



ONDULÉ TEXTILES: WEAVING CONTOURS WITH A FAN REED by Norma Smayda with Gretchen White
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The immediate appeal of *Ondulé Textiles* is in its collection of stunning photographs. Curvy blocks, wavy landscapes, and sinuous lines draw the reader beyond the grid of warp and weft and into a new world of weaving possibilities. But the photos are only one aspect of the book's allure. A wealth of information quickly unfolds as Norma Smayda chronicles her ongoing exploration of weaving with fan reeds. First inspired by a class taught by Sara von Tresckow at Convergence® in 2010, she promptly purchased a fan reed and began an in-depth study of its potential.

Ondulé, from the French for undulating or wavy, can be produced in warp or weft. Smayda's well-researched introduction traces the history of ondulé reeds from industrial looms of the early 1800s to contemporary handweavers. She traces Peter Collingwood's and Theo Moorman's innovative contributions, along with Japanese techniques from the mid-1900s. John Marshall's photographs from his collection of Japanese textiles make a particularly engaging chapter.

Profiles of five contemporary weavers show not only the artists' creativity in design, but their inventiveness in adapting to the variables of different looms, reeds, and mechanisms for manipulating the reeds. Their individual approaches to loom modifications suggest possible solutions for fan reed novices in altering their own looms. Their textiles are diverse and inspirational.

The second half of the book focuses on Smayda's personal evolution of weaving with fan reeds. From reed specifications to "hints and helps," the information is invaluable, especially for the weaver who is considering the purchase of a fan reed. Twenty-one drafts are presented in chronological order, so that the reader witnesses the author's creative process and methods of sampling as she explores each design. Although technical details are given for each of the projects, this is not a recipe book. Instead, it is an account of a master weaver's journey of discovery. Most of the warps were woven as a series of pieces, and much can be learned by studying the effects of altering weave structure, treadling, weft materials, and reed manipulation. We see the effect on color intensity in densely sett areas, the precise placement of a stripe, the use of a hybrid reed to intersperse plain and curved areas. Smayda's careful consideration of each element gives an exemplary lesson in experimentation. Weavers at all levels will find it both instructive and delightful to follow along as she asks, "What if...?"

*Reviewed by Deborah Irmiter
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