

Caravaggio Towel Collection

My contribution for 2021 is a tea towel collection inspired by Caravaggio's Crucifixion of Saint Andrew.



I got the idea for this project when I read earlier this year about the research of Helena Loermans on the type of canvas used by the great masters of the 16th and 17th centuries such as Titian, Caravaggio, El Greco, and Velazquez. The examples unearthed by Helena Loermans were woven in fancy gebrochene (Ms and Ws). Marje Thompson also came across a similar canvas and wrote about it in a 1997 Weaver's publication. What is unusual about the Crucifixion of Saint Andrew is that the canvas used by Caravaggio was woven in 8-shaft 5-end huck lace instead of gebrochene.

It is thought that the painters who chose such canvasses were looking for (1) fabric that did not require joining, (2) an interlacement that would minimize the reflection of light, and (3) a rough texture onto which paint laid in a thick manner would adhere. A gebrochene tablecloth fit the bill!

Project specs

- Structure: 8-shaft 5-end huck lace
- Warp and weft: 8/2 cotton (3360 lb/yards) from Brassard (Viel Or and Brique)
- Sett: 18 epi
- Pattern repeat: 110 ends
- Number of warp ends: 440

I used color-and-weave for added interest, using for inspiration the pale red cloth covering Saint Andrew and the ochre cloth covering the executioner.

I wove four towels: I followed Loermans' draft for the first one and I varied the treadling and tie-ups for the other three.

In the draft that Helena Loermans reverse-engineered, the blocks are threaded as follows:

A B C D E F E D C B A F E D C B A B C D E F

The treadling sequence produces warp floats. The blocks are treadled as follows:

A B C D E F A B A F E D C B A F E D C D E F

References

Caravaggio. The Crucifixion of Saint Andrew. The Cleveland Museum of Art.
<https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1976.2>

Jasiński, Mateusz. 2019. The Painting Techniques and Technology of Caravaggio's Followers. ICAR the Journal vol.3. pp. 47-59.
https://www.academia.edu/41013495/The_Painting_Techniques_and_Technology_of_Caravaggio_s_Followers

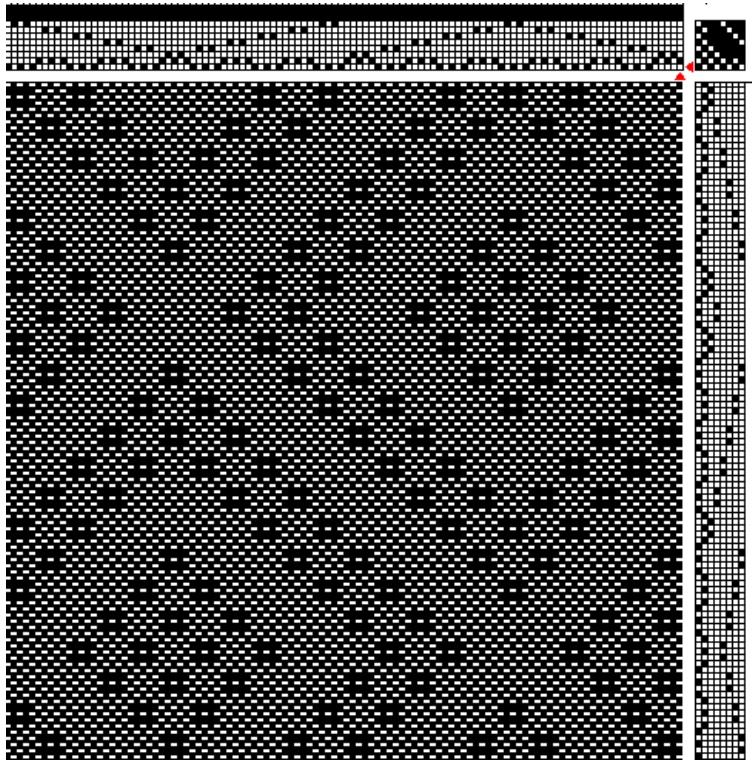
Loermans, Helena. Caravaggio The Crucifixion of Saint Andrew (1606-07) Cleveland Museum of Art. <https://labo.pt/caravaggio-the-crucifixion-of-saint-andrew>

Loermans, Helena. Weave drafts. <https://labo.pt/weave-drafts>

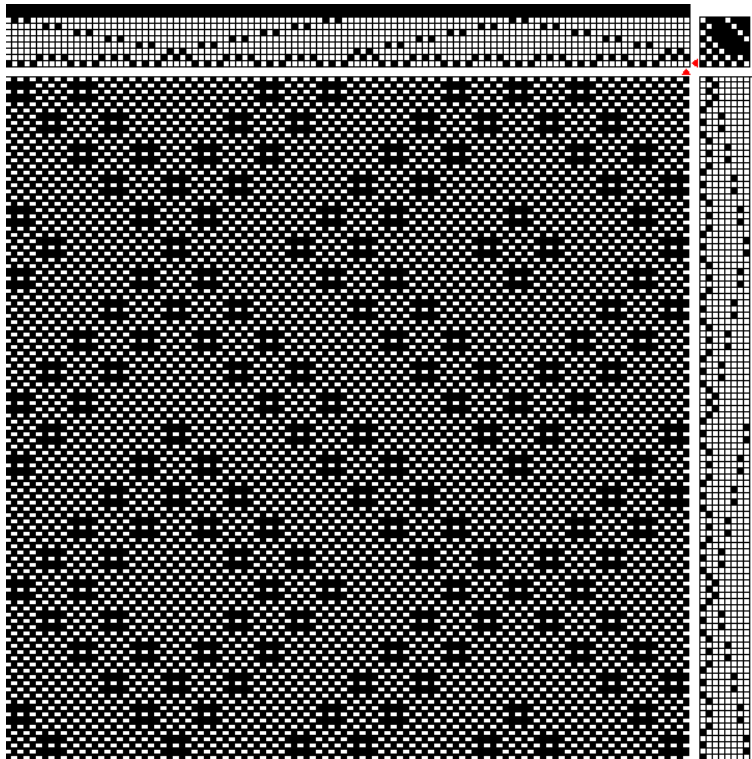
The Cleveland Museum of Art. Conserving Caravaggio's Crucifixion of Saint Andrew.
<https://www.clevelandart.org/research/conservation/conserving-caravaggio%E2%80%99s-crucifixion-saint-andrew>

Thomson, Marje. 1997. The Earl's Canvas. Weaver's, 38, pp 38-40.

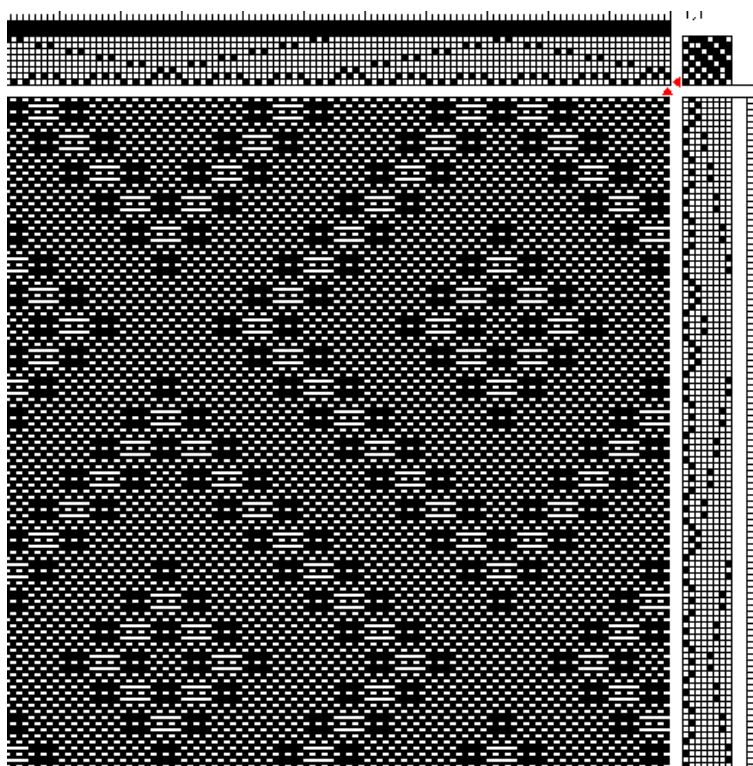
Drawdowns



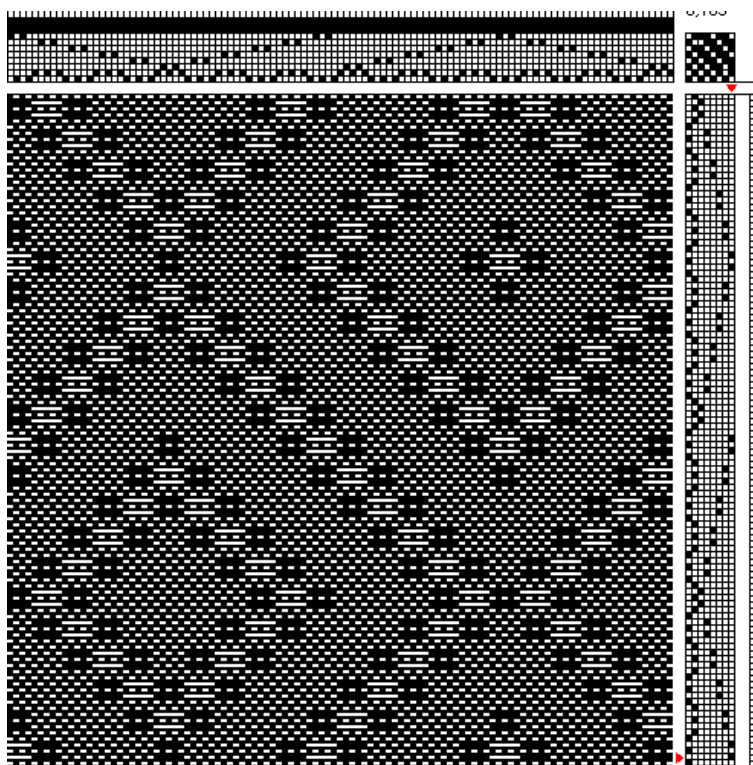
Towel 1 – Follows Helena Loermans' but the foundation threads are on shafts 1 and 2



Towel 2 – Same as Towel 1 but woven as drawn in



Towel 3 – Different tie-up; treadled as Towel 1



Towel 4: Same tie-up as Towel 3, treadled as drawn in