

# Colors from the Masters

## creating color palettes from paintings

TRACY KAESTNER

*It's a joy to mix yarn colors in a weaving and watch them blend as the threads interlace. It often takes an extensive yarn stash, however, to have enough different colors to use for effective blends. One way to maximize the pleasure of color blending is to paint the warp, choosing and mixing as many colors as you like. As soon as the door is open to creating absolutely any color, the problem becomes: what colors to make?*

I love flowers! Looking at their beautiful colors and shapes makes me happy. I also enjoy paintings by the great masters. What could be better than combining the two and using for color inspiration a great painting of flowers? To plan the color palette for this warp-painted scarf, I started with a photograph of Severin Roesen's *Still Life Flowers and Fruit*.

### Derive a palette from a painting

To follow this method for creating a palette, you will need a set of Color-aid papers (Color-aid Corporation, [www.coloraid.com](http://www.coloraid.com)), good natural light, and an image, such as a painting or photo. Begin by pulling out of the Color-aid pack the papers that match the colors you see in your image—the more the better. Place the colors in color families, all the blues together, greens together, etc.

Next, look at the image and ask yourself some questions. Which of the colors do you really like? What colors contribute to the feel of the image? Which work together? Then begin eliminating, leaving the ones that seem most essential.



*Tracy Kaestner of Katy, Texas, specializes in working with color. She teaches weaving and dyeing at the Lone Star Loom Room.*



PHOTOGRAPH BY TRACY KAESTNER

**Pick the Color-aid papers for colors that you find in a painting or other image.**

You want a reasonable number of colors to work with, but not too many. Although you can create an almost infinite number of colors by dyeing yarns, those that are too similar will seem the same in your piece. (If you plan to use commercially dyed yarns, you will probably be limited anyway by cost or colors available.) Take your time deciding which

color gets to stay and which to eliminate. When you think you are finished, fan out the colors you have decided to keep. Step back and squint; you may find you still need to make some changes.

In *Still Life Flowers and Fruit*, the background shows many shades of dark green. Lighter yellow-greens are used in the leaves and bright warm colors predomi-

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Olive w/ H&O couple drops of black

Rust w/ H&O

100% Br. Blue couple of

10% Scarlet 70% gold 20% Navy

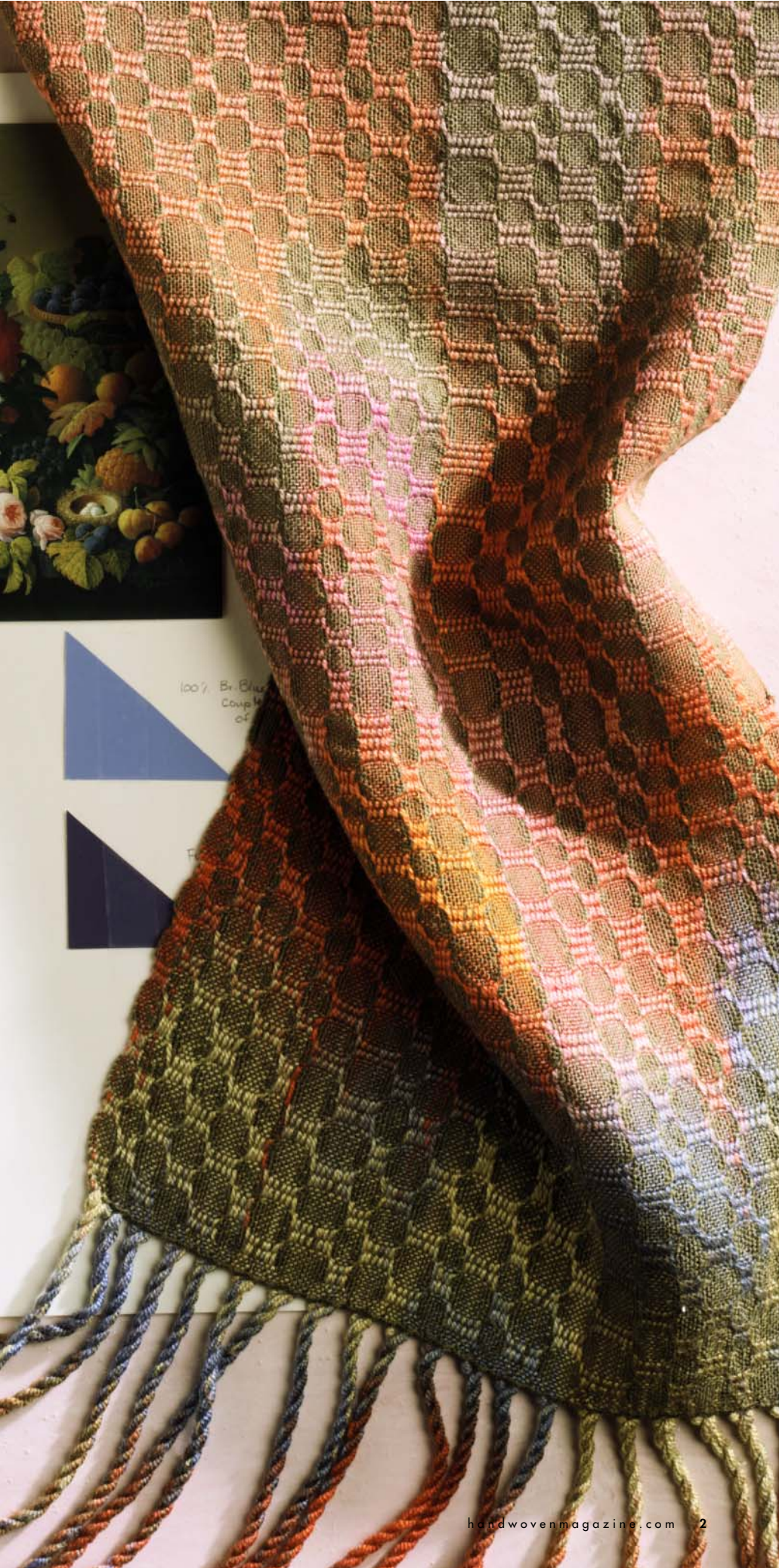
Fuchsia w/ H&O

Gold w/ H&O

100% Red

100% Gold

100% Scarlet



# STEPS FOR PAINTING THE WARP AND WEAVING THE SCARF

**Step 1** Wind the warp in five separate chains, or sections, 3 yd long each: four of 56 ends each and one of 58 ends (282 ends total; this includes 2 ends for floating selvages; you can also add a few extra ends to replace possible broken warp threads if desired). Tie the crosses of each section loosely and do not cut the end loops. (These directions are for warping back to front. For complete warping steps, see Resources at handwovenmagazine.com.) Put a piece of waterproof first-aid tape around the end loops of each section and number them (1 to 5) with a ballpoint pen.

**Step 2** Remove the warp sections from the warping board by folding them into packets about 10" long instead of chaining them off. Soak in a soda ash solution for 30 minutes following manufacturer's directions. Squeeze out the solution from each packet.

**Step 3** Prepare the dyes according to the dye formulas for your colors (or those on page 4). Be sure to follow all safety precautions and the instructions that come with the dyes. Lay out the sections of warp in numerical order on plastic wrap covering a long table or counter. Using a brush with stiff bristles, paint each of them with dye in any order that pleases you. Test the colors near the crosses (this area will be loom waste). You can paint each section differently or vary only slightly your treatment of each one. Make sure the dyes penetrate all of the threads. Roll up the sections in the plastic wrap and let sit for 48 hours.

1a. Thread by thread draft

17x																	1	2	3	4	
			4	4	4	4												3	3	4	4
							3	3	3	3											
		2	2	2	2						2	2	2	2						2	2
			1	1	1	1					1	1	1	1					1	1	

• = floating selvages

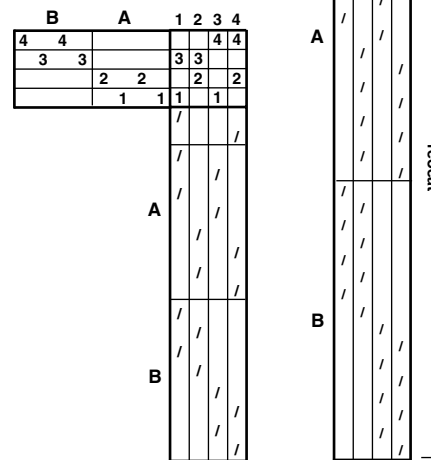
plain weave

**Step 4** Unroll the plastic wrap and loosely chain up each section to remove. Rinse in warm water and then place in a bucket filled with enough water to cover all the fiber. Stir in ½ cup vinegar and soak for 30 minutes. Remove chains, squeeze out water, and soak in warm water with a small amount of Orvus Paste for 20 to 30 minutes. Rinse thoroughly until water runs clear; hang the chains to dry.

**Step 5** Slip the end loops closest to the threading cross onto a rod in numerical order, 1 to 5. (This rod will be attached to the warp beam apron rod.) Place lease sticks in the cross and secure them for beaming. Spread the warp in a raddle, centering for 10" weaving width. Attach the rod to the apron rod and beam the warp under firm and even tension.

**Step 6** There are two blocks in turned M's and O's: Block A (1-2-1-2) and Block B (3-4-3-4); see Figure 1b. I divide the heddles evenly among the four shafts—70 heddles on each. Then I vary the sizes of the two blocks randomly as I thread. If you do this, just remember that each block must be divisible by 2 threads and Block A must always end on shaft 2 and Block B on shaft 4. Another option is to thread all of the blocks with 8 ends in each as shown in Figure 1a.

1b. M's and O's blocks



**Step 7** Allowing 8" for fringe, begin and end the scarf with 4 picks plain weave and hemstitch, including 6 ends and 2 rows in each stitch. Weave the scarf for 72". You can vary the number of picks per block or follow the treading in Figure 1a, but always end each block on treadle 4.

**Step 8** Remove the scarf from the loom and prepare a twisted fringe with two groups of 6 ends in each fringe. Machine wash, delicate, in warm water with Synthrapol. Machine dry, warm, until slightly damp. Iron dry, and then beat on the edge of a table to revive drape and luster. Trim fringe.

## PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

### Weave structure for scarf

Turned M's and O's.

### Equipment

4-shaft loom, 11" weaving width; 12-dent reed; raddle; 1 shuttle.

### Yarns

Warp: 20/2 spun silk (5,000 yd/lb), natural 846 yd (2¾ oz).

Weft: 20/2 spun silk (5,000 yd/lb), Deep Olive, 620 yd (2 oz).

### Yarn sources

Natural 20/2 spun silk is available from

Treenway Silks, Deep Olive from Webs.

### Dyes and dye supplies

Sabracron F dyes (available in 2 oz packages): Golden Yellow F14, Flame Scarlet F31, True Red F33, Brilliant Blue F42, Deep Navy F47, Rich Black F16, Fuchsia F35, Rust F 51, and Olive F 75; dye supplies required by manufacturer's directions including, vinegar, soda ash, Synthrapol, stencil brushes, plastic containers, plastic wrap.

### Dye and dye supply sources

Dyes and dye supplies are available from PRO Chemical & Dye.

### Warp order and length

282 ends 3 yd long (allows 6" for take up and 30" for loom waste; loom waste includes fringe).

### Warp and weft spacing

Warp: 28 epi (2-2-3 in a 12 dent reed).

Width in the reed: 10½".

Weft: 28 ppi. Woven length (measured under tension on the loom): 72".

### Finished dimensions

After washing, amounts produce one scarf 8½" × 64" plus 5" fringe at each end.

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nate in the flowers. A sense of light is provided in the painting by the white and pale-colored flowers. I chose to use all of these colors in the scarf except white.

### Translate the colors to dye formulas

The next step is to snip off a piece of each corresponding Color-aid paper and tape it onto a sheet of paper with the original inspiration. You are now ready to derive the dye formulas for your chosen colors.

A booklet that comes with the Color-aid papers explains how to read the codes written on the back of each color to determine hue, saturation, and tint or shade. By studying the codes and locating the colors on a color wheel, you can estimate the percentages of dye colors and the amount of black, white (water), or the color's complement to use for each one.

### General warp painting tips

When you are painting a warp, wind warp chains with a small number of ends so that the dyes can penetrate thoroughly. A rule of thumb is to wind chains for a warp width of 2" or less. Add a few extra threads for floating selvages and to use in case of broken warp threads. To keep the chains in order, number them with a ballpoint pen on waterproof first-aid tape.

Sabracon F dyes are fiber reactive dyes suitable for both cellulose and protein fibers. Colors are mixed from 2% stock solutions: 2 grams of dye per 100 milliliters of distilled water (except for black, which needs to be a 4% solution). I mix a one liter stock solution of each color at a time and store the solutions in a cool, dark cabinet. They can be used for up to three months.

The dyes come in powder form. To make stock solutions, use an accurate scale and measure the powder into a cupcake paper (discard later). Always wear a mask and gloves when working with dyes; dye powder is toxic. Add a small amount of hot distilled water to the powder; stir into a paste. Add the remaining distilled water; stir until well mixed.

The silk yarn for this scarf should be mordanted in soda ash before dyeing. Dilute soda ash with boiling water and pour it into a bucket with enough water (130 degrees) to cover the yarn you will be dye-

## DYE FORMULAS FOR WARP-PAINTED SCARF

Color	Color-aid code	Sabracon F dye formula
Bright Yellow	Y-T1	100% Gold, diluted with 25% water
Peach	R-P1-2	100% Rust, diluted with 50% water
Pink	R-P2-2	100% Fuchsia, diluted with 25% water
Bright Red	Rw-T1	100% Red
Light Olive	YGw-P2-2	100% Olive, diluted with 50% water + 3 drops black per 100 ml dye
Dark Olive	YGw-S3	10% Scarlet, 70% Gold, 20% Navy
Bright Blue	B-P2-2	100% Brilliant Blue + 4 drops black per 100 ml dye
Blue-Violet	V-P2-1	25% Fuchsia, 75% Navy

ing. Remember that everything you use for dyeing should be dye-dedicated forever (gloves, apron, pots, spoons, scale, etc.).

The following Sabracon F dye colors are used in the project scarf: Olive, Scarlet, Navy, Gold, Rust, Fuchsia, Red, Brilliant Blue, and Black; see Dye Formulas. With these (and the addition of Sun Yellow), you can actually mix almost any color. To test colors and change mixes, practice on portions of the warp that will become loom waste. Always keep a record of the formulas you use at each dye session so you can mix the same colors again.


### Other design considerations

Remember that just because a painting inspired you, doesn't mean you have to stick to the colors and proportions you find in it. If you really like one color, use lots of it! If you discover interesting combinations along the way that aren't in the painting, use them. It's your piece!

You can use commercially dyed yarns instead of painting or dyeing. For this

scarf, I painted the warp but used a commercially dyed Deep Olive silk as weft. Since the deep green color is a unifying element in the painting, I thought it would have the same effect in the scarf.

### Choosing a weave structure

When you take the time and make the effort to paint a warp, you want the warp to show in your final piece. M's and O's is a weave structure that contrasts areas of plain weave with areas of weft floats. Turned M's and O's "turns" weft floats into warp floats, making it an ideal choice for a warp-painted scarf. 

### Resources

- Kaestner, Tracy. "A Sunset to Dye For: A Shawl in Fabric Forecast's Island Sunset Palette." *Handwoven*, November/December 2004, pp. 78–80.
- . "Paint a Rainbow." *Handwoven*, March/April 2000, pp. 58–61.
- Saulson, Sarah. "A First Warp Painting Project." *Handwoven*, November/December 1999, pp. 48–52.

## DYE SAFETY CHECKLIST

- ✓ Never mix dyes in the kitchen; use equipment for dyeing only.
- ✓ Wear old clothes and apron or smock.
- ✓ Work outside if possible.
- ✓ Carefully follow all instructions that come with dyes and chemicals.
- ✓ Wear gloves and a dust mask
- or a respirator when you mix powdered chemicals and dyes.
- ✓ Wipe up spills immediately with a damp paper towel.
- ✓ Do not eat or drink while you are working with dyes.
- ✓ Use nonreactive plastic cups, buckets, spoons, and stainless steel or enamel pots.