Developing a Textural Image

----- *Patricia Williams, 6/97*

I have been using pickup 1:1 unstitched lampas to weave pieces which become dimensional when they are subjected to a 30% lye bath. This dimensionality occurs because, in the areas of fabric which are double in thickness, one layer has been woven with silk (which doesn't shrink in lye) and one with cotton (which does). Printing one of the warps with an image of an organic texture guides me in making the pickups needed.

I recently needed to develop a new silkscreen for use in printing the warp for a new series of pieces. My objective was to end up with a silkscreen which, when repeatedly printed on a warp, would provide an overall textural image with smooth transitions between the repeats. The silkscreen would also need to have shapes which were large enough both to provide some ease in the pickup process and to result in woven areas large enough to develop some dimensionality when shrunk.

I started the design process by having some slides I had taken of various textures digitized onto a CD-ROM. Using Photoshop, I converted sev-eral of the images into grayscale to simplify matters, and then experimented with selecting different rectangles from them. I used the simplest repeat available in the Terrazzo plug-in to make tiles which could be the basis for my silkscreen, and then experimented in Canvas with various ways of placing those tiles in repeat.

Once I had found a few tiles which seemed usable, I experimented in Photoshop with reducing them to different numbers of values (white, grays and black), finally settling on 3 value levels as the most satisfactory. Then I used Streamline to reduce those 3 values to only 2. (I did this two-step process in order to end up with larger, simpler shapes than were obtained when I reduced the tiles to only 2 values in either Photoshop or Streamline). I then used Photoshop to resize the tiles to fit my silkscreen.

I will have the 8 x 10" version of one of the black and white texture tiles (shown below) copied onto a transparency. Using that transparency, I'll make a photo emulsion silkscreen which will print that image. Because I've gone through the process described above, I already have a sense of the possibilities for using this screen effectively on my warps, and can therefore simply begin to print with the assurance that things will work out as I wish.

tile derived from tree bark

Softward Used:
Adobe Photoshop 4, Deneba Canvas 5,
Adobe Streamline 3, Adobe Pagemaker 4