

from top left / Checked cloth inspired by a fragment from the Herjolfsnes Excavations, face and reverse.

Wrapping cloth with different stripes in the warp and weft.

centre / Checked part wool cloth, commission for Skansen in Stockholm.

centre right / Variation with green weft.

below from the left / Östgötadräll in two different designs, woven to be skirts.

# HISTORIC CHECKS

Elin Kindberg trained as a weaver at Sätergläntan. The inspiration for her woven checks is drawn from mediaeval sources, Rococo revival and folk culture.

– YES IT IS NEARLY always checks. Historic textiles and folk style never fail to catch my eye: wrapping cloths, shawls, garment fabric. So for me, check patterning has a truly familiar feel.

Elin began her weaving career by training at Sätergläntan in Dalarna. Folk textiles are integral to the school. That was what attracted her, and although she had never woven before she came to the school and sat at a loom, she felt like she had come home. Weaving was just perfect for her, where it was at.

The first two years were spent immersing herself in the technique, after which she was able to “drop” the book, being more sure of the various set-ups. She could think her own ideas in weave, independently.

For the first year project she focused on a little 3-shaft twill fragment from a 14th century find, part of the Herjolfsnes Excavations in Greenland. A checked woollen cloth lay rolled out on the table: most of the cloth had been sold, one piece for a cape and another made up as a conical cap. Two modern mediaevalists had become the happy owners of material that added yet more authenticity to their handwork.

While the brown yarn was industrially dyed, she had dyed the red herself with madder. Finishing had been carried out at a fulling mill with stocks, located in Dala-Floda.

In her second year, she designed, set the colour scheme and wove a large all-wool shawl. Making use of a computer and weave programme in the process. She finds that an effective way of creating different combinations, and using the fabric display function, you can see how the

colours work together when they meet in the cloth. The shawl is big, soft and cosy-protective – a real survival textile.

The fine, small-checked wrapping cloth, woven in cotton, expresses quite a different form language, but just like the shawl, is deeply rooted in tradition and history. These are tested qualities, cleverly worked out and developed with experience.

The wrapping cloth has a more elaborate stripe sequence in the warp than in the weft, which means that it is faster to weave than if weft shades had to be changed as often as for the warp.

Smart thinking of the past is as smart today. And it gives a beautiful, living quality to the patterning.

Here too, the computer was used to play with colour, with the verticals and horizontals of the checks.

OTHERWISE, cloth by the metre is for her one of the best things around.

– Being able to create the cloth you want is such a wonderful feeling. For example, there is no other alternative than weaving the cloth yourself to make a good Rococo revival style dress, which requires around 10 metres. There just aren't any machine woven cloths in the whole wide world on a level with a hand-woven part wool/part cotton cloth.

The weaving width she sets up is between 75 and 90 cm, often referred to as half width.

– I prefer weaving double the length than double the width, for sure. If you then plan the weave carefully, based on the pattern for which the cloth is needed, you don't need to make it double the length either.

– And a part wool/part cotton cloth is really my thing. Cotton warp and wool weft. There is nothing around today that corresponds in terms of durability, feel and drape. I really like that rough, slightly prickly feel.

Plus it is great to weave.

HER FIRST MAJOR commissioned project was for 16 metres of checked part wool cloth for the Skansen costume store in Stockholm. She wove it in her third year on the course, during which she had to complete a commissioned weave as preparation for professional working life. This fabric was to be made up as a Rococo revival dress and used by people working at Skansen (an open-air museum). The weft, a garment yarn in 11/1 wool, was dyed with acid dyes; the 30/2 cotton was dyed with reactive dyes. The dyed cotton turned a little patchy, partly from the ties and partly from being bunched up in a skein. Washing and re-dyeing improved it, but it remained slightly uneven. With its little, lighter streaks, though, it looked like the older cloth, in its somewhat worn state.

– Occasionally, what you think went wrong is the very thing that makes it really good.

She wove this cloth with an old type of reed made with real reeds. Not as precise as metal reeds, but more accommodating when weaving. The little differences in the sett enliven the cloth. Elin does not use a stretcher when weaving a part wool cloth, as the weaving width holds well with the coarser wool yarn. She discovered that fine cotton yarn is preferable to thicker 16/2 in the warp. Even when she beats in stronger woollen yarn. ➤

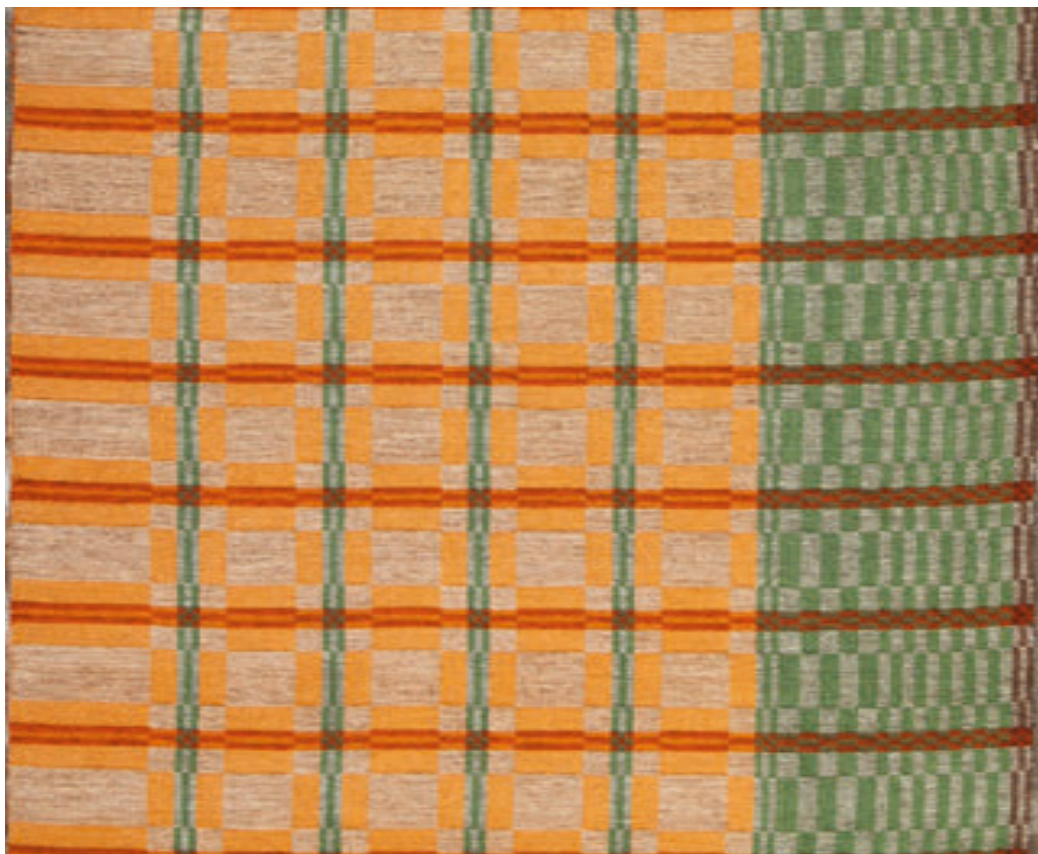


PHOTO: MONICA HALLEN



The cloth for Skansen has brown and blue checks in it. Those yarns, when dyed, looked pretty saturated with colour and came over as a bit strong. Yet woven into the brown warp, they looked just as toned down as in the original.

The doubled white stripes in the warp and weft endow the cloth with character. Where they meet, a tiny little check forms.

– Just think how dull it would have been with one wide white stripe making the check. This is yet another example of how skilled they were at creating checks that enlivened a textile.

Green, instead of blue, weft was used for weaving a length for herself, resulting in a completely different expression.

In weaving the checks a similar and an appropriate length, she is generally confident enough to rely on eye measurement. The checks have to be a little longer than they are wide, partly because they draw in once the weave is cut off and partly because the cloth shrinks more lengthways with the finishing treatment. In this case, the cloth was steam pressed after cutting off.

When she visited Skansen, she was introduced by Erik Thorell, then in charge of the costume store, as the person who had woven the checked wool and cotton cloth.

– It's an amazing feeling to have done

something, which is actually now at Skansen!

FOR HER FINAL PROJECT, she used Östgötadräll weave to make a skirt in autumn colours. Östgötadräll was not an obvious choice, initially. Prior to this, the Östgötadräll weaves she had seen appeared pretty “square” to her. But after examining pictures with old weavings, looking in the archive and visiting Ann-Sofie Svansbo at the Hemsjöiden in Östergötland, she saw something else. Energy was what she found in the old dräll weaves. The shoemaker yellow, often used in Östgötadräll, was perfect. And she is very fond of autumnal shades. Her check composition was in orange, red, brown and a striking green.

– The green is important, it lifts the other colours by being there.

Two variations were woven on the same warp. The first was made up into a pleated skirt; the second, woven with a natural grey weft in big checks, is still waiting. The idea at the outset was to sew a “stubb”, a kind of quilted underskirt, which often had beautiful quilting designs (just like those worked on Östgötadräll coverlets). But she hasn't quite decided, so it sits and waits.

30/2 was also used for the warp, with 6/1 and 8/1 woollen weft.

– The grey yarn felt like it was full of

spinning oil. I washed it before weaving so as to be sure nothing unforeseen would happen once the woven cloth had its finishing treatment.

In the red house with white corners, situated with a view over the lake, stands the loom that belonged to the leading weaving light, Malin Selander.

– It feels nice that it is her loom I am weaving on, says Elin.

New weaves are waiting to grow. Plans for the future include further work with historic and period textiles, ideally to commission. Her weaving practice is combined with work at a school, not involving textiles. Textiles are her own thing. She has just received her self-employed tax certificate and calculates each weave on the basis of receiving reasonable remuneration.

For the Östgötadräll weave, she needs at the very least 1600 SEK/metre, and says:

– I would like what I weave to be valued, which means pricing is an important factor.

There are customers around.

Several people who bought cloth from Elin had saved up a long time.

– It is wonderful when somebody calls and says NOW I am ready to buy that cloth I have been so wanting. ♪

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