

Color for Tapestry

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Color can be the most exciting feature of a tapestry. It can be what draws a viewer's attention and what either attracts or revolts someone. The depth of color that can be achieved in densely packed layers of yarn in a tapestry is dramatic.

My thoughts about color are usually in my mind right at the beginning of a new piece. I like to pull out yarns and pile them together to see what works. Often, further along in the design process, I will wrap yarns around a yardstick or strip of foam core to see how a number of colors appear in rows or, perhaps, in inch widths. This is early on. A successful tapestry probably won't have equal amounts of the colors. Some should be dominant with others playing subordinate roles.



Sneezing Lady III, 22" x 16"

In reviewing my notes and records about tapestry, I think I can trace many of my color choices and use of borders to my discovery of Turkish kilims in the early 90's. I liked the colors and simple geometric designs woven in the covered warp tapestry technique. I discovered a book, [The Tribal Eye](#) by Peter Davies, in a bookstore and brought it home. From that I learned about the 1989 publication of [The Goddess of Anatolia](#) which blew me away with its theory that the kilim designs from Anatolia, or Turkey, go back to early Neolithic times when god was a woman! I procured the book from the U of MI through inter library loan. It gave me access to designs obtained from anthropological digs uncovered from ancient walls.

The old kilims pictured in books often have rows of crenelated designs, chevrons, stylized flowers and even birds. I wove them in conjunction with the elebelinda or goddess figures against modern appliances and with cartoon figures. I played with the borders on graph paper and still use graph paper to plan out my borders especially if an image is repeat.

I have kept notes on the planning and weaving processes from my earliest pieces, recording the sett and yarns and ideas. I have a small, loose-leaf notebook that I have used since 1997. Bear with me as I look through for writings that deal with color choices.

1/23/04 "Want to use lots of yellow and yellow-green. Can make stem of curving grass if use white background down below leaves. Will use paler colors at top in back and dark green in front. Not much depth here." Notes for *Hooray!*, a grass allergy tapestry.

4/19/04 "Black and White is successful. Geometrics make this more contemporary." Notes for *Woman Sneezing III*.

9/29/07 "Design very successful. I like the creepiness of exoskeleton images in bottom border. Transparency works. Dark gray water good against black in borders." Notes for first dragonfly tapestry, *Metamorphosis*.



Hooray, 23" x 20"

5/29/08 "Two weeks designing 4 Dragonfly designs. Emerald Spreadwing, Water border @bottom -black/blue, red leaves add punch. Clouds or stylized flowers at top? or both?"

7/12/08 "close blends seem best. Too much contrast (color mix on the bobbin) makes a spotty surface. Use the light bright greens at the front of piece but dull them going back. Mix the bright green with other greens or with grays." Notes for *Pondwater Puzzle*

9/17/08 " Pitcher Plants in Wilderness Park on Lake MI – Comparison of Dragonfly & Pitcher Plant. Killers Fierce, Carnivores – The Predators – pale yellow or black background, Very delicate – Lethal – White border looks like a photo. Thinking of negative space around pitcher plants."

11/29/08 "Curving lines of darker gray on lite gray are subtle & nice, (single strand outlining)"

1/30/09 "Colors are good after many false starts. 3" bug border, lt. gray 203, white bugs. gray 203, 202, 200, paternayan. Detail lines on bugs mostly 200 and 202 mix. 2" wing design border – lines with single strand black cotton 5/2."

12/16/09 "10" woven- Dark greens to portray night & moth is light green. Using mix of 4 greens for dark. Listening to PBS radio show about "Dark Green Religion – Nature based spirituality. All life related – DNA."

6/10/11 “Interesting how something can look good in outline form – delicate lines on white paper. When colored in, shapes and form take over. But then color can change it all again. Luna moth on acanthus leaves doesn’t say much. Luna & caterpillars can be about the circle of life – beginning – ending.”

8/11 “Good idea. Make a swatch card: punch holes on index card. Combine yarns to match color pencil squares.”