

Bag of the Month

May: small shoulder bag with paper-yarn weft

VIRGINIA REISNER

In the Habu Textiles booth at Convergence in 2002, I found not only the usual wool, silk, and cotton yarns, but also yarns made of unusual materials like stainless steel and plant fibers like bamboo, hemp, and nettles. One yarn that looked like a thin strip of paper really piqued my interest. How, I wondered, would this yarn work in a woven cloth?

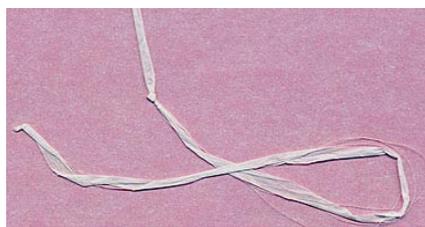
Habu Textile's online catalog describes this yarn as "very unique." A linen paper core is wrapped with a few strands of almost invisible raw silk to give it strength. The yarn dyes beautifully, with the raw silk taking the dye slightly differently from the linen paper (Habu also offers a version dyed in indigo). The yarn is strong enough to be used as a warp for weaving and is advertised as completely washable.

In spite of this assurance, I decided to use the paper yarn as the weft and another yarn as the warp in a project that would not need to be washed. To me, the paper looked as if it would dissolve if it got wet! Although I used a variegated rayon that is no longer available as the warp in the herringbone-twill fabric for this bag, other yarns of similar thickness would work as well.

After removing the fabric from the loom, I cut off the sample and washed it by hand. To my surprise, the yarn held together beautifully—the washed sample looked exactly like the unwashed fabric. There was no shrinkage in length and only about 1/16" shrinkage in width. What an amazing yarn!



Virginia Reisner of Elmhurst, Illinois, has been a weaver for twenty-five years. She teaches weaving at a local living history museum.

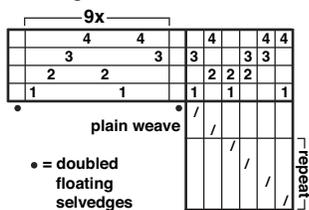


The "paper" in this yarn is made of pure linen. The yarn is created the way paper is made rather than being spun and plied the way most yarns are constructed. To provide strength, nearly invisible strands of silk are wrapped around the flat strip of linen. This yarn is washable and takes dyes well.



STEPS FOR WEAVING AND SEWING THE SHOULDER BAGS

1. Draft for bag fabric



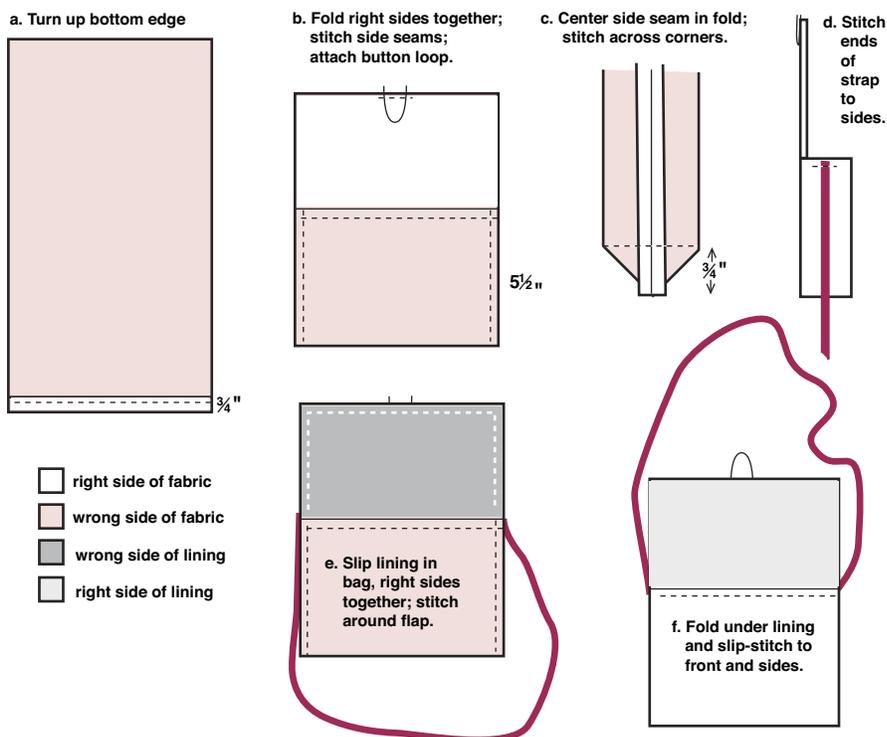
Step 1 Wind a warp of 110 doubled ends variegated Tencel (includes 2 doubled ends for floating selvages) 2 yd long. (You can also substitute single ends of 5/2 pearl cotton or other yarn of similar thickness.) Use your preferred method to warp the loom following Figure 1 and the directions in the Project at-a-Glance.

Step 2 Spread the warp with scrap yarn in plain weave. Wind a bobbin with the silk-wrapped paper yarn to use as the weft. Weave following the treadling in Figure 1 for at least 17" for the fabric for one bag (enough warp is allowed for two bags; add 1/2 yd warp length for each additional bag).

Step 3 Remove the fabric from loom. Cut into two 16" pieces for two bags and secure ends by serging or machine stitching. Steam-press the finished pieces lightly.

Step 4 To assemble and sew each bag: Cut a piece of lightweight fusible interfacing the same size as the bag fabric (8 1/2" x 16") and fuse to one side of the bag fabric. This will add stability and durability to the bag. Turn the bottom edge up 3/8" and stitch (a).

2. Steps for assembling and sewing the bags



Step 5 Fold up the bottom section 5 1/2" right sides together and stitch side seams with a 3/8" seam allowance (b). Cut a 2" piece of rolled elastic and form into a loop. (The loop should be big enough to slip over the button closure with just a little stretching.) Center the loop on right side of the top flap and pin or baste in place. Press seams open.

Step 6 Fold so that each side seam is centered at the bottom and stitch a 3/4" box corner across each point (c). Attach a shoulder strap or handle to the

sides of the purse on the right side of the fabric and pin or baste in place (d). I used a 36" 8-strand beaded kumihimo strap; a twisted cord or narrow band will also work.

Step 7 Cut a piece of lining fabric the same size as the purse and sew as for purse. With right sides together, slip lining inside purse. Stitch around top flap (e). Turn right side out. Fold under raw edge of lining and slip-stitch to front and side edges (f). Add decorative button for closure.

PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

Weave structure for bag fabric

Herringbone twill.

Equipment

4-shaft loom, 10" weaving width; 12-dent reed; 1 shuttle.

Yarns

Warp: 8/2 Tencel (3,360 yd/lb) used doubled, variegated Iris, Wild Grape, or Painted Desert, 440 yd (2 1/2 oz).

Weft: raw-silk-wrapped linen paper (4,992 yd/lb), 175 yd (1/5 oz).

Yarn sources

8/2 variegated Tencel is available from Webs, N-24 raw-silk-wrapped linen paper from Habu Textiles in 3 oz skeins.

Notions and other materials

For two bags: 1/2 yd lightweight fusible interfacing, 1/2 yd lining fabric, 4" rolled elastic for button loops, 2 decorative buttons, matching sewing thread—available from fabric stores.

Warp order and length

110 doubled ends (includes 2 doubled

floating selvages) 2 yd long (allows 4" for take-up and 34" for loom waste).

Warp and weft spacing

Warp: 12 doubled ends per inch (1 doubled end/dent in a 12-dent reed).

Width in the reed: 9 1/8".

Weft: 18 ppi. Woven length (measured under tension on the loom): 17" for each bag.

Finished dimensions

After assembling and sewing, amounts produce two bags 7 3/4" x 6 1/2" each.