

Skullery Towels

MARGERY ERICKSON

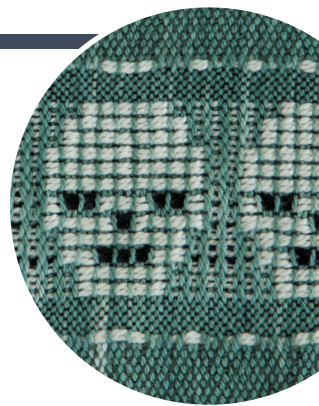


Photos by Matt Graves

HANDWOVEN

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STRUCTURE

Plain weave with summer and winter.

EQUIPMENT

8-shaft loom, 21" weaving width; 10-dent reed; 3 shuttles; 4 bobbins.

YARNS

Warp: 8/2 cotton (3,360 yd/lb; Valley Yarns; WEBS), #8176 Natural, hand-dyed, 1,117 yd. **Note:** The warp for the towel shown was dyed using Dharma Fiber Reactive Dye #31 Dark Green. If you prefer to use a commercially dyed solid warp, Margery suggests choosing darker shades of the Valley Yarns 8/2 cotton, such as #2625 Ink Blue, #5949 Black Forest, or #6995 Purple.

Weft: Plain weave: 8/2 cotton, #8540 Shale, 584 yd.

Pattern: 5/2 pearl cotton (2,100 yd/lb; Valley Yarns; WEBS), #8001 White, 70 yd; #8990 Black, 16 yd.

Tabby: 10/2 pearl cotton (4,200 yd/lb; Valley Yarns; WEBS), #8990 Black, 92 yd. **Note:** Margery used 10/2 unmercerized cotton from her stash when she wove these towels, but she suggests the Valley Yarns 10/2 pearl cotton listed here as a good substitute.

WARP LENGTH

406 ends 2¾ yd long (includes floating selvages; allows 7" for take-up, 26" for loom waste).

SETTS

Warp: 20 epi (2/dent in a 10-dent reed).

Weft: 18 ppi in the plain-weave areas; about 20 ppi in the border motifs.

DIMENSIONS

Width in the reed: 20¼".

Woven length: (measured under tension on the loom) 66".

Finished size: (after wet-finishing and hemming) two towels, 18" × 27" each.

*For several years, I have been designing and weaving various motifs inspired by a sheep pattern from a past issue of *Handwoven*. After seeing my woven pumpkins, candles, rabbits, and jack-o'-lanterns, a friend asked if I could weave skulls as well—they are a favorite of her daughter. Considering that skulls can be found on everything from T-shirts and jewelry to tattoos, jackets, and socks, she's not the only one who likes them. Fortunately, one of my looms just happened to be warped with the right threading, and I started designing skulls and weaving samples.*

I also like to combine my love of weaving figures with my love of hand-dyeing yarns. I delight in playing with dyes and watching how the colors evolve. These towels were samples woven using one of my hand-dyed warps—you can see the color shading and variation in the finished towels.

Use this pattern to weave some skulls of your own!

1 Wind a warp of 404 ends 2¾ yd long. Wind 2 additional ends to be used as floating selvages and set them aside. Warp the loom using your preferred method, following the draft in Figure 1. Centering for a weaving width of 20¼", sley 2 per dent in a 10-dent reed. Sley the floating selvages through empty dents on each side of the warp and weight them over the back beam.

Weaving Notes

- Using the two 5/2 yarns to make the skull features (eyes, nose, mouth) before adding the tabby may take a little time to wrap your brain around. Once Margery was able to understand this concept, it opened her mind to more pattern ideas.
- Margery's hand-dyed warps are never one solid color—she prefers to have some variation and uniqueness in the finished fabric.

Note that the plain-weave (tabby) treadles are 5 and 6 for ease of treadling using both feet.

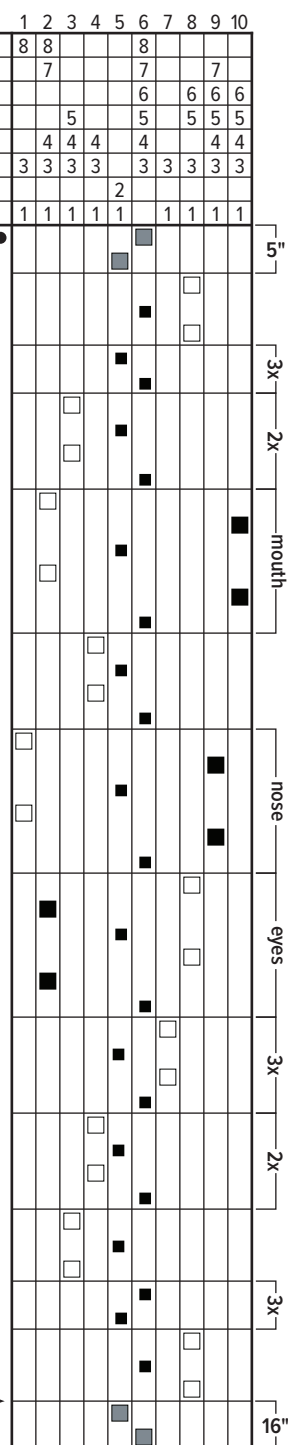
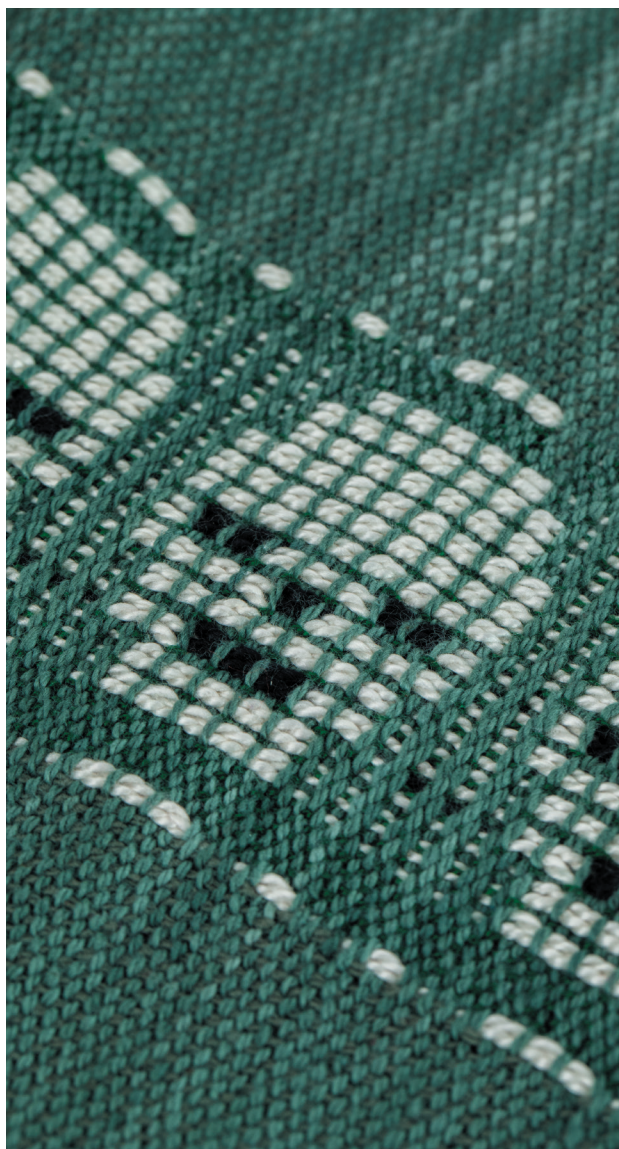
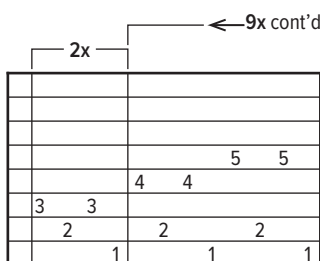
2 Wind bobbins with each of the weft yarns. Spread the warp with scrap yarn.

3 Weave 5" of plain weave for a hem and border using Shale 8/2 cotton. Tuck in the

Shaft 8	18
Shaft 7	36
Shaft 6	36
Shaft 5	36
Shaft 4	36
Shaft 3	40
Shaft 2	101
Shaft 1	101
Total	404

9x										2x	
8 8											
7 7 7 7											
6 6 6 6											
5 5											
4 4											
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1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1											

- floating selvedge
- Shale 8/2 cotton
- Shale or Black 10/2 cotton
- White 5/2 cotton
- Black 5/2 cotton



For second border and hem,
start here and work towards the top. →




weft tail and then start the pattern section with 2 picks of White 5/2 cotton separated by a tabby pick of 10/2 cotton and then 6 more picks of plain weave using the 10/2 cotton before starting the skull motif. Follow the skull pattern as shown in the draft. Note that when you weave the skull's mouth, nose, and eyes, the tabby pick comes in after both the White and Black pattern picks. When you have finished the skull, weave 6 more picks using the 10/2 cotton, then 2 picks of White 5/2 cotton separated by a tabby pick of 10/2 cotton.

4 Change to Shale 8/2 cotton and plain weave for about 16" for the center of the towel.

5 Starting where indicated on the draft, reverse the skull treadling and then complete the towel with 5" of plain weave using the Shale 8/2 cotton. Add 2 picks of scrap yarn and weave the second towel as you did the first.

6 When you have finished the second towel, weave several picks of scrap yarn to protect the weft. Cut the fabric from the loom.

7 Secure the raw edges with machine stitching. Wet-finish by machine washing and drying. Turn the hems under ½" and press. Turn under another ½", press again, and hem by hand or machine. 

RESOURCES

You'll find Georgean Curran's "Warp-Faced Sheep" pattern, which inspired Margery's motifs, on p. 93 of *Handwoven*, March/April 1990.

MARGERY ERICKSON is a longtime weaver, designer, teacher, and proprietor of *Opalescence Fiber Studio*.