flooring and wall-covering materials. (90)

In 1945 he served as one of the judges of the International Textile Exhibition sponsored by the Woman's
College, University of North Carolina, Greensboro. At that time he made the following statements in relation to textiles and art:

Fine textiles should be works of art, as well as every other item used in the composition of pleasant living quarters. Art should not be relegated to the museums, it should be manifest everywhere. Art is the well doing of that which needs doing. A work of art might well be a well presented meal, a pair of shoes, a little backyard garden. Whenever a work of art is created it helps towards a more abundant life. The International Textile Exhibition at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina is thus another meeting ground for all who are anxious, not merely to preserve the beautiful things which we have, but to make in our own day, some addition worthy of a civilized people. (94)

Mr. Cooper's screen-print designs include both large and small geometric, floral, and abstract types, many of which are portrayed in free-drawn technique. Many of them suggest an atmosphere of informality. Eight Cooper designs are included in this study.

Some color combinations Mr. Cooper uses are: chartreuse and white; graphite, carmine and chartreuse on natural; green and pink on white. As to his favorite colors, he says, "There is no color nor combination of colors which cannot be used somewhere, and so I have no favorites." (88:122)

Mr. Cooper has very definite opinions about the use and selection of textiles for the home, as he indicates
in these statements:

It is my conviction that the correlation of fabric design with furniture design and interior architecture is most important. In designing a room, it is envisioned as a whole, with the upholstery and drapery fabrics playing just as important a part as any other factor. A fabric design, however, need not be limited to one use only. Depending on the type of fabric used together with the color scheme, it may be adapted to use in a mountain cabin or a lady's boudoir. (88:124)

Simplicity, practicality, restfulness, easy maintenance, and attractiveness are characteristics which he desires in textile fabrics for the home. Cooper Designs are created by Mr. Cooper and his assistants for drapery and upholstery fabrics. Like some other well-known textile designers, Mr. Cooper also prints his designs. (89)
Figure 62

Two Dan Cooper fabric designs
Figure 63

Three drapery fabrics
Plate XXIX

Floral Design by Dan Cooper
Figure 64

"Pamela"

by Dan Cooper
Plate XXX

"Pamela"

Swatch Showing Texture and Color
Figure 65

"Panama"

by Dan Cooper
Plate XXXI

"Panama"

Swatch Showing Texture and Color
Figure 66

Estelle and Erwine Laverne
Estelle and Erwine Laverne, native New Yorkers of French ancestry, are a wife and husband design team. They have the distinction of receiving the first award for printed textiles in the 1947 International Competition of the American Institute of Decorators. "Atmospheric No. 1," the design awarded first place, has been shown many times in contemporary textile exhibits and has been widely advertised. It is the design which initiated the "atmospheric" series and is pictured in this study in figure 66.

The Laverne express their views about the above design as well as design in general in the following statements. "We designed this pattern in co-relation with the other features of a room - the floor, the furniture, the chairs. We feel that it sets the mood for the entire decor. We like to feel that our design expresses 1947 in America just as a toile would have expressed a certain historical stage in England's culture or Gothic architecture would have expressed the feelings of France at a certain time in the past.

"We consider 'Atmospheric No. 1' as typical American art of the post-war era, entirely devoid of past and outside influences. First of all we expect the design and
its coloring - to put at 'ease' those who look at it. By this we mean that we expect it to have a quality of 'growing' on a person till the person feels as if the design is an intimate friend. Like life itself, it is devoid of straight lines." (98:28)

Many of their designs are of the co-ordinated type - designed for drapery fabrics, wallpapers, and printed dress goods. It is their contention that wallpaper and draperies in the home serve as a background for the people in it. This is a new angle presented by them for department store promotion of their fabrics. "Squared Circles," "Meditation," and "Fun to Run" are typical designs in this co-ordinated group.

"Squared Circles" was shown in the New York Museum of Art in 1948. It is an all-over small repeat pattern suited to all three uses indicated above. Usually more vibrant colors are used in the dress design version.

"Meditation," also in this group, is a bold abstract design producing a feeling of several planes. It has been shown in metal-shot, textured rayon and cotton fabrics.

"Fun to Run" was "created to give the feeling of freedom and sense of endless space. It is composed of graceful appearing abstract figures." (96:36) For dresses it is available in lame'. The New York Metropolitan
Museum of Art included it in their 1948 exhibit of contemporary art. It is pictured in American Fabrics magazine. (101:93)

"Rugged Squares," another Laverne Original, was shown in the exhibit, Decorative Arts Today, at the Newark (New Jersey) Museum, November 4, 1948, to January 3, 1949. (99)

Illustrations of wallpapers can be found in Interiors magazine. (100:112, 118) and (95:45)

The Oregonian Hostess House, Portland, featured several Laverne Originals in their showing of home furnishings in April 1949. (97)

It is interesting to note this designer-team's approach to designing which they indicate in the following statements. "We first paint a design just as any artist would paint a picture without regard for the textile end use," stated Mr. Laverne. "Then we literally 'abstract' the essence of that painting into a textile design, an abstracting process that makes the design suitable to decor, to textile printing, and to reason." (98:29)

The Lavernes have traveled all over this country in search of American atmospheres. They select a definite area, live there for a time in order to truly learn and understand the life and culture of that section in relation
to the present. This thorough study is made before they try to create their designs. The Pennsylvania Dutch country was one of these localities, and the "Pennsylvania Dutch" fabric, plate XXXII is one of the resulting designs.

In 1940 and 1941, the encouragement which the Laverne needed in order to continue their adventure in designing, was furnished by the decision of the vice-president of Macy's to buy their designs and to publicize their work. Theirs was a new style of design and here was the person who was willing to take a chance on promoting their style of art. To quote the Laverne, "We feel that the buyers and executives of retail merchandizing - all - hold the destiny of textile arts in the palm of their collective hand - for America."

(98:28)

Both Mr. and Mrs. Laverne have expressed the wish that, "We would like to feel that our designs express the present (1947) conditions and culture in America, and that we have set a definite trend for the better in American textile designs for decorative fabrics." (98:28)

The acceptance of the striking simplicity of their abstract designs is noteworthy.
Several pages are devoted in this section to two artists who design for Laverne Originals, Alvin Lustig and Ray Komei.
Figure 67

"Meditation"
Plate XXXII

"Pennsylvania Dutch"

by the Lavernes
Plate XXXIII

"Squared Circles"

by the Lavernes
"Marbalia" chintz

This design is also printed on cotton rayon faille, satin, and hammered lame; cotton rayon fabric with silver or gold metallic thread.
Plate XXXV

"Marbalia" Wallpaper

It is designed to function as BACKGROUND for authentic period and contemporary modern furnishings.

Available in unlimited color range, including gold and silver.

Sunfast, economical and durable. Also available with baked plastic finish, completely washable, heat resistant, flexible, scratch and moisture resistant.
Figure 68

Laverne designs

"Fun to Run" (left)

"Atmospheric No. 1" (right)
Plate XXXVI

"Fun to Run"

by the Lavernes
The next few pages are devoted to two artists who design for LAVERNE ORIGINALS.
Plate XXXVII

"Incantation"

by Alvin Lustig
Plate XXXVIII

"Masks"

by Ray Komei
Plate XXXIX

"Big Catch"

by Ray Komei
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

A definite advancement has taken place in the textile designing of hand weaving. Chartreuse, dubonnet red, magenta, shocking pink, lacquer red, canary yellow, turquoise, violet, blue, and all their variations are suggestive of some of the lovely colors used today. Dorothy Liebes is highly skilled in the use of vivid colors and their successful combination.

Textures that are smooth and rough, dull and shiny, nubby and irregular add interest to the appearance as well as to the tactile quality of the fabric. All four handweavers are highly aware of the importance of texture in today's fabrics. Dorothy Liebes uses such unusual materials as sequins, beads, fringe, cellophane, split bamboo, plastics, metallic yarns and foils, and others, in addition to basic yarns of cotton, rayon, silk, and wool. Miss Strengell is more conservative in both her color selections and material combinations. She has done some outstanding and very successful work with Fiberglas. Mohair is a favorite of Mr. Watterston. His drapery fabrics are gauze-like in appearance and often have a plaid or striped effect due to the way in which combinations of yarn weights and textures are arranged.
on the loom. Variety in both colors and materials appeals to Mr. Sailors. He uses them in custom-woven draperies, upholstery, coatings, suitings, rugs, and roll-up blinds. His training in fine arts and his experience in teaching weaving have been an excellent background for his work.

All four designers also have had similar training in fine arts. Miss Strengell has contributed much toward the teaching of good design in woven fabrics. Her designs are also used by several companies for production on power looms.

Printed textiles today present a vivid array of colors and patterns which are particularly appropriate for the needs and desires of American people. A wide scope of subject matter serves as a source of inspiration for today's designs. Geometric patterns, with an architectural atmosphere, and abstract designs are being gradually accepted by the public. The definite influence of Angelo Testa in establishing this trend is a significant fact. Mr. Testa believes that floral designs have no place in furnishing buildings of modern architectural design.

Miss Reeves, whose work is expressive of much character, also creates designs of a geometrical nature.
Interesting space relationships and use of simple color combinations are characteristic of her work. Pre-Columbian art has been the inspiration for much of her work. She also simplifies design to an abstract quality with most pleasing results.

The Lavernes have designed some three dimensional effects. These are also geometric in type. In general, the Laverne designs are striking in their simplicity. They do their own printing. Dress, drapery, upholstery and wallpaper designs are often identical. Alvin Lustig and Ray Komei are two designers on their staff.

Doris and Leslie Tillett, who own and operate a printing and pilot mill, the only one of its kind in the United States, are a design team and work directly on the fabric. The design evolves as they progress and many colors may be used. It is a trial and error method, but has proved very satisfactory for both them and the manufacturer. It is their aim to create designs that are suitable to each fabric used and to the purpose for which the fabric is intended. They are the first American contemporary designers to work on sheer woolen fabrics. Their most recent designs are textural in appearance and are printed on fine cotton fabrics.

A sketchy lightness is typical of most Stan Taylor Originals. Block printing, screen printing, and hand
techniques are used in applying color to the fabric.

Provincial informality is characteristic of many John Little designs. He also does some abstract types. Much publicity has been accorded him through promotion of his paintings and fine art background.

For informality and practically any choice of subject, Dan Cooper fabrics will offer many possibilities. Mr. Cooper designs many of the fabrics he uses in his interior decorating projects. He supervises a staff of designers who work in his studio. He stresses the importance of appropriate home furnishing background to suit the individuals in these homes.

For florals, Marion Dorn is outstanding. The consistent popularity of them is due to her unique treatment of a traditional design in a modern manner. Most are colorful and large in scale. She prefers florals, but abstracts are also one of her accomplishments.

Probably the greatest change is the designer-and-manufacturer relationship in which the manufacturer has come to accept the design as originally presented by the artist.

Conclusions

The increasing number of hand-weaving studios indicates the interest which is being shown by the public in
this hand craft. It is certain proof that hand crafts have always been and will continue to be an important factor in the production of beautiful works of art. The human element must enter into the planning of every object, even though it may eventually be constructed by a machine. This fact is readily observed when one examines machine-woven fabrics that have been translated from hand woven designs.

There will always be persons who will have a desire to own hand woven fabrics. There are those who will always appreciate the beauty of imaginative, well-executed craftsmanship.

The most recent developments in designer-manufacturer relationship is indicated in Interiors magazine. (11:134, 136) The complete freedom with which these designers (George Nelson, Edward J. Wormley, Salvador Dali, Abel Sorenson, Bernard Rudofsky, and Ray Eames) were allowed to work has resulted in very acceptable and pleasing designs. An interesting fact again presents itself: none of these designers was a textile-designer specialist. This fact has been pointed out several times in this study. Those who are promoting this practice have initiated the pioneering phase of this trend, a trend which appears to be well on its way toward becoming a general
practice. This has been brought about partly by insistence of recognition on the part of some designers, and by the recognition of the advantages of promotional opportunities to the manufacturer.

The increasing importance of the designer in the textile fabric industry, and his possible influence in establishing design trends and practices appears to be firmly rooted.
GENERAL


ROBERT SAILORS


DORIS AND LESLIE TILLET


RUTH REEVES


STAN TAYLOR


ANGELO TESTA


APPENDIX
APPENDIX A

Bibliography: Some hand-weaving designers not included in this study.


"We Need Crafts for Their Contact with Materials," Design. Columbus, Ohio, Design Publishing Co., vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 21-22, December 1944.


JOSEPH BLUMFIELD


APPENDIX B

Bibliography: Some printed textile designers not included in this study.


ALEXANDER GIRARD


North Carolina, University, Woman's College. Greensboro, International Textile Exhibition, 1944.


