Where do patterns come from?

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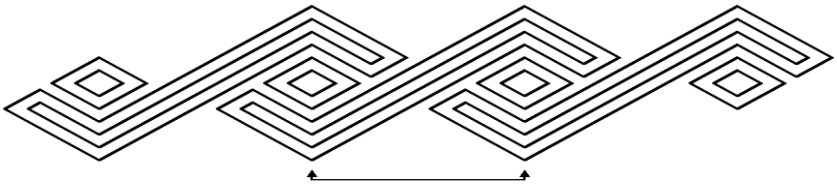
There is a time to weave familiar patterns and there is a time to experiment with new designs. Both activities have their rewards and challenges. It is easy to come up with new paper designs. But can we weave them? A number of questions need to be considered when we take the step from paper design to woven band. There are always surprises, obstacles, a lot of learning, fun, and always more new paper designs. I enjoy this process so much, I rarely get around to finishing large projects.

How to go about creating new patterns? In this article we look at two ways. At first we'll be very systematic and use a motif from the weaving world. Then we will let our surroundings be our guide.

Multi-shaft loom weaving

Many card weavers are also loom weavers and have pattern books for looms with 4, 8, 10 or more shafts. Twill patterns for eight or more shafts are a natural source for card weaving because twills create diagonal lines. Two books come to mind for this topic. Carol Strickler provides many elaborate patterns for weavers who have just eight shafts in *A Weaver's Book of 8-Shaft Patterns* (1). I had "translated" several plaited twill patterns into card weaving patterns and you can see them on my website (2). A less known book was published by Clotilde Barrett and Eunice Smith called *Double Two-Tie Unit Weaves* (3).

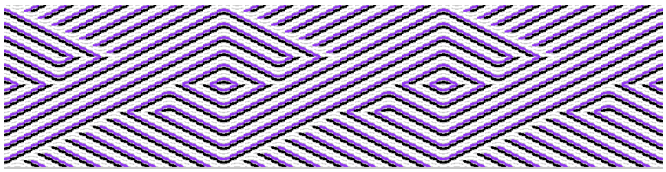
Let's now look at a ten-shaft pattern, Photo 5.10 in Barrett and Smith (3). It is a nice pattern but out of reach for me since it requires ten shafts. But it has potential for card weaving. The central motif is a swirl bending four straight lines halfway around a diamond shape.



Consider the section between the arrows to be repeated for a longer band. First we need to decide on a threading, then fill in a beginning and end, and a background pattern on the sides. My first band uses three repeats, has a dark-light-dark-light threading, has half diamonds at beginning and end, and straight parallel lines on the sides. There are 26 pattern cards, and a border card on each side.

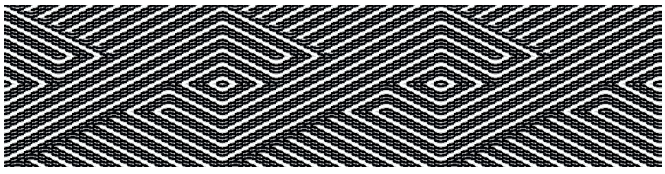
Threading: dark blue–white–dark green–white, 5/2 perle cotton

This pattern can be woven in other threadings. Egyptian Diagonals will create thicker, crisper lines but require 47 cards. You can simplify the pattern and use only two lines in the swirl instead of four. That brings the card count down to 34. I like to spice up the standard threading for Egyptian Diagonals by using two colors for the dark color. It creates a shadow effect and gives the piece more depth.



Threading: white–white–purple–black

This motif can be woven in just about any card weaving technique. Vacant Hole is an option for either the entire piece or just some sections, possibly combined with Brocade, or 3-1 Broken Twill. Even Double-Face will work fine.

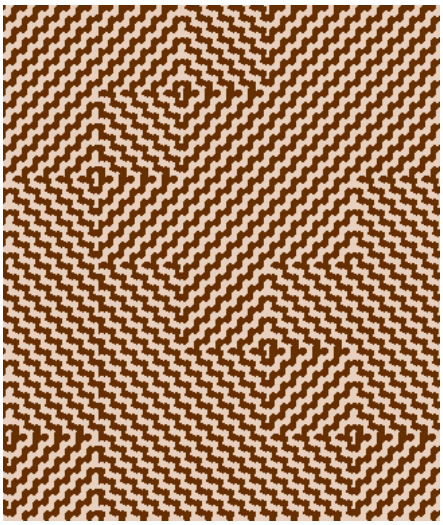


Threading: black–black–black–white

Back to the design. I liked the dark outlines that surround the swirl where lines change direction. It creates a crisp ridge that lifts the motif. I decided to take advantage of that effect and use it on all sides of the swirl. Incidentally this change, shown on the following page, created a wavy fill pattern on the side.

Weaving with dark outline on all sides of the pattern creates a wavy fill pattern on the side.

Now I want to show how one pattern can morph into another and yet another. Let's use a different ten-shaft pattern, Photo 5.13 from *Double Two-Tie Unit Weaves* (3), as a starting point. Throughout the band all lines run smoothly from one pattern into the next. Using the threading of dark–light–dark–light you not only create a pattern on the front side, you even have a pleasant pattern on the back side.



Double two-tie unit weaving pattern

Card weaving

Off the Wall

Literally! This next pattern was lifted off a wall in the Exploratorium in San Francisco. It was a tiled wall and it seemed to move. The surface was covered with black and white square tiles and had grey horizontal grout lines. When I looked closely I saw that all tiles were the same size, the rows offset by approximately half a tile. This savvy design created a perfect optical illusion (4). I wondered if I could get the same effect in card weaving. I developed a computer model to see how many rows I would need and how many cards to get small squares. Four rows of squares seemed enough. I started weaving "squares" with ten cards in Double-Face, four picks per color. The cards for the grey lines always turn backwards. Quickly I noticed that my squares on the outside were noticeably thinner than the two rows in the middle. Pulling the weft in caused the distortion. Moving a single card from the center rows to the outside fixed the problem. Now the cards were arranged as: 1 grey–11 B/W–1 grey–9 B/W–1 grey–9 B/W–1 grey–11 B/W cards–1 grey. 10/2 perle cotton.

If all this makes you dizzy, just relax, go to the beach and look at the waves. Notice, no two waves are the same.

References:

(1) Carol Strickler: *A Weaver's Book of 8-Shaft Patterns.* Interweave Press 1991, p 102, 103.
(2) www.theloomybin.com/cw/2color.html [referenced on February 12, 2017].
(3) Clotilde Barrett, Eunice Smith: *Double Two-Tie Unit Weaves.* Weaver's Journal Publications, p36, 37, 39.
(4) www.morethanmaths.com/fun/gallery/illusions2 [referenced on February 12, 2017].