Drafting: A Personal

by Philis Alvic

I became impressed with the mechanism of the loom in art school, where I studied weaving with an excellent teacher. Although it would take many more years to find my own artistic identity, I made a commitment at that time to let the loom do the work. Rather than turning to tapestry to make the pictures in my head materialize, I decided to learn enough about the loom to make it do my bidding. As I progressed, I found that the loom is more than just a vehicle; it is a contributor to the creative product.

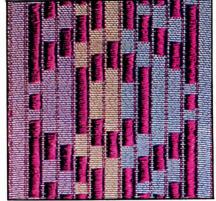
After several years of studying the loom, I now speak of mastery of it as a direction rather than an attainable goal. The constant striving would be discouraging if it were not so exciting. Everything I learn is added to a store of ideas that can be drawn forth when needed for a particular piece. With greater understanding of the loom, each hanging moves closer to my original conception of it. Control is not just



Bergman Positive

sought for its own sake, but for what it enables me to do.

At a not-too-clearly-defined point in my career, I began designing wallhangings rather than fabrics. Because of the scale at which I



Tied Lithuania Miniature (Front)

found myself working, I no longer manipulated individual threads, but units of threads. I was drawn to block weaves because of their flexibility in interpreting a design figure.

The tied block weaves offer a definite figure area and a definite background; the weaver has the choice of either the warp or the weft for the main area. Usually, I prefer to have the warp define the design, with the weft filling in behind it, reasoning that there are

fewer harnesses to lift at any one time. However, since that is not always true, I am sure that it is often habit which governs my thinking, rather than practical reasons.

In all of the block weaves described in this article, the weft is tied or held in place over long areas across the width of the piece. The tie threads perform the function of confining the weft relatively inconspicuously in some of the weaves I describe. But the ties contribute considerably to the overall visual effect in other weave structures. Therefore, in planning a piece, the weave structure must be considered a vital element.

As I investigated block weaves in more depth, I found that my pieces were also becoming larger. My work tended towards bolder statements, which demanded the larger format. Creating the designs was a matter of arranging positive and negative areas. The weave structure allowed for the increase in size of a piece without forfeiting fabric stability. Planning a piece required the use of profile drafts, which I described in Part I in SS&D, Winter 1981.

The skeleton tie-up is also given for each of the unit threadings discussed. I always use the skeleton

Tied Lithuania (16 harnesses)

Only one thread functions as a weft tie on the surface. Another single tie operates on the reverse side. Vertical columns are formed by this single tie. The warp blocks appear as windows in the weft-created columns. On one surface, the pattern figure is created by the warp, and on the other by the weft. In the miniature, the figure-ground relationship is well-illustrated, especially when both sides of the piece are seen.

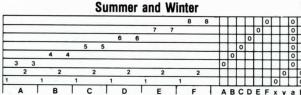
Gary

Bergman (8 harnesses)

Margaret Bergman looked at the structure of Summer and Winter and concluded that if three tie-down threads instead of two were used, a pattern could be created by the tie threads. Within the large figure areas a secondary, diamond pattern is developed. Since the threading unit is so large, the structure encourages simple, bold designs. However, these designs also have a lot of surface interest because of the action of the tie threads. The two sides of the fabric are not identical, even though the main blocks are exact opposites. The tie threads show more of the weft, depending on the side, producing a far more distinct main design on one side of the piece.

As in Summer and Winter, bits of the warp show in the weft, and some of the weft peeks through in the warp areas. Sometimes, the big blocks cannot be made to conform to a design without becoming impossibly large. Therefore, it is permissible to break the unit in the middle and change pattern harnesses, but only if the correct sequence of the tie threads is maintained. This technique is employed in *Positive*.





KEY
Capital Letters: blocks
x,y,z: tie threads
a,b: tabby
All tie-ups given are
for a rising shed loom.

Approach (Part II)

tie-up, because I find it easier if I think in terms of pattern block treadles and tie-thread treadles. For this, of course, I always need two feet. One foot depresses the treadle of a block while the other operates the tie. All these weave structures require a tabby to hold them together. Each pattern and tie pick is, therefore followed by a tabby pick. The tabby picks alternate between the "a" treadle and the "b" treadle. There are several different treadling sequences that can be used with each of the above structures. Each of these sequences performs the same function in the development of the blocks, but they create a distinct surface texture. These textural differences present another element for consideration in the planning of a work.

With my working knowledge of several tie-block weaves, how do I choose which one to use? Sometimes the decision is forced by a particular technical problem in the design. Most of the time, however, the choice is made because of the surface texture of the weave. Different weave structures look different and different treadlings also change the finished appearance. With more possibilities at my

disposal, I can convey the precise feeling that I desire. The tool that I use (in this instance, the loom) has become a partner in the creative process. By more skillful manipulation of the loom, I can come closer



Beiderwand Miniature (Front)

	tal Thre In A Un		Number of Blocks
Summer and Wint	er 4	2	n - 2
Bergman	16	3	n - 3
Beiderwand	5	alternatii 2	ng <u>n - 2</u>
Tied Lithuania	10	1 on each sid of fabric	_

n = the total number of harnesses available on your loom.

Summer and Winter (10 harnesses)

The tie threads, in addition to confining the weft, act as an integral part of the warp pattern areas. Because of this dual purpose, they function better if they are similar or identical in color to the rest of the warp. This also means that there are flecks of warp color in the weft area and vice versa; no area is exclusively one color.

In Four Times Four, seven blocks make up the rather complex figure, while a single block controls the border. The warp is the pink and yellow with red borders. Color is also used to define the major pattern areas in the weft.

Beiderwand (16 harnesses)

With Beiderwand, two distinct color areas can be maintained without mixing. This is possible because the tie threads operate independently of the warp pattern areas. The warp block area is a true plain weave, while the weft is a tied overshot. Because the tie threads operate separately, it is impossible to create a plain weave that involves all of the warp threads. When the tie threads are the same color as the weft, the two separate areas are emphasized. The tie threads may be a different color from the weft, which enhances the surface texture, as was done in the Beider wand miniature. Because the weft completely covers the warp in Beiderwand, the warp can be several very different colors across its width. The varying warp colors may coordinate with the design, or, as shown above, the color may change randomly. There are definite right and wrong sides to a piece when this weave structure is used.

to my initial vision. Control of my equipment actually suggests elements for inclusion into a piece. Therefore, as an artist, I must take more responsibility for the choices that I make.

Bibliography

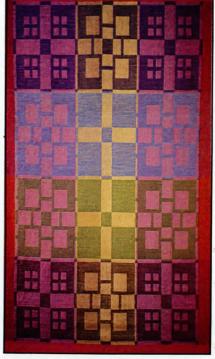
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Philis Alvic was awarded the HGA Certificate of Excellence in Handweaving in 1976.



Summer and Winter Four Times Four