THANK YOU PETER COLLINGWOOD!

Anne Mieke Kooper

"Complete control over and insight into a technique often comes only after it has been repeated many times," says Peter Collingwood in the preface to his book, 'The Techniques of Rug Weaving'.

A weaver and designer myself, I like to tell my own story to emphasise how true and valuable his statement is.

Many years ago I was looking for a way to make pile rugs that would allow me to design and weave them in my own studio. The corduroy technique described in Peter Collingwood's book seemed inviting. It inspired me right from the start, stimulating ideas for research and experiments. He explains the various possibilities very well, and the diagrams are explicit and clear (fig. 1). The book has remained my source of information until today.

There are two basic types, single corduroy and double corduroy. I found the latter suited me better because it allows for a thicker pile. It also provides the best binding for playing with unusual weft yarns, such as plastic strips, paper, linen, silver threads or rags, which I combine with wool and cotton. By elongating these strands of yarn, I am able to create loops and then cut them after fixing them with a few plain, solid picks. This is how I made my first hand-woven rugs using a great variety of materials (fig. 2).

Besides working in my studio, I was employed by Koninklijke Textielfabrieken Raymakers, a textile mill famous for its velvet fabrics. There I learnt that a good quality velvet should have a closely woven, permanently embossed, non-flattening pile. This pile should be so dense that the ground weave is hidden.

This traditional approach to making velvets inspired me, I found it intriguing to research the contrast between visible, flat-woven areas and piled sections. My first step was to create rows of pile threads, some shorter and some longer, on a plain-woven ground (fig. 3). The corduroy technique proved perfect for this. Eager to find more options, my next step was to experiment with the interaction of different kinds of pile and a woven pattern in the ground cloth.

The results were fascinating and added a new 'layer' by allowing a design to be created on the warp as well as the weft. This was achieved by screen printing or tie dyeing (fig. 4). In addition, I used more colours and yarns of different sizes in the weft (figs. 5 and 6). The printed pattern thus reacted with the weft, producing interesting visual effects.

All these experiments prompted me to design and weave a small collection of upholstery and curtain fabrics. The series was shown in the "2010 Textiles and New Technology" exhibition held in London, Edinburgh and Tilburg. The Swiss company Gessner AG showed an interest in the results and produced a series of my fabrics. They executed an industrially woven range of curtain fabrics, using a screen printed warp for the ground weave, both thick and thin weft yarns, and a multi-coloured yarn (fig. 7). The collection was acquired by the Dutch Textile Museum.

With Peter Collingwood's statement in mind, I continued my 'fieldwork'. A new series came into being when I discovered a weave construction that allowed me to hide some of the weft threads used for the pile. This meant I had even better control, and was able to create areas where pile threads would pop up from the flat weave while remaining invisible in other areas. This was the effect I had been seeking for glow-in-the-dark yarns, leading me to produce 'Firefly'. In daylight, the pile is visible, tone-on-tone with the ground cloth. At night, only the pile is visible, appearing scattered on the surface (fig. 8).

Shortly afterwards I designed and produced a series of hand-woven shawls with different layers of chequered woollen plaid and silk bands, alternately visible on the front and back. Pile is used as a colour accent, but it is mostly the complex weave construction that attracts attention (fig. 9).

After so many years of experimenting with this corduroy technique in fabrics, my next project was a return to interior decoration – back to the floor. Based on a module of 60 cm in width, I designed a series entitled 'Modular Rug'. My chosen width enabled me to weave my pieces by hand on my studio loom, as I still found this the best way to experiment with materials and obtain specific variations. All the pieces in this Modular Rug series have a ribbed ground weave of wool and cotton, with a nice volume created by hidden rubber fillings that make them soft to walk on. In some of the rugs the pile pops up from this ground weave regularly, and is made of solid rubber strips (recycled bicycle inner tubes). Others have solid areas alternating with dense pile areas. By putting together modules with different textures and surfaces, I can create unique floor rugs (figs. 10 and 11).

To create a contrast to these ascetic, dark rugs, I used the modular system and the corduroy technique again to develop and weave a flowery, colourful series of borders. They can be used to put around an existing rug or for any other decorative effect (figs. 12 and 13). It was a great pleasure to make these.

Looking back on all my work makes me realise that pile weaving, in whatever material or texture, has become my 'signature'. It began the moment I first read the chapter on corduroy weaving in "The Techniques of Rug Weaving". And the book is still within easy reach...

Thank you Peter Collingwood! ■

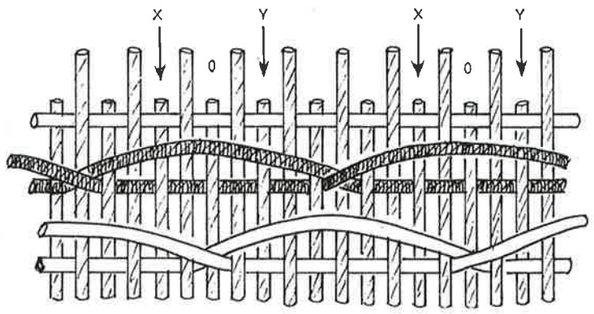
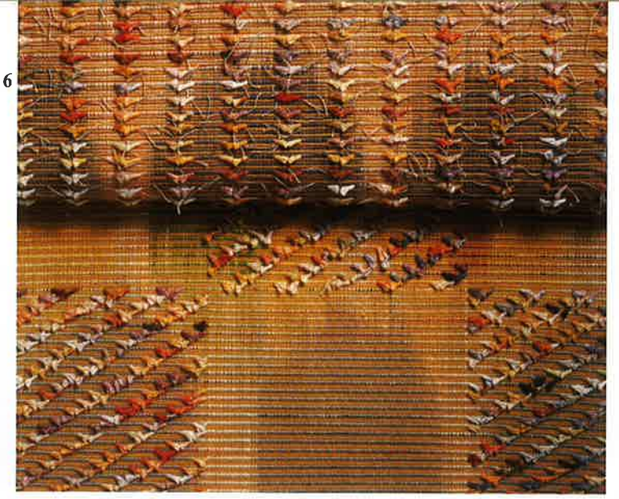


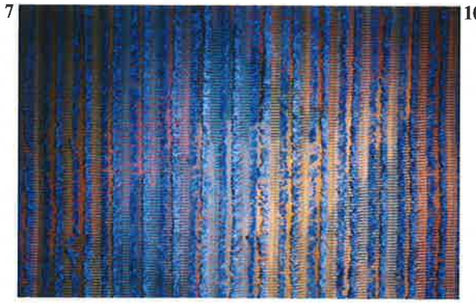
Fig. 1
Illustration no. 339 from the book The Technique of Rug Weaving:
"Double Corduroy. Showing position for pulling up loops in relation to corduroy pile picks"

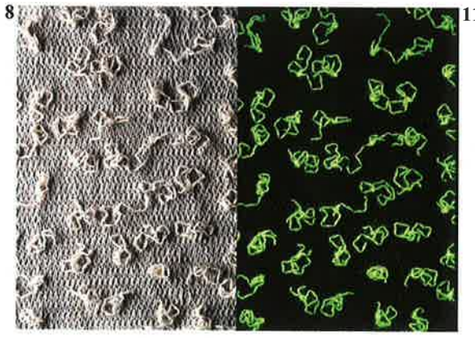
About the author
Anne Mieke Kooper is a textile designer living in Amsterdam. For many years she has been a lecturer at the Rietveld Academy and is currently working mainly free-lance.

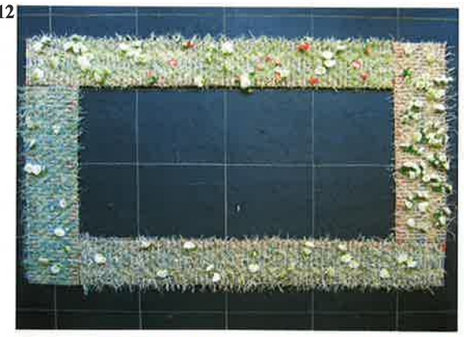


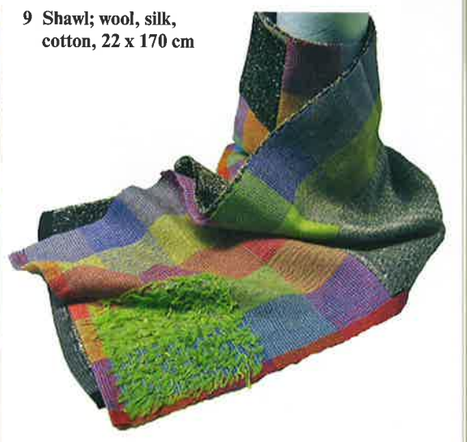
6 Corduroy and rib weave on printed warp and weft threads *Photo: Frank van Dam*

2 Double corduroy rug, 2 x (240 x90 cm)
3 Plain weave with corduroy pile picks
4 Drying of warp threads with prints
5 Corduroy and rib weave on painted warp thread *Photo: Frank van Dam*









9 Shawl; wool, silk, cotton, 22 x 170 cm

7 Interior fabric, printed warp with pile; Gessner AG
8 'Firefly', glow-in-the-dark fabric *Photo: Frank van Dam*
10 +11 Modular rug, wool and cotton with rubber piles *Photo Frank van Dam*
12 +13 'Border', mixed materials, bottom: detail