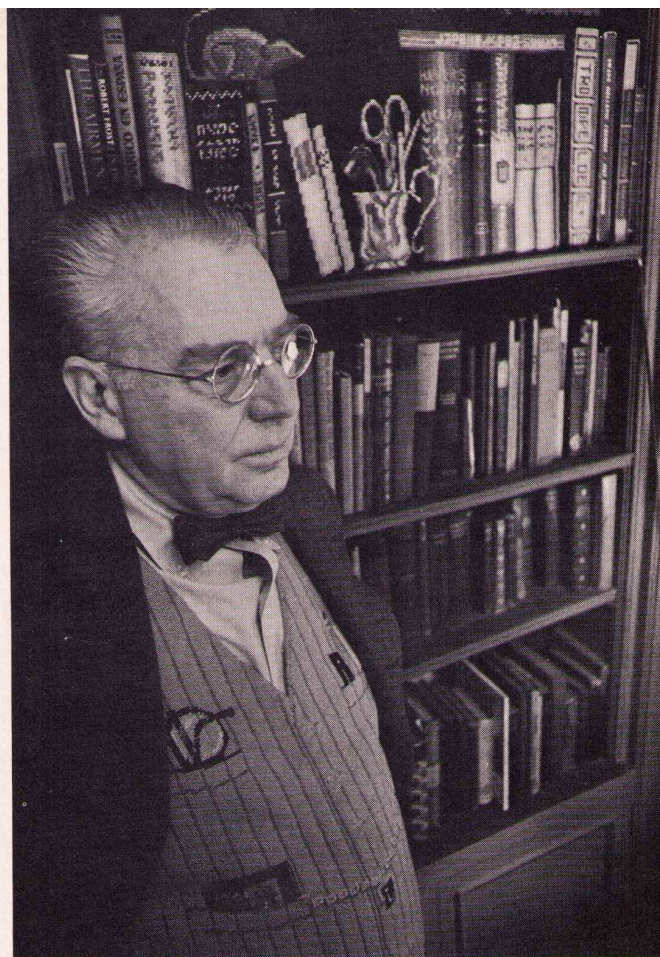


Art in America

MAY-JUNE 1968 \$2.50



Both the trompe-l'oeil vest and the trompe-l'oeil bookshelf (which conceals a hi-fi speaker) are Russell Lynes's own designs. They are both worked in gros point with some details in petit point. A number of the "books" on the shelf represent books Mr. Lynes has written, and the rat is Cadwallader, hero of his satirical novel of the same name. The vest was stitched in 1952; the speaker cover in 1966.



THE MESH CANVAS

Coins and stamps, playing cards and toys, ceramics and low-relief sculptures in multiple editions—all designed by outstanding artists—have been a part of Art in America's program to introduce art into everyday living. Here we present our latest project: designs for needlework by thirteen artists who represent a broad range of contemporary trends

Russell Lynes

Russell Lynes describes the two lower pillows as "the kind of needlepoint I design as I go along, starting with just a bare canvas." The other three are adapted from drawings—two from Steinbergs and one from a 19th-century illustration in Harper's Weekly.

Several months ago I stood in the bright clutter of a wool and needlework shop in New York picking out (with the aid of the manager of the store) the colors of wool for the chair seat by Gene Davis that is reproduced on page 33. A group of customers and saleswomen gathered around. The brilliance of the design, its simplicity from a needlepointer's point of view, its obvious elegance and directness shone like a beacon among the usual kinds of needlepoint designs—sentimental animals, bunches of roses, cute doorstops, butterflies, fruits, vegetables all conventionally drawn, and that nadir of the craft, the "old master," partly worked by some poor soul and ready to have the background filled in by some poorer but more affluent soul.

For many years needlepoint has unfortunately been considered a suitably genteel pastime (like china painting and pyrography a century ago) only for otherwise unoccupied ladies—a sort of parlor version of occupational therapy. It deserves better than that. It is a medium exacting in its precision but relatively easy to control. It can be extremely simple or extremely subtle. Wool has a built-in luminous quality that cannot be imitated in any other medium, and the colors in which it is dyed or which it can create (it can be mixed almost like paint) are limitless.

Increasingly in recent years there have been needlepointers who have taken designs from contemporary paintings (I have seen pieces done from Calder and Miró and Mondrian and Braque, for example) and done them in gros point or petit point (or a combination of both) with excellent results. I have occasionally done pieces from paintings myself, and I have found that artists like Ben Shahn and Bernard Perlin have been fascinated by the ways in which oil or crayon or serigraph can be interpreted (or rendered, if you prefer) in a medium as different as wool is from the ones they have used.

While there have been a number of distinguished artists in the last few decades who have designed tapestries that have been



This chair seat was the first needlepoint piece that Mr. Lynes did. He adapted the design from a Steinberg drawing in his collection. The golden-haired nude is worked on a dark red background.



Russell Lynes adapted this handsome piece full-size from a silk screen by Ben Shahn. The dimensions are 22 x 28".

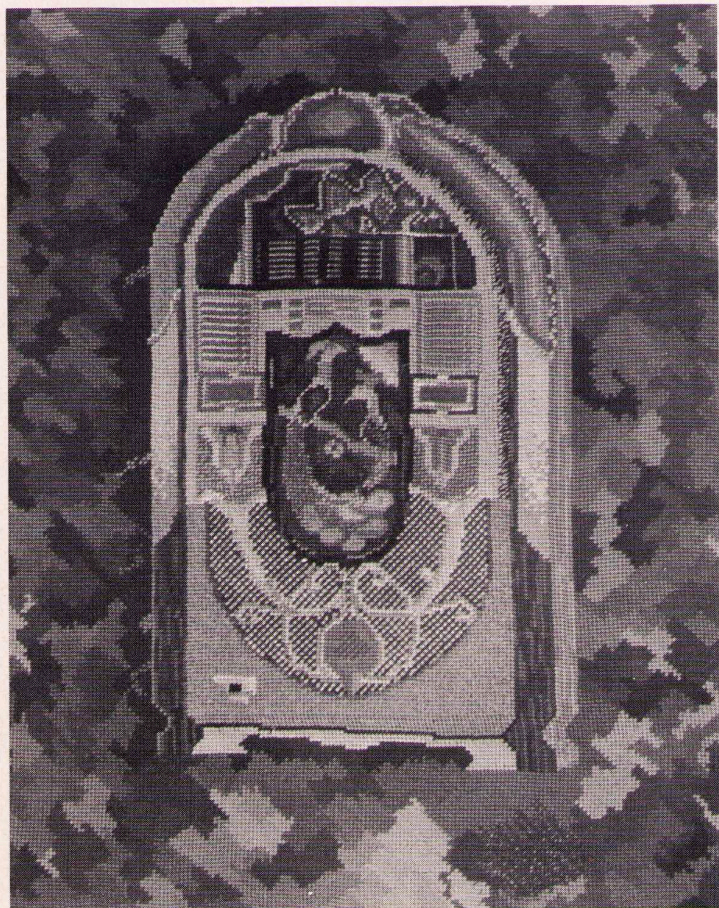


This design is taken from a crayon drawing by Bernard Perlin. Enlarged from 18 x 18" to 24 x 24", it serves as—and was designed to be—a loud-speaker cover. There are no areas of solid color in it, an effect produced by the pointillist technique which, as far as he knows, Mr. Lynes was the first to use in needlepoint. The piece won first prize several years ago in a needlepoint exhibition in New York.



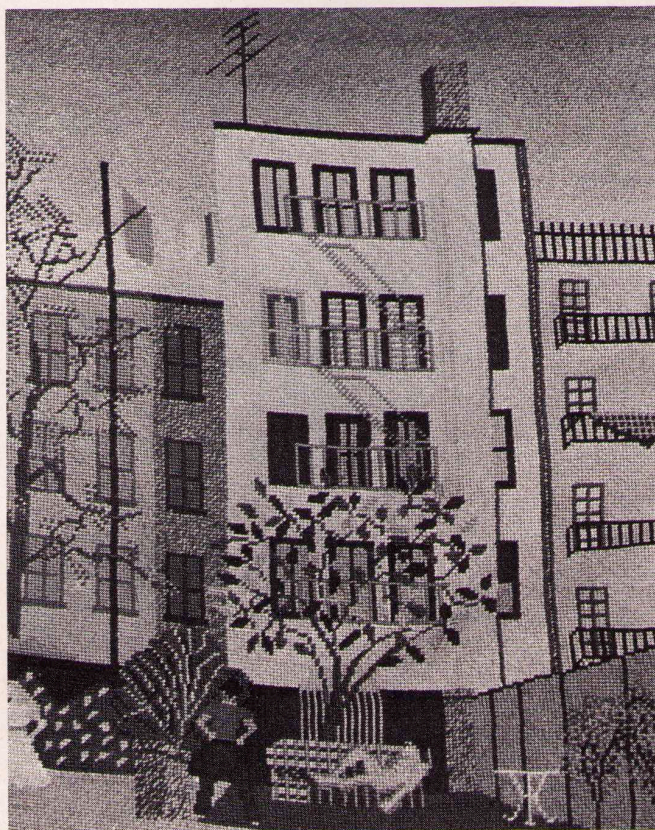
Inspiration for this needlepoint design was a painting which Russell Lynes did of his house in North Egremont, Mass., in 1947. Executing it in needlepoint ten years later, he used the pointillist technique in the sky and grass to achieve a luminous quality.

On the following pages: A Color Portfolio of Needlepoint Designs by Thirteen Artists



Mr. Lynes executed this juke-box design in 1954 —“pre-pop,” he notes. He based the design on a Wurlitzer model of World War II vintage.

Russell Lynes calls this cushion design “The Garden of Eden,” complete with Adam and Eve under the apple tree. Actually it is the view from a back window of his New York brownstone.



Gene Davis: Chair seat cover, acrylic on needlepoint canvas, 15 x 15". "Stripes have long been used as a decorative motif in the arts. Their utilization as a compositional device in my paintings, however, is quite another thing, spatial in concept and nondecorative. This design, you might say, is a combination

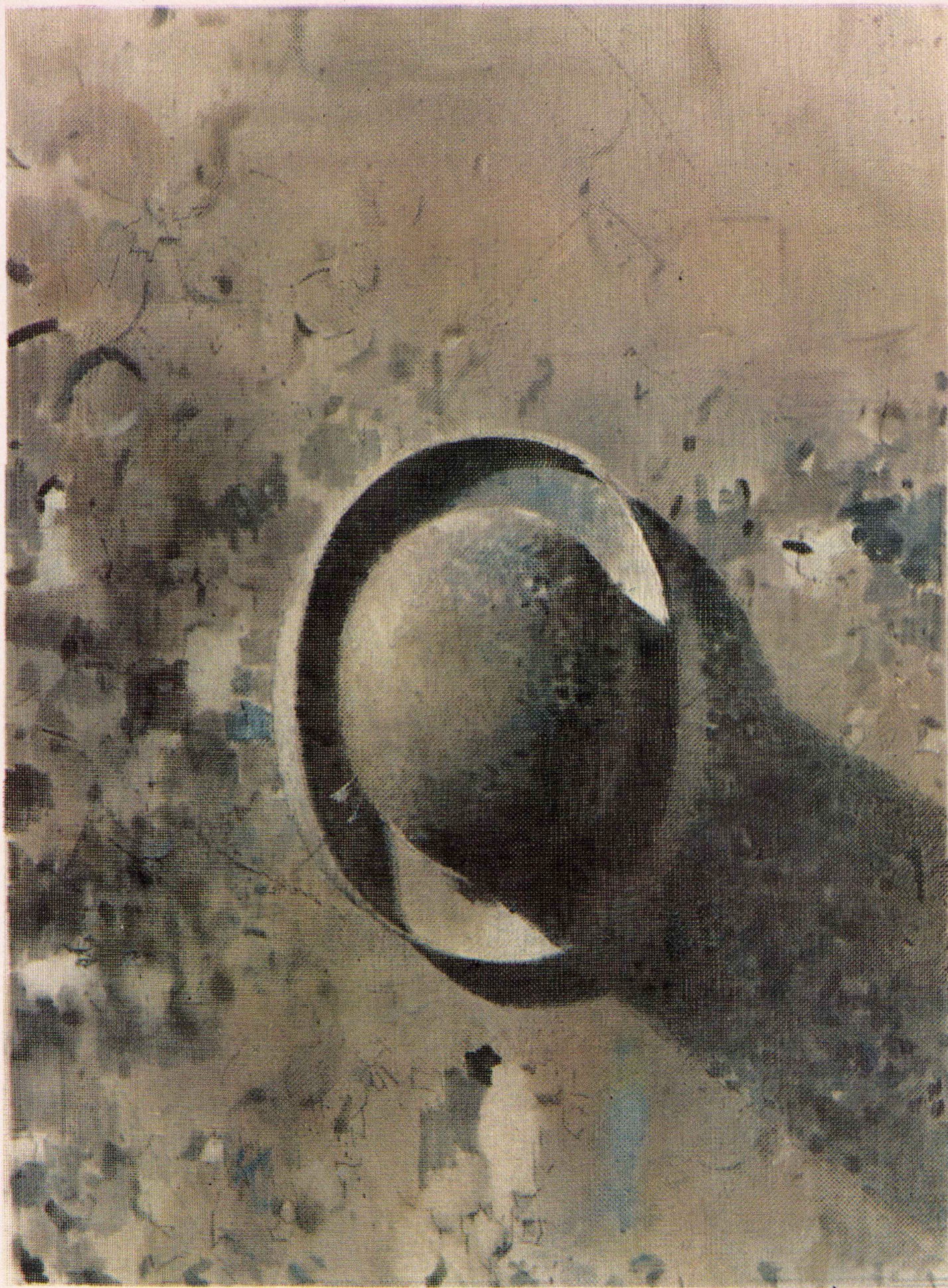
of the two." Gene Davis, who has been creating his stripe paintings since 1958, recently concluded three one-man shows which ran concurrently at the Jewish Museum and the Fischbach Gallery in New York and at the San Francisco Museum of Art. He belongs to the rising Washington School of painters.



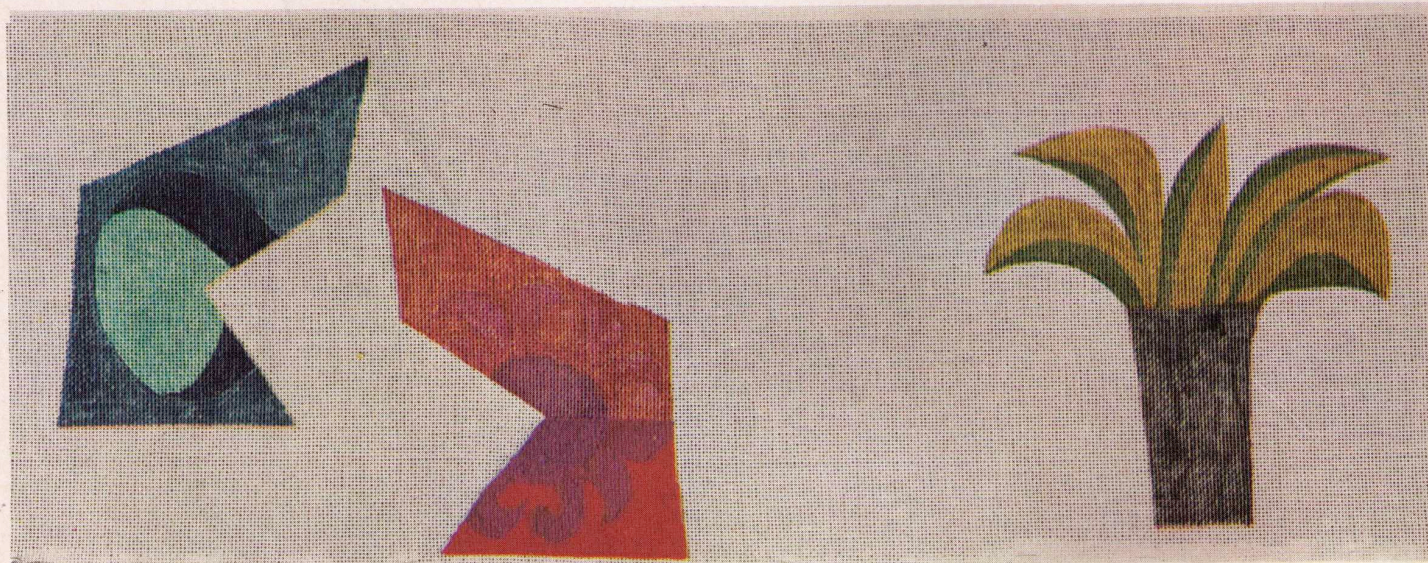
Leonard Baskin: *Cushion*, watercolor on needlepoint canvas, 16 x 16". Leonard Baskin is known not only for his often macabre sculptures and woodcuts, but also for delightful engravings of insects and plants for his Gehenna Press publications. He teaches printmaking at Smith College and exhibits at the Borgenicht Gallery in New York, where he will show recent drawing and sculpture in June.

Walter Murch: *Coffee-table top*, oil on needlepoint canvas, 37 x 27½". On the evening of December 11, 1967, Walter Murch died suddenly of a heart attack. This needlepoint canvas is the last work that this great magic realist executed before his death. (He also adapted this needlepoint design as a painting for the 1967 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting at the Whitney Museum of American Art and titled it *The Bowler for Art in America*.) In the absence of his expressive voice, the work must be allowed to tell its own eloquent story.

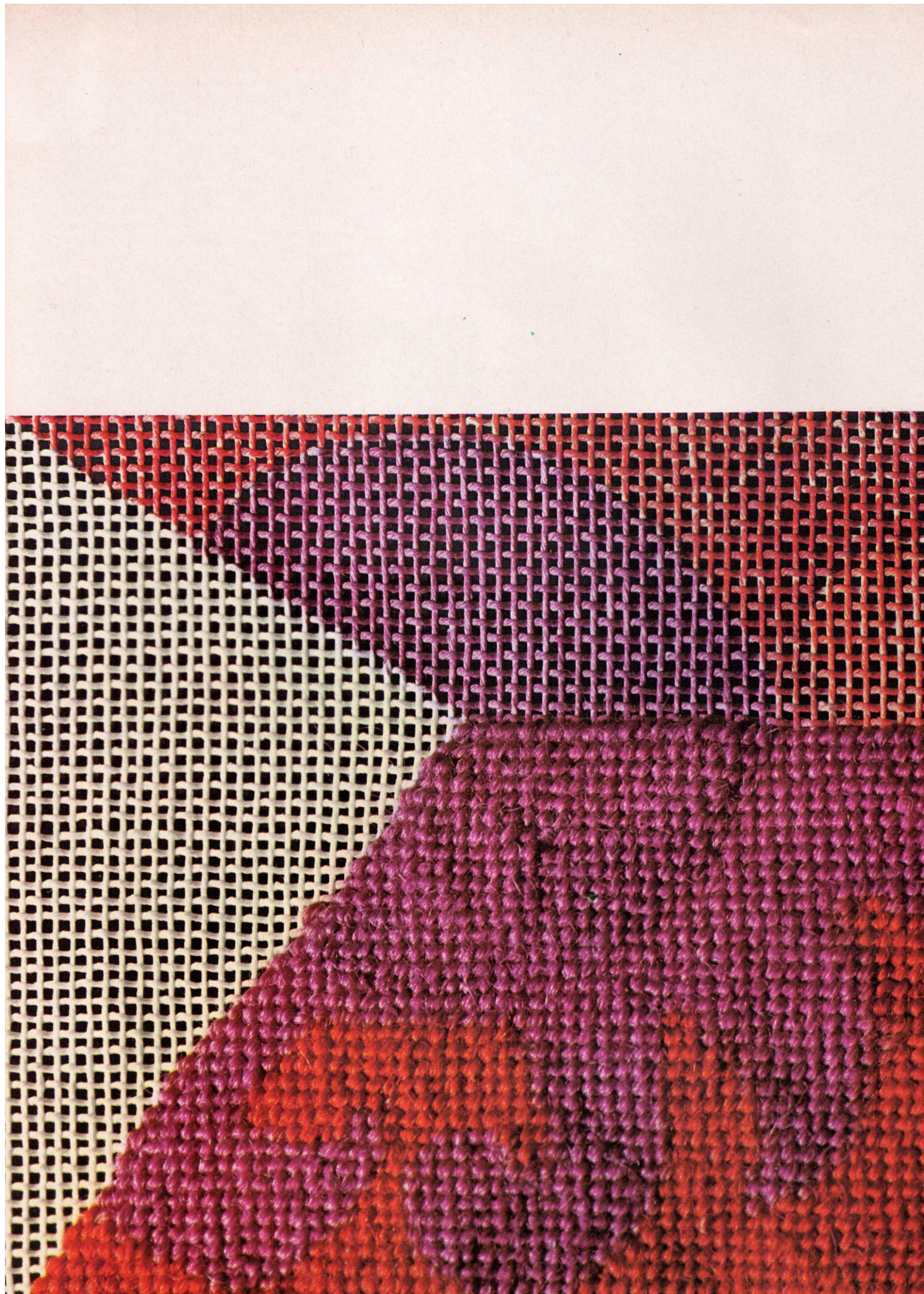




Carol Summers: Bra and bikini, printer's ink on needlepoint canvas. This fashion innovation, conceived by Mr. Summers, is intended to be worn under a clear plastic dress. "I was intrigued by the notion of designing in needlepoint," he explains, "because it struck me as being far removed from the twentieth



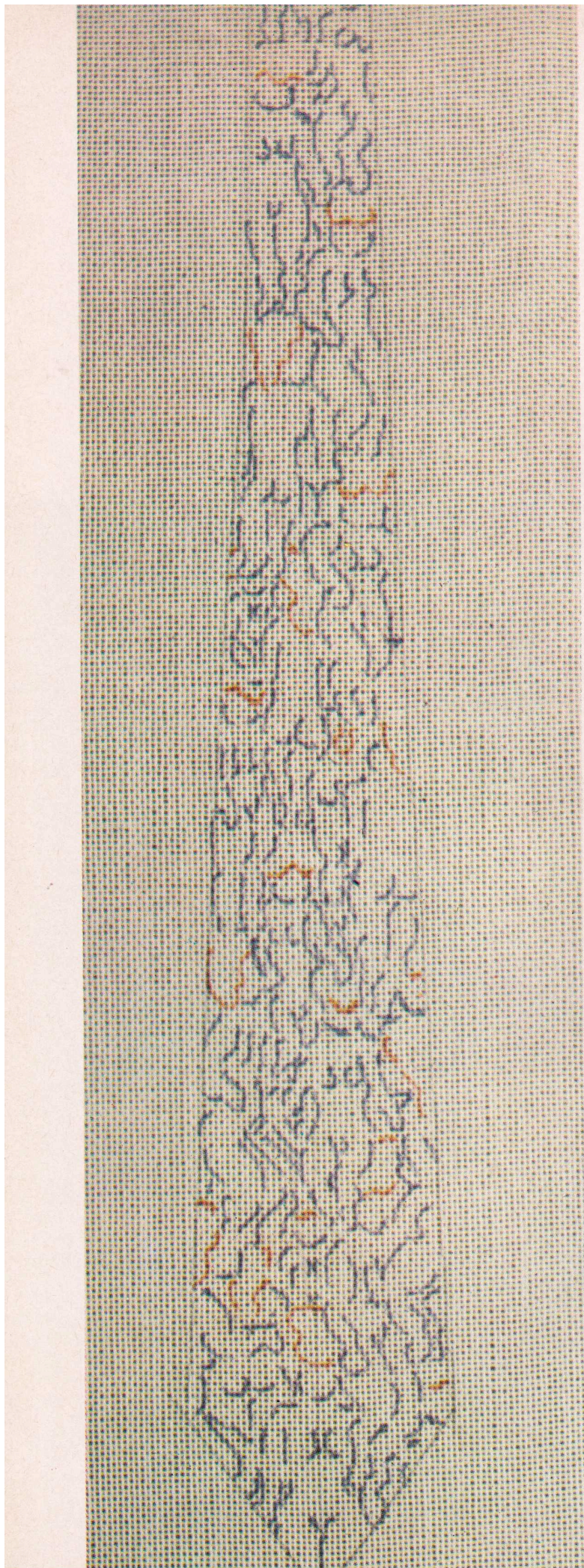
century. I thought bikini pants and bra were so unlikely a candidate for needlepoint treatment that the very idea was funny—still is." Carol Summers lives in New York and devotes most of his time to woodcuts, with occasional work in jewelry design. Russell Lynes executed the colorful detail shown at the right.



Richard Anuszkiewicz: *Man's vest*, liquitex on paperboard
 "The needlepoint vest design was no different for me than painting a shaped canvas. The only limitation was the shape which had to perform a function. I chose the right-to-left diagonal in order to produce an unbroken line when stitched. The lines themselves alternate between warm green and cool blue affecting the red in contact. The intervals of red expand and decrease in arithmetical manner and result in a multicolor shape with maximum economy of means. With the vast range of styles and ideas of today's contemporary art I have always found the results of the project such as this most fascinating. A leading American contemporary artist Richard Anuszkiewicz exhibited at the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York, and was artist-in-residence at Dartmouth College in the fall of 1967 and at the University of Wisconsin during February and March this year.



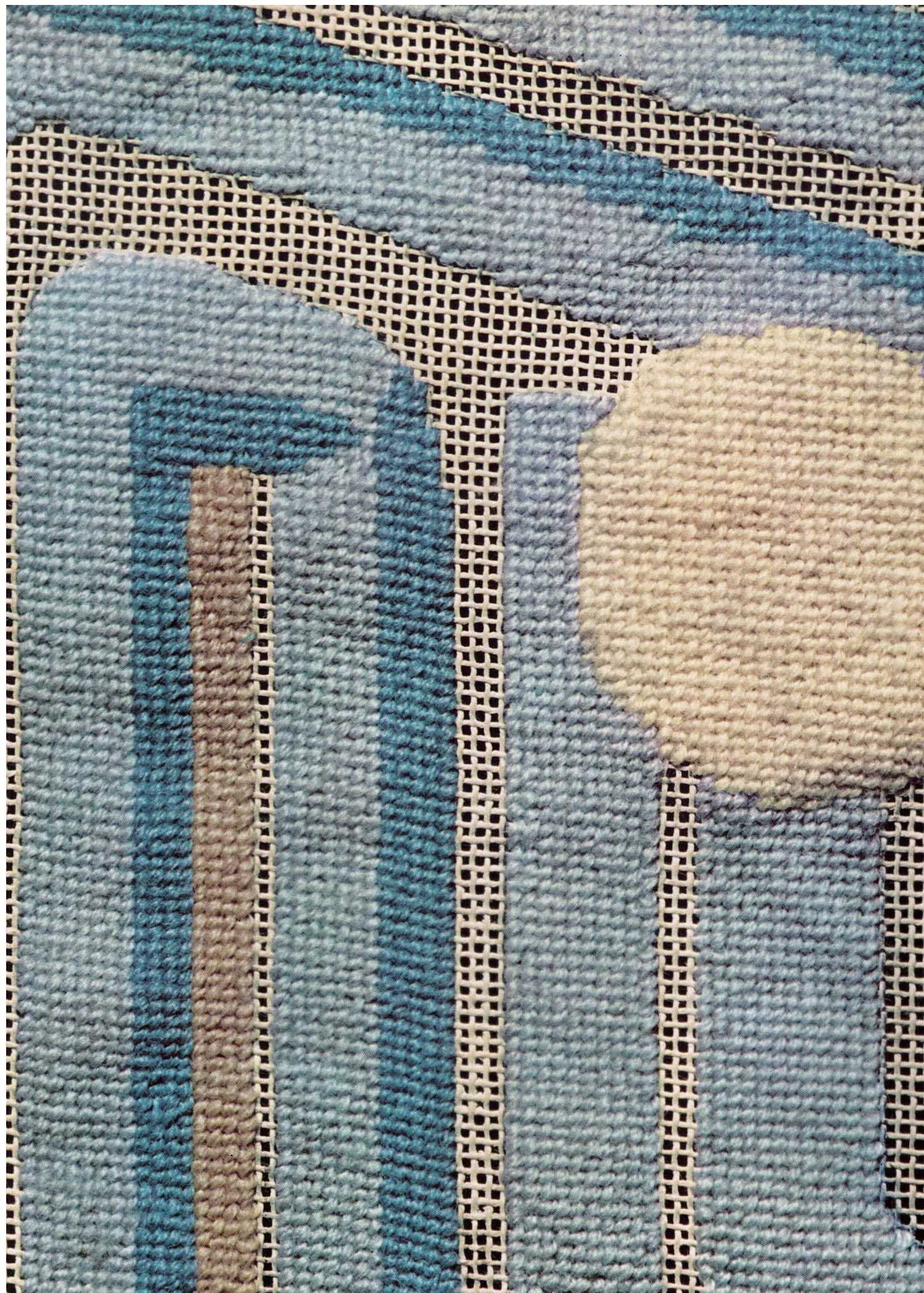
William Copley: *Necktie*, detail, marking pen on needlepoint canvas, 56 x 3½". William Copley calls his figurative design of nude females "*Cherchez l'Homme*." "The theme began as a reaction to drip painting; still hope to do the idea in bed sheets." Painting under the "pseudonym" of Cply, Mr. Copley—also well known as a collector and art patron—shows in the New York and European galleries of Alexander Iolas. Detail above worked by Mr. Lynes.





Chryssa: Window shade, oil on needlepoint canvas, 72 x 34". The point of departure for Chryssa's needlepoint design—illustrating a fragment of neon sculpture—was the List Art Poster which she designed for the 1967 New York City Sculpture Festival. The blue linear areas represent neon tubing, the white circular shapes are electrical connectors and the white areas surrounding the tubing—intended to be left unstitched—are spaces through which light is to filter, giving a luminous, airy effect. "I chose a window shade because it brings me closer to the three elements of my work: glass, light and darkness." Chryssa, one of the foremost light artists, exhibits her neon sculptures at the Pace Gallery in New York and has shown in numerous international exhibitions. Mrs. Albert List of List Art Posters worked the extensive detail shown at far right.

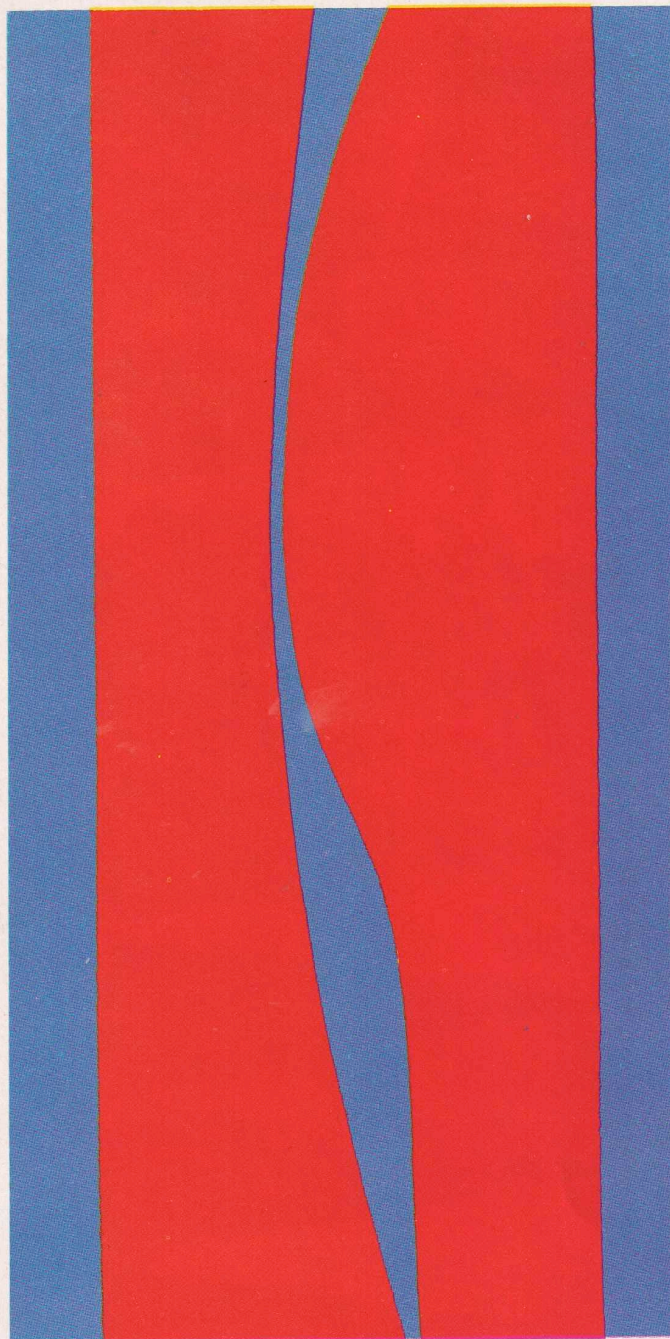


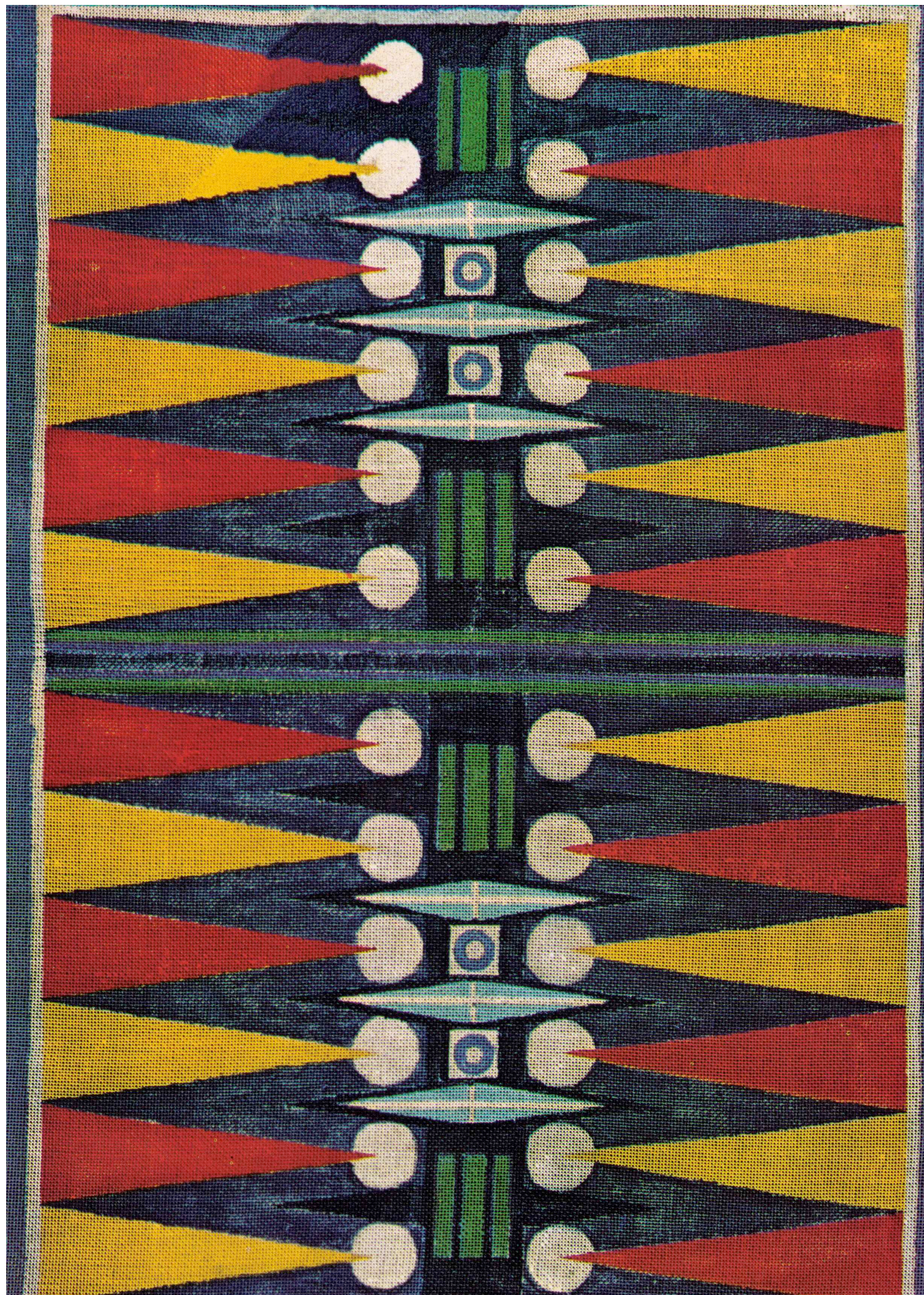




Frank Stella: Two cushions, completed in wool on needlepoint canvas, 15 x 15" each. These cushions were executed by Mrs. Leo Castelli and are now in the Castellis' private collection. The linear design lends itself perfectly to needlepoint treatment. Frank Stella, who pioneered the minimal movement with his pinstripe paintings in the "Sixteen Americans" show at the Museum of Modern Art in the winter of 1959-60, has been one of the most important influences on the younger generation of American painters. He shows at Castelli in New York.

Lorser Feitelson: Sketch for a hi-fi speaker cover, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 12". (The final design, executed in acrylic on a needlepoint canvas, is shown on the cover of this issue.) "My design for a hi-fi speaker cover is in the style of my recent hard-edge paintings. The vermilion and blue are intended to fluctuate ambiguously as positive and negative. In the central area I have invited the unavoidable needlepoint interpretation to displace the original flowing, curvilinear contours with edges that are hesitating and jagged. The colors were chosen for maximum impact when translated into wool." Lorser Feitelson, a California innovator of the hard-edge style, exhibits at the Ankrum Gallery in Los Angeles.





George Ortman: Backgammon board, oil on needlepoint canvas, 33 x 23". "Games as an art form have interested me for a long time. I have done two chess sets—men included—and the backgammon board presented similar visual ideas. The rich textures and colors which needlepoint offers and the experience of working in a new medium made the project especially intriguing." George Ortman is painter-in-residence at Princeton University and last fall had a retrospective exhibition of his geometric paintings, constructions, drawings and lithographs at the Princeton University Art Museum. He exhibits in New York at the Howard Wise Gallery. Writer Mary Jean Thorne, long-time needlepoint enthusiast, executed the detail shown below.





Cleve Gray: Slippers, liquitex on needlepoint canvas. Cleve Gray's slippers are probably the project's most literal example of "art for everyday living." Commenting on his choice of subject, Mr. Gray said, "I thought it would be fun to have

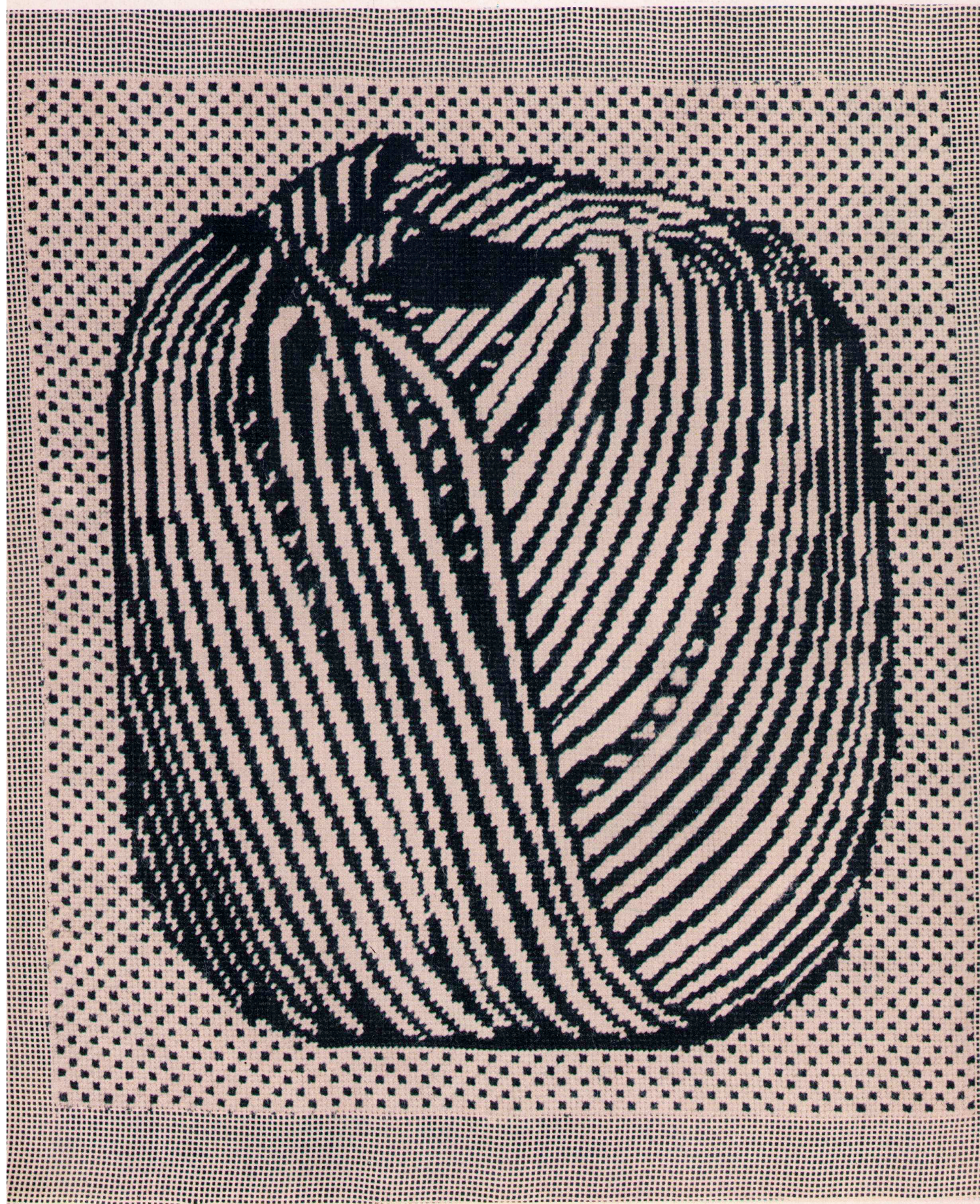
some colorful slippers to wear at night." Cleve Gray is an abstract-expressionist painter whose most recent exhibit was a one-man show at the Saitenberg Gallery in New York. Mrs. Thorne worked a portion of one slipper (below left) in wool



Alfonso Ossorio: Fire screen, acrylic on paper, 26 x 20". The artist named his design "Endless Heads." "The basic idea is an open circle whose bounding line turns in on itself to delineate two heads; these in turn form a variation on the traditional circle-contained 'yang and yin.' The elements surrounding the central image are distracting embellishments knuckling down to various biomorphic activities in their own hard-edged way.

One of the pleasures and challenges of projects such as this one is the chance it gives the artist to envelop within his own ideas other media than those he usually works with, to show that the medium is the vehicle and not the message." Alfonso Ossorio, whose assemblage constructions have been described as "maximal" art, lives and works in East Hampton, Long Island, and his work is exhibited at Cordier & Ekstrom, New York.





Roy Lichtenstein: Cushion, marking pen on needlepoint canvas, stitched in wool, 15 x 13½". Mrs. Leo Castelli has worked this design of a ball of twine, which Mr. Lichtenstein adapted for needlepoint from one of his paintings. He felt that this subject would be particularly appropriate for needlepoint, that it would be interesting to see the twine re-created in another form of string. Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein lives in New York and shows regularly at the Castelli Gallery. He currently has a large traveling exhibition in Europe; after opening last November at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, it went on to the Tate Gallery in London, the Kunsthalle in Berne, and is concluding its tour in Hanover at the end of May.

executed by the Gobelins tapestry works and exhibited widely in the museums of America, needlepoint design has been almost entirely in commercial hands. In some respects the designs have improved, but to my knowledge needlepoint has never in recent times received serious consideration from a group of artists until now. The editors of *Art in America* invited thirteen painters representing a variety of schools and techniques to submit designs for publication here and for an exhibition which will be held at the FAR Galleries from May 6 to May 18. The artists were selected not only for their distinction, but because of the variety of their approaches—op, pop, hard edge, abstract expressionism, poetic realism, figurative, assemblage and light. What they have produced, as you have seen, is adaptable to the medium with varying degrees of difficulty. The most difficult piece to work is that of the late Walter Murch, a challenge to the most expert needlepointer. Possibly the easiest is Gene Davis' stripes, a perfectly straightforward job that requires no subtlety of execution but produces a maximum of effect.

In order to show what happens to a design when a portion of it is worked, several accomplished needlepointers have done parts of several of the pieces shown on the preceding pages. The writer Mary Jean Kempner (Mrs. Kempner Thorne), collector Mrs. Albert List and I have done details of the designs. Mrs. Leo Castelli has executed the pieces now in her collection.

If this display of distinguished modern needlepoint designs helps to shoo out some of the cute and genteel nonsense that clutters the wool shops (and hence the living rooms) of America, that would be almost justification enough. If it should inspire other artists to turn their serious attention to this highly flexible and, to the needlepointers, delightful medium, that would be a bonanza indeed.

Art in America needlepoint-project produced by Susan Relyea.

Photos by Geoffrey Clements (color), Elton Robinson (black-white).

All materials supplied by Alice Maynard Needlework Shop, N. Y.

An exhibition of the thirteen designs will be held May 6-18 at the FAR Gallery, 746 Madison Ave., N. Y. Workable reproductions of several of the designs will be available later in limited editions.



Mr. Lynes is shown working on Gene Davis' chair-seat cover (see page 33).