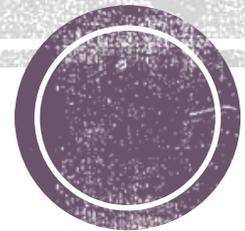


# **Surface Texture Inspiration: A Look at Free-Form Tapestry Weaving**

**Presentation to CWSG  
Janet LeMasters Lee  
November 21, 2020**



# What is Free-Form Tapestry Weaving

**Tapestry Weaving** – weft-face weaving featuring discontinuous wefts

**Traditional Tapestry** – often pictorial, following a pattern or cartoon; typically woven using plain weave, producing a flat surface

**Free-form Tapestry** –

- Free-style approach emphasizing finger manipulation techniques, colors, and textures over process and patterns
- Design at the loom; general idea of yarn, colors, and shape of the piece but techniques/texture developed as the piece is woven
- Art yarns and roving often used to add texture
- Combination of many techniques (weaving, macramé, beading, embroidery, etc) and many materials (wool, cotton, sari silk, denim, etc)



*Schacht article demonstrates difference between traditional and free-form tapestry. Here, artist uses same subject matter, color scheme, and yarns. For second weaving, artist plied the yarn to make it thicker and also used roving. <https://www.schachtspindle.com/tapestry-weaving-the-long-and-the-short-of-it/>*

# Characteristics of Tapestry Weaving

## Balance

- Tapestry is weft-faced, meaning the warp does not show. A fabric that is completely weft-faced will typically be much stiffer than a balanced weave.

## Design

- Because the warp does not show, it does not affect the appearance of the fabric. Warping is quick. It is wound directly on the loom without planning, counting, or measuring.
- The application of the weft creates the design. Design is produced by discontinuous wefts and there can be many changes of weft color across a single row of weaving.
- Tapestry weaving is generally not woven “row by row” across the width of the piece but, rather, by shapes or colors as the design progresses. While warping is fast, the weaving is slow.

## Products

- Produces a one-sided fabric that is fairly stiff/firm.
- Wall hangings, pillows, bags, placemats; anything decorative



Natalie Miller

# Tapestry Tools and Equipment

- **Looms:** spectrum of looms with differing options for tension and shedding devices; can be vertical (high-warp) or horizontal (low-warp)
- **Shedding Device**
  - Traditional Tapestry Looms: Shedding System on loom
  - Simple Frame Looms: Manual using shed stick or rotating heddle bar
- **Tensioning System** (high tensioning is needed)
  - Traditional Tapestry Looms: Tensioning Device on loom
  - Simple Frame Looms: no tension adjustment on loom
- **Warp** – very quick to setup; needs to be strong (cotton, linen, wool)
- **Weft** - Tapestry needle, bobbin, shuttle, or nothing (butterflies)
- **Beater** – can push weft threads down with fingers or a tapestry beater, which is a fork-like tool with teeth designed to go around the warp threads and push down your weft threads.

*I use un-tensioned frame looms, tapestry needles and shuttles, and a shed stick (when doing whole rows of plain weave)*



Schacht Looms



Lost Pond Looms

# Weaving on a Frame Loom

To keep your selvedge straight and maintain proper tension, bubble the weft and then beat down. The further you travel across the warp with one continuous weft, the more important this becomes. Weft tension, or the amount of weft put into the warp with each pick, is something that has to be constantly monitored and adjusted.



# Hand-Controlled Weaving Techniques

Dimensional texture can be produced by hand-controlled weaving where weft is wrapped around the warp or pulled out from the warp (loops); generally woven with a closed shed

Examples: Rya (Ghiordes) knots, Oriental soumak, Greek soumak, twining, and loops

Lyndsey Campbell



*From Pile Weaves, p.6: “They are the exclamation points in a flat weave. They add raised dimension to an otherwise flat surface. They add warmth and weight...”*

# Rya (Ghiordes) Knots

Rya Knots are what you most often find at the bottom of a weave to create a fringe but can be placed anywhere to create a more unique and interesting composition. These knots are also used when making a shaggy carpet texture

Place strands of yarn over warp threads, bring the right side of your yarn behind and around your warp threads and then bring the left side of your yarn behind and around your other warp threads so that the ends meet up in the middle. Pull down. Secure with row of plain weave.

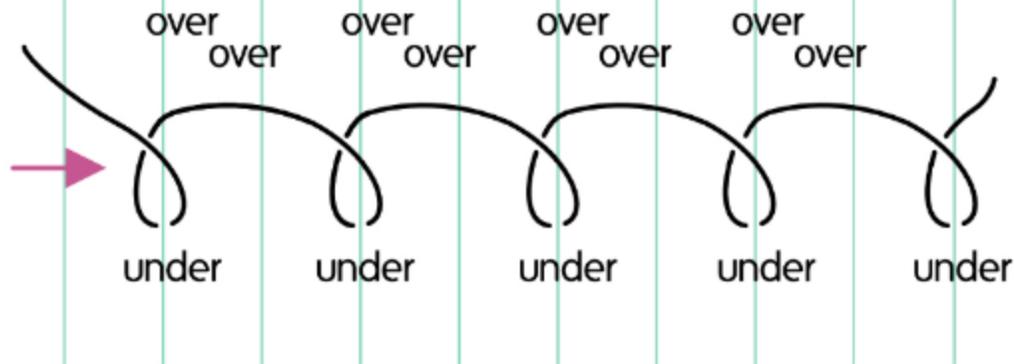


# Oriental Soumak

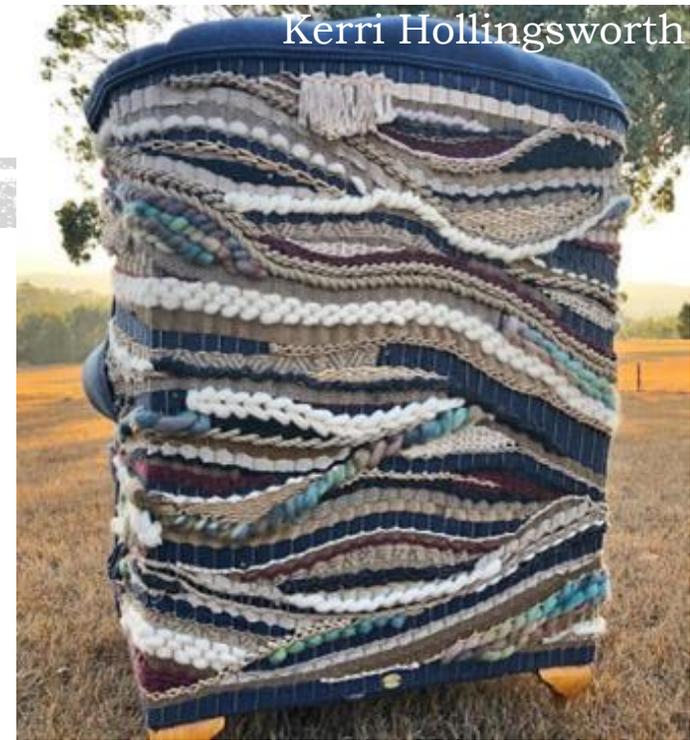
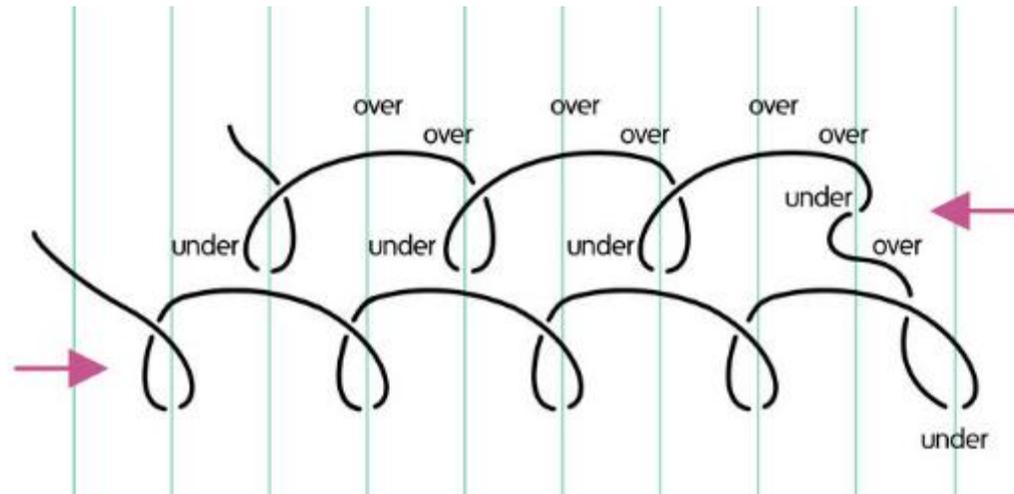
Kerri Hollingsworth

Oriental Soumak is traditionally wrapped over 4 and back under 2, but can be done in any combination (over 2 and back under 1) depending on thickness of yarn and look you are trying to achieve

Single



Braid

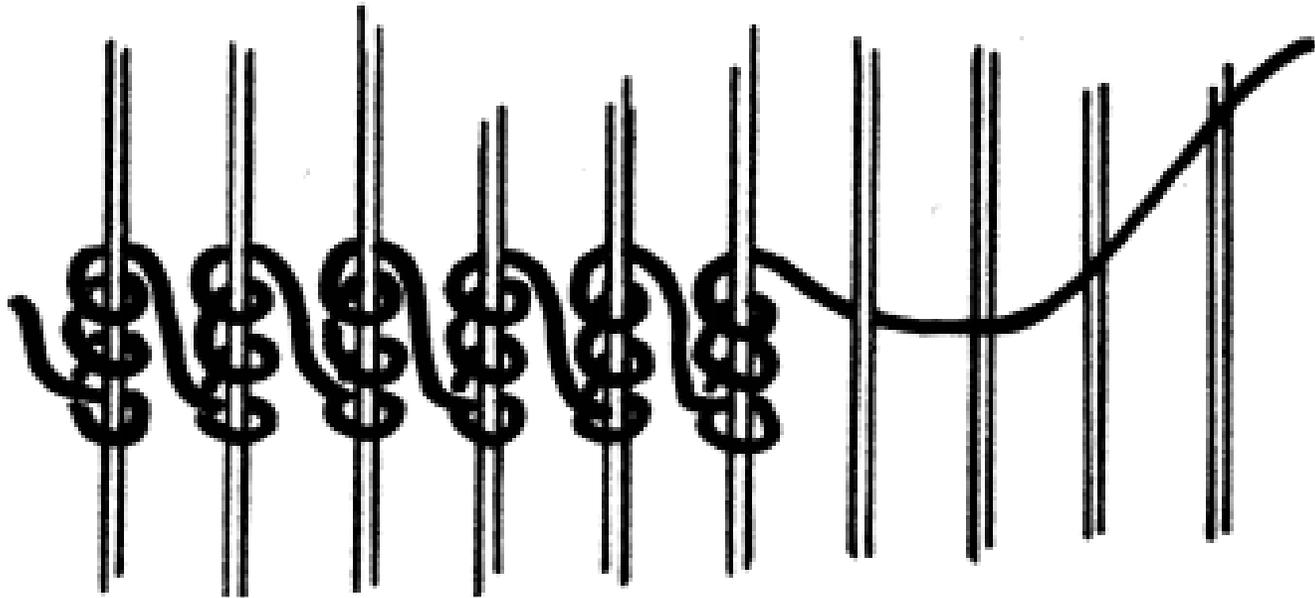


[crossingthreads.co](http://crossingthreads.co)



# Greek Soumak

With the Greek Soumak, the weft is wrapped 3 times (at least) over the warp. It is considered an ornate knot and when packed together gives a rippled effect.



Greek Soumak



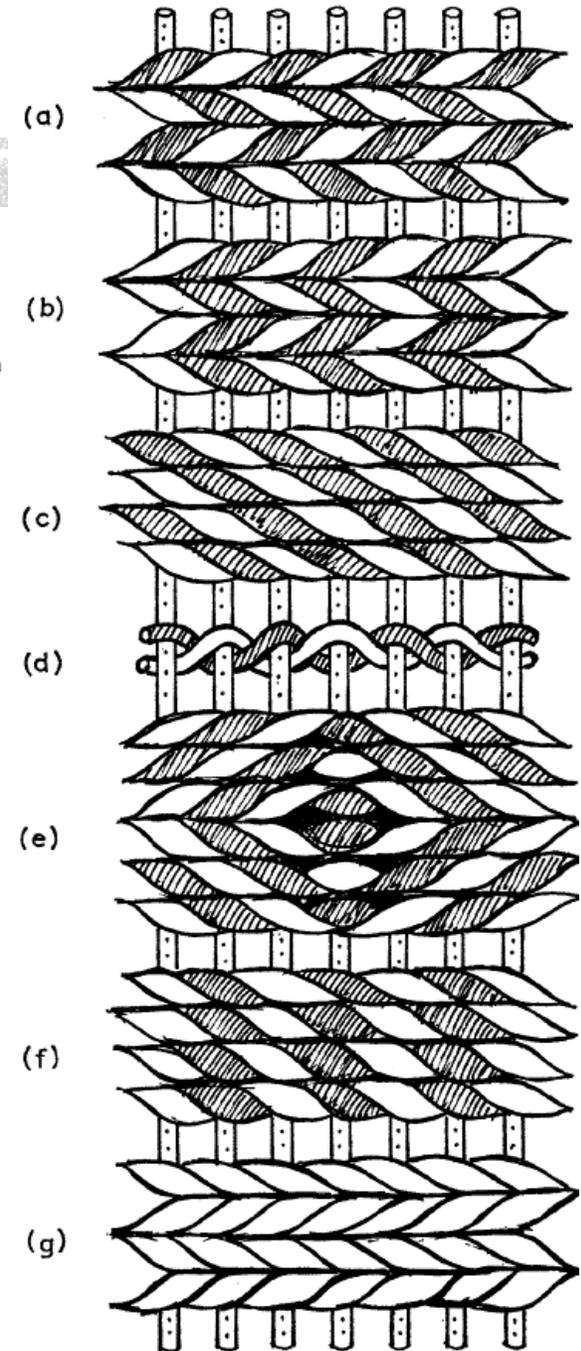
Jennifer Edwards

# Twining

Twining locks the warp in place so it is a good technique to use at the bottom/beginning of your piece. It's also useful to outline a shapes. You can vary colors and direction to create patterns. To twine, you wrap alternating threads around the warp. Weave thread #1 under the first warp and up and then weave thread #2 under the second warp and up.

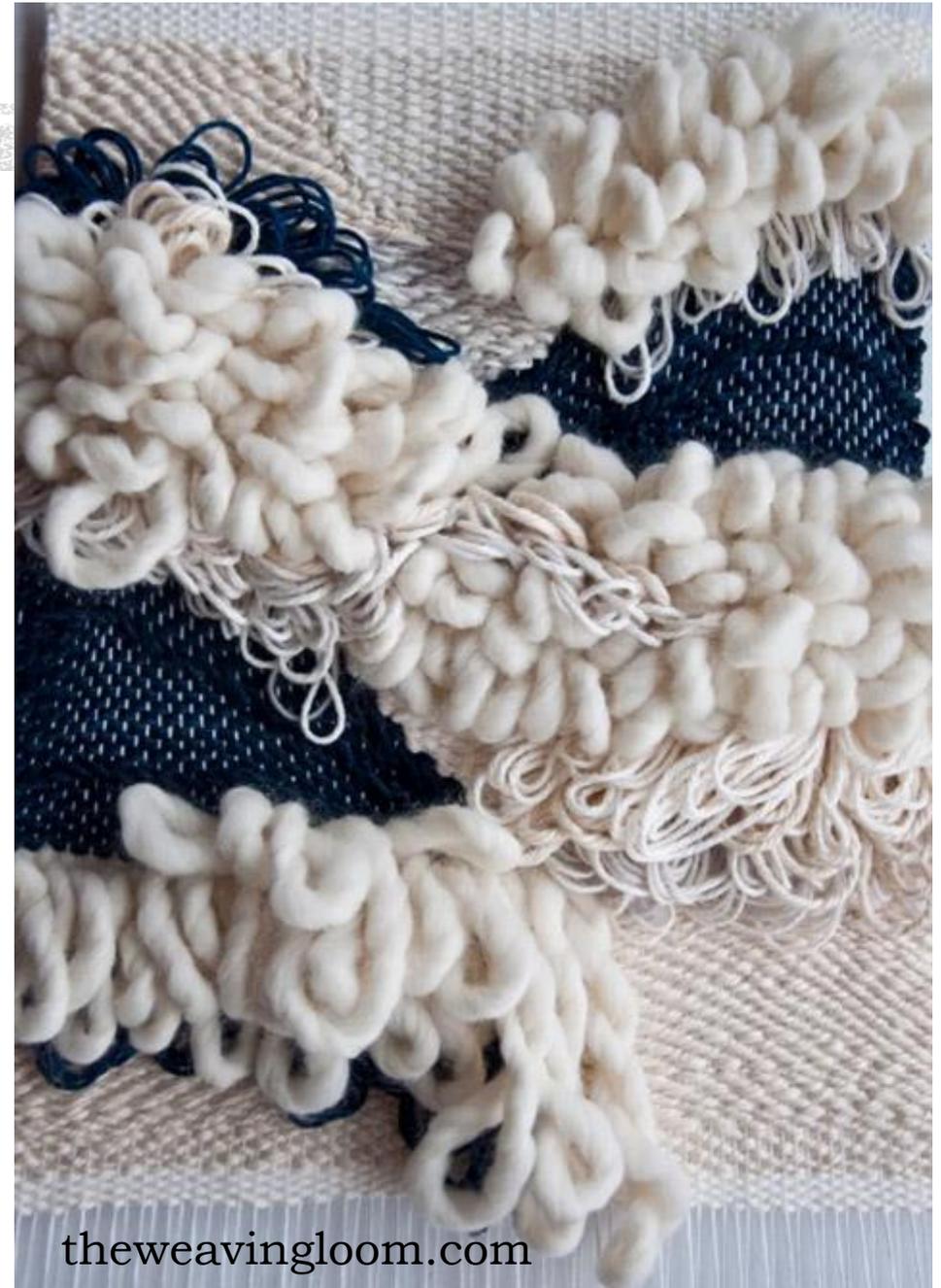


Fig. 367  
Weft Twining  
(a-f) Various motifs obtained  
with two-colour weft twining  
(g) Characteristic surface when  
alternate rows are S- and Z-  
twist



# Loops

Loops are created by looping weft yarns around a rod while woven in the warp. They can be uniform or more organic and random. They need rows of plain weaving between for support.



# Finishing and Taking Off Loom

1. Clean up the back and tuck in all the ends (or leave them hanging)
2. To finish the bottom of the weaving
  - Cut it off the loom at the bottom; tie knots and tuck in on the back-side of the weave.
3. To finish the top of the weaving
  - Weave the last row as hem stitch or twining to prevent weft from traveling up the warp
  - If wall hanging:
    - Can slide off warp loops and slide onto a wooden dowel
    - Can cut and tie knots like the bottom and then hand sew onto wooden dowel
    - Can cut and tie it to the wooden dowel
  - If not a wall hanging, then finish the top just like the bottom by cutting and tying knots



Jennifer Edwards

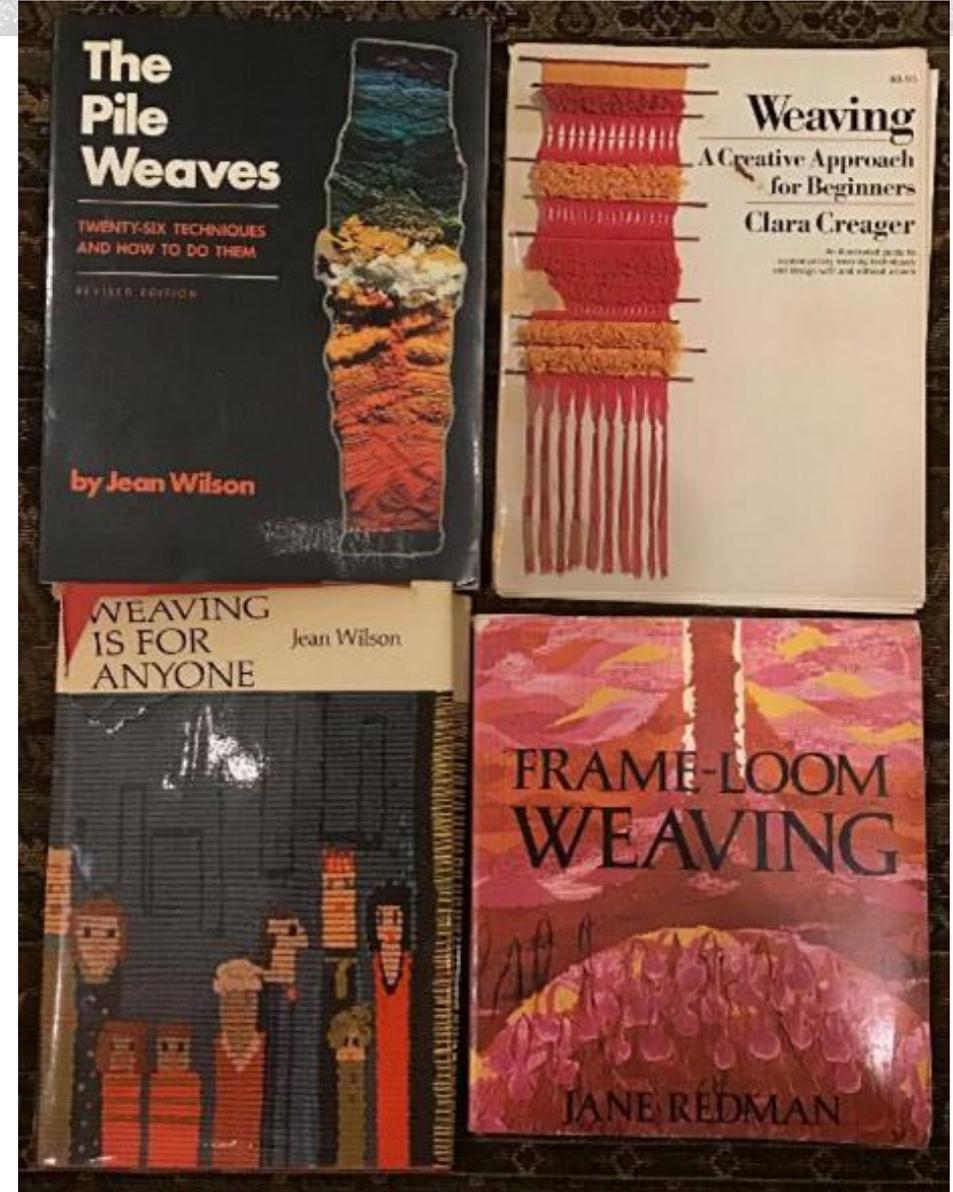
# Free-Form Tapestry Resources

- Our Library:

<https://www.librarything.com/catalog/CWSGLibrary/yourlibrary>

- Rigid Heddle Loom and finger-controlled weaves:

<https://www.schachtspindle.com/pattern-1-picked-up-loops/>



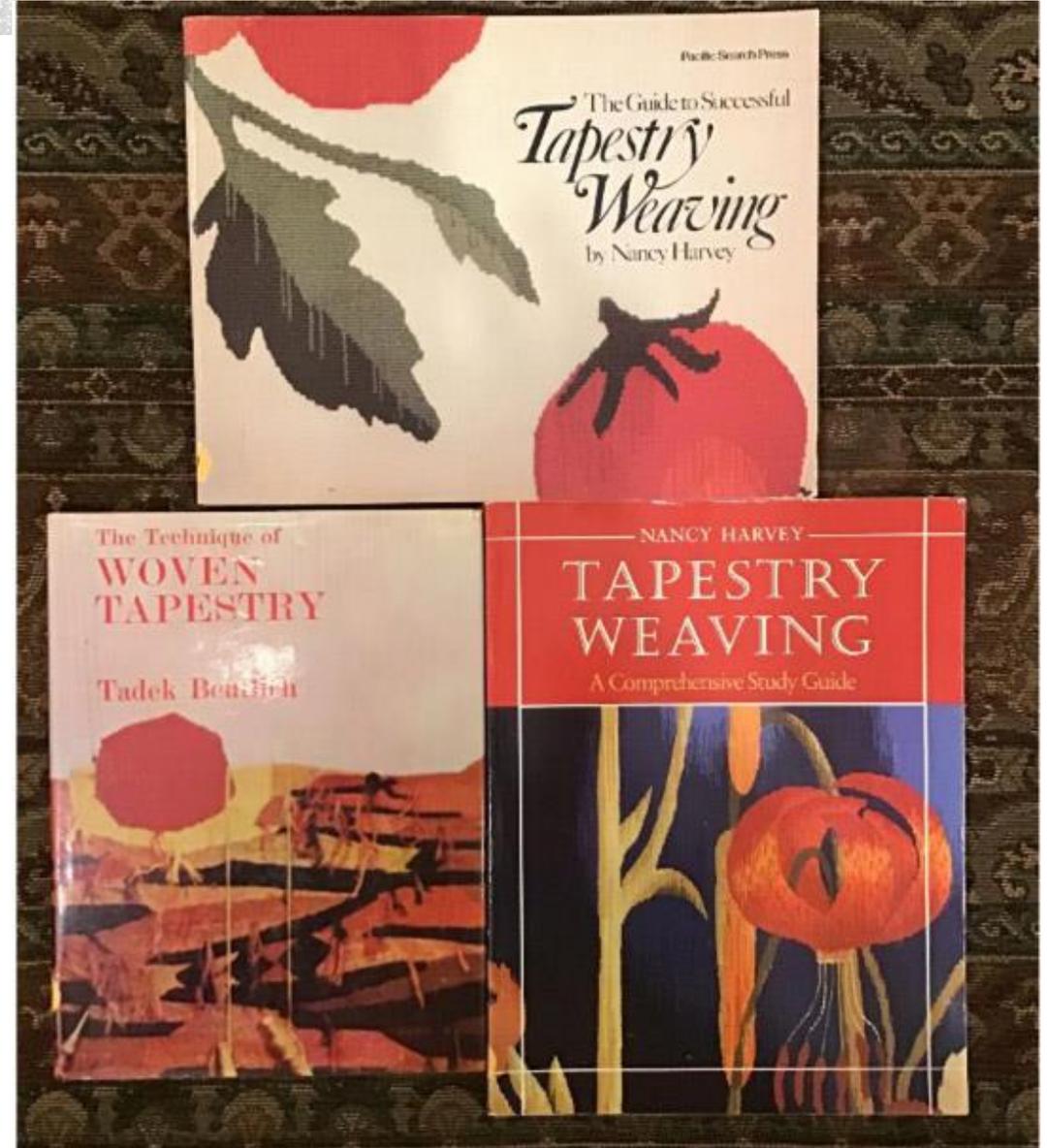
# Traditional Tapestry Resources

- Our Library:

<https://www.librarything.com/catalog/CWSGLibrary/yourlibrary>

- Video “The Art of Making a Tapestry”

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/special-topics-art-history/creating-conserving/textiles/v/making-a-tapestry>



# My Work



**Questions?**

