

NOTES FROM THE JUDGE'S PERSPECTIVE

NEVADA COUNTY FAIR 2016

Sharlet Elms

1. Details matter! Take the time to ensure your fringe is cut even. Uneven or slap dash fringe says that you didn't care about finishing your work properly. After all the time you have spent weaving and producing a beautiful fabric why would you not take the time to finish your work properly? Check that your knots are tied evenly and that your twisted fringe or braids are an equal amount of tension in them, if not REDO!
2. Check for weaving errors. If you weave alone and don't have someone to help, there are a couple of ways to review your work. Hang the fabric in front of a window or sliding glass door and view the light thru it. Another way is to take a picture of it and look at the photograph you will see things you didn't when looking directly at the fabric. Of course the time honored way is to have a weaving friend come and look at it. Review our work also for weft ends that did not get trimmed.
3. When weaving chenille, hemstitching is not enough to stabilize your ends; i.e. twist fringe. Be sure to put in a row or two of stitching, ideally a small zig zag stitch. It will disappear when you wash the fabric. Do not leave chenille fringe untreated/loose. Within a few washings you will have only string (the core) left.
4. Think about the warp ends and how you will deal with them. Will you hem the ends, hemstitch, let fringe hang, twist the fringe etc? If you plan to hem then consider whether you should reduce the size of your weft yarn to make a more pleasing turn and if you plan to enter the project in competition, HAND STITCH the hem. Machine stitching almost always results in the hem being uneven unless you use care and a walking foot on your sewing machine. If you plan to just let the fringe hang, is the yarn in the warp suitable for that kind of wear?
5. Think about the relationship between the color of yarn(s) chosen and the structure you are weaving. When you use a variegated yarn you have a very busy color palette and paring it with a wonderfully detailed weave structure will result in the weave structure being lost or not really visible. It generally works best to have one WOW factor, either the color palette i.e. spectacular hand dyed yarn or a detailed weave structure, NOT both! Variegated yarns are usually shown to their best advantage with simpler weave structures

such as plain weave. There are always exceptions to the rule but be sure you think about it and plan for it to achieve the best results.

6. Think about the final use of your fabric and how the structure or color palette will be displayed. If you have chosen a structure with a large repeat and you plan to make a vest, the structure will most likely not be seen in the final project. The same goes for color repeats which can be poorly represented in the final garment if they are not carefully thought out. Stripes can be the most difficult, after all how many people want stripes wandering around the body?
7. Plan for selvages. What do I mean? If you plan to use your fabric for sewing and the fabric will be cut up then selvages do not matter. However, if you are planning a shawl, scarf, cowl, etc. where the selvages will be on display then selvages do matter. Consider your weave structure and if your selvedge thread won't be caught each time then consider using a floating selvedge thread or two to produce a nice edge. Floating selvages can help with a multitude of problems so have them in your weaving arsenal.
8. Whether or not you are using a floating selvedge consider how the weft turn will look against the edge. Imagine for example that you have quiet colors for your warp and you use a bright weft you will notice EVERY weft turn on the edge, You might want to add a few threads on each side in the same color as the weft so as to hide the weft turns. If you use only a few ends, say 2 to 5 depending on the grist of the warp, you will likely not notice the color stripe.
9. Fishing line is our friend! Fishing line acts as a placeholder, which can be pulled out after you finish weaving. If you are having trouble with pulling your edges too tight, consider trying fishing line from the back beam to the breast beam tightly passing thru the reed at the edge of your fabric and pull against that each throw. IF you plan to hem your ends you can often get a better turn by placing a throw or two of fishing line in place of your weft yarn. Then you pull them out when you are ready to hem leaving an even line for the turn with less bulk! You can use fishing line as your floating selvedge and remove it after weaving. It has many uses!
10. Measure your picks per inch (ppi) frequently, for instance every time you advance! Your beat changes with your mood (ask me how I know!) and rarely do any of us sit down and weave an entire piece of cloth in one sitting. You should check that your beat is consistent each time you advance your warp. I keep a small ruler tied right to my beam and before I advance my cloth I check that my ppi is within 1 of my desired ppi. If it is not, then I have only a short distance to unweave, I know I said unweave!
11. Cloth should be properly finished for competition so that means washed! I know of no fabric that doesn't get washed at least once in its lifetime so it should be washed before submission. Washing completes your cloth by

allowing your fibers to bloom, your structure to settle into its final place and allows the yarn ends to find their place in the cloth. It can reveal problems with the cloth such as if you have an uneven beat or have reed tracks it will likely show up here.

12. Final thought: your cloth is the expression of your art form. Treat it as such. Take care in all of the details. Think thru each process and take pride in all of the steps. Your fabric in the end is the representation of your art.