

Shuttle-Craft Bulletin: Selling Your Handwoven Articles



In the November 1928, May 1929, and January 1930 Shuttle-Craft Bulletin issues, Mary Meigs Atwater discussed selling one's handwoven goods. In 1928, Weavers asked: what makes a piece of weaving saleable or unsaleable? Many complicated factors enter into it, according to Mary: salesmanship, location and product type, to name a few. But to her, the single most important element is beauty of color in the article. This is what everyone reacts to most instinctively and powerfully.

Mary wrote: "Nothing sells like beauty. Weavers are apt to forget the fact that it is not so much cloth we are creating as it is, or should be, beauty." A good color combination gives pleasure, while a bad one she described as acutely painful. She further wrote that while there is no

recipe book for putting colors together well, she got the following advice from an art teacher: try your colors together; if they displease the eye, the combination is incorrect.

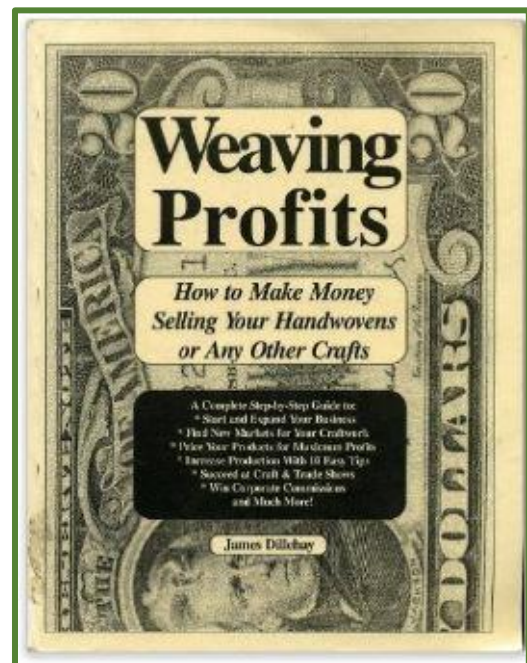
In 1929, with the Depression on, weavers were asking, where and how can I sell the things I make? Mary wrote then that a weaver should first ask instead: "what shall I make for sale and how shall I make it?"

The how and where to sell question deals with salesmanship, which Mary considered to be a gift, a talent not to be learned by effort. But, before a weaver attempts sales, he or she must have a saleable line and not attempt to sell the random designs that one might like to weave. The main objective is weaving an article that the buyer will like and purchase. This comes through planning. Mary listed about 17 possibilities of things to weave, a few of which are rugs, curtains, wall hangings, table runners, towels, fabric for clothing or upholstery and so on. A weaver must be willing to try and find out what interests the buyer and pay less attention to what interests him or her.

Once a product line has been chosen, consideration must be made on the design, weave structure, materials, size and color. Of color, a variety of combinations should be tried out to see which sells and then concentrate on weaving those.

Once that is done, a weaver can consider how best to reach the intended customer. There are more avenues available now, I think, with online selling (for example, Etsy, Ebay, or Amazon to name a few).

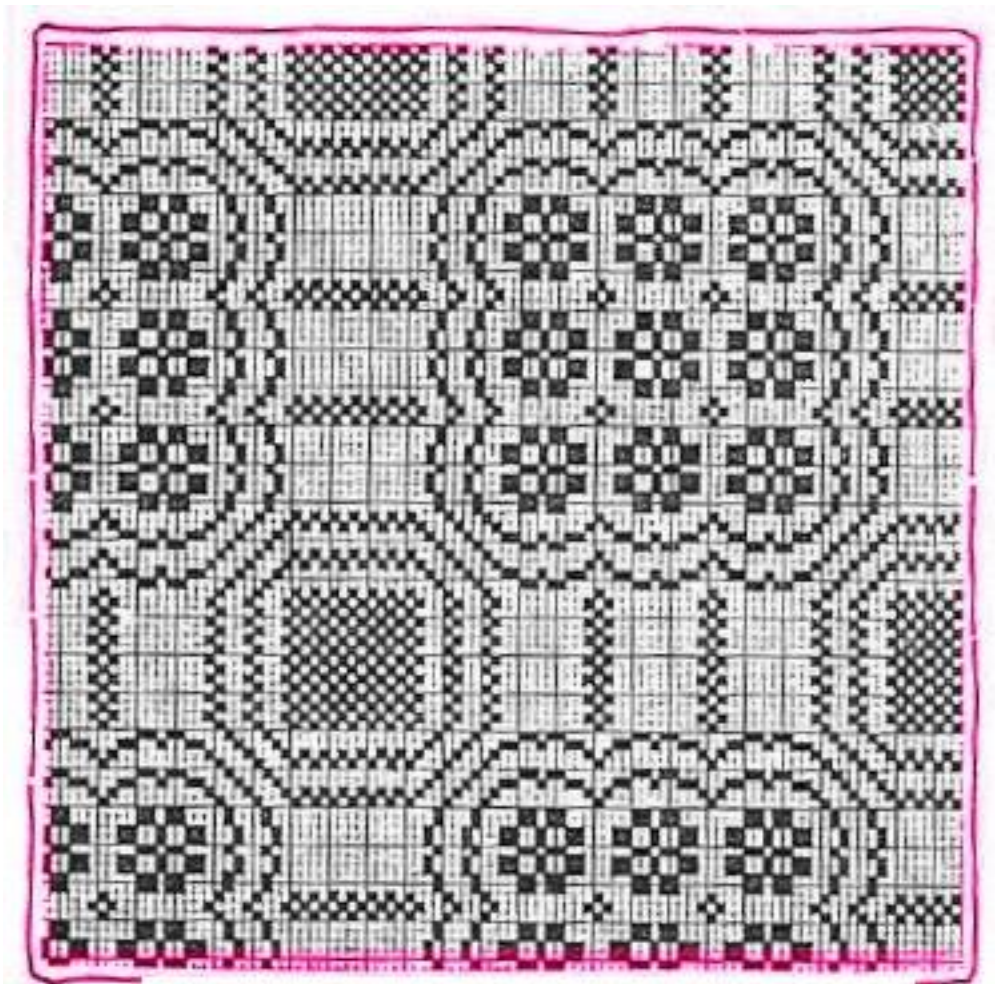
In 1930, weavers were still interested in weaving for profit, and Mary's advice has not changed. Mary considered weaving for pleasure and weaving for profit to be 2 different things. While she wrote that it is possible to enjoy weaving for profit, the two should not be confused. In weaving for profit, items that people will spend money on must be woven at the lowest possible cost in materials



and time. A standardized line is desired. Samples should be prepared from which custom orders may be made, or production of a sizable stock prepared. If you plan to sell your own work, then you will be a salesperson as well as a manufacturer. If you plan to sell through a shop or on consignment, then you must pay a price for that convenience. It may be worth it.

Mary proposed forming a Shuttlecraft Guild Selling Group, either organized as an incorporated stock company with a sales agency, or having weavers host a sale each year at several locations in the country. I do not think either plan was ever implemented.

Finally, Mary offered a lovely overshot draft in the May 1929 Bulletin, woven rose style with threading and treadling recommendations for either a coverlet, woven in 2 pieces, or a table runner. See the figure shown here.



An Unusual Rose Pattern