

The Shuttlecraft Bulletins - Weaving Bags

This month's Shuttlecraft Bulletin article on weaving bags is taken from the July 1926, February 1927 and June 1928 Bulletins. These bulletins cover the weaving for and construction of handbags. Mary Meigs Atwater wrote that making a better grade of bags is an excellent prospect for profit. Handbags of the time were becoming larger, more elaborate and beautiful, with a wide and shallow shape. An online search for vintage handbag of the period gave images of many beaded bags with art deco clasps, some very ornate (see the photo from the Metropolitan Museum of Art collection).



She recommended using fine materials like silk, many with metallics or wool in bright patterns on cream linen ground. They were set in metal tops or frames with clasps and slightly gathered at the tops. Flat square bags were still in use, but the gathered bags were newer. Mary recommended that you make them up as perfectly as possible and charge a suitable price.

The weave structures that she thought would work included the 3-harness weave (like krokbragd), Bronsen, Monk's Belt, some of the smaller overshot patterns, like honeysuckle, Russian diaper-a small all over pattern in a diamond shape, and Summer and Winter. She also referred to the doubleweave bag mentioned in the earlier 1924 (#4) Bulletin. This bag is a project included in the *Doubleweave* book by Jennifer Moore.

In designing the bags with clasps, Mary recommends bands of pattern with plainweave for a striking effect, with the selvages either at the side or top of the bag. Putting the selvages at the side of the purse will give horizontal stripes or bands of patterns that are recommended to be placed near the bottom of the bag. The patterns will be vertical if the weaving selvages are at the top of the bag and in this case should be placed near the middle of the bag. Her weaving instructions were for a 14 inch wide warp, resulting in a 12 inch wide finished piece to give an indication of size. She stated that a 20 yard warp, 14 inches wide would make 30 bags. The favorite color in 1928 was old gold, which, she said harmonizes with many color combinations. Other color combinations given were blue and green or brown, orange and black, or grey black or brown warps.

The purse frames or hardware, with clasps are still available today. They are either sew on or glue in and can be purchased from Etsy purse supplies. See, for example: www.etsy.com/shop/MeiMeiSupplies?ref=l2-shop-info-name

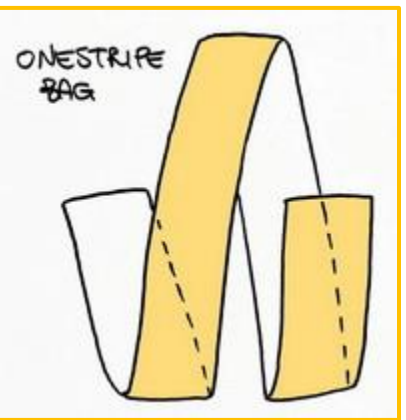
Mary also mentions a warp faced square bag of many brilliant colors, based on one she received from Italy. The resulting fabric would be stiff enough that the only finishing needed would be a pair of handles made from 2-inch strips of the weaving folded.

Handwoven bags of today are much less formal and tend to be larger, like totes and messenger bags. There is a tutorial for a bag made from a

handwoven fabric strip on the blog: *Donis Delis* that you could try- see the diagram at right.

I think that Deanna has made this one and brought it to a guild meeting. This can be made from a handwoven scarf.

One bag that I'd like to make from handwoven material is called an Origami Market Bag, the tutorial for it can be found at this link: <http://lolanovablog.blogspot.com/p/tutorials.html> See the red bag in the photo.



Bags can be made from small pieces of handwoven fabric, out of novelty yarns and many different weave structures. There are 2 projects in the *Weaving Made Easy* book by Liz Gipson, for rigid heddle Handwoven bags is something in which a weaver can experiment. So, try one!

🍷 Maureen Wilson