



AN EXALTATION OF BLOCKS by Rosalie Neilson
*Orion's Plumage, 17506 SE Walta Vista Drive,
Milwaukie, Oregon 97267.*
2017. Softcover. \$125.

This astounding labor of love consists of a box containing two twin-loop wirebound volumes. Volume One is a 128-page treatise on symmetric block design and its applications. Volume Two is a toolkit consisting of block-design elements printed on cardstock and transparent overlays, similar to the ones you may have seen for overhead projectors in the days before smartboards and computer projectors. The transparent overlays can be combined singly or in multiples with the design pages to build thousands upon thousands of designs. According to the author, the Section One Toolkit produces over 2 million designs, and the Section Two Toolkit yields 68 billion designs.

In her preface, Neilson explains how a book on collective nouns, *An Exaltation of Larks*, inspired the title of her work. Fortunately, the bevy of blocks does not necessarily have to be a bewilderment of blocks. Structure weavers will enjoy Neilson's thorough explanations even as they marvel at her meticulously systematic methodology. Color-and-texture weavers can also benefit from *An Exaltation of Blocks*—once you convince them not to flee in terror—because it is a resource that weavers can approach on their own terms. Although some might prefer to start by reading the first three chapters on the construction of blocks, this is not mandatory. Others might opt to start by playing with the materials in the toolkit, and then return to learn more about theory and principles. Still others might review the instructions for the Section One Toolkit in Chapter 4 or those for the Section Two Toolkit in Chapter 5, and create a design that they want to weave right away.

Chapter 6 explains how to translate a block design into a profile draft. To illustrate the process, the same six-block design is shown translated into summer-and-winter, huck lace, and warp-faced rep profile drafts.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 cover these three block-weave structures in more detail. The discussion of each structure includes interactive exercises, whose answers appear at the end of each chapter. This convenient location of the answers does have its disadvantages. In the summer-and-winter chapter, one exercise appears on the left-hand page—and its corresponding answer is printed on the facing right-hand page. Fortunately, the wire binding makes it easy to hide the answer so you can complete the exercise without peeking.

Chapter 10 addresses the topic of asymmetry, and shows how changing the relative proportions of blocks can dramatically transform a motif. Although Chapter 10 is the last chapter, it's not the end of the text. In the Appendix, Neilson explains how she created the design pages and transparent overlays, revealing that the profile draft is identical throughout each section; what changes is the tie-up.

An Exaltation of Blocks is a fascinating design tool. It would be an excellent addition to a guild library or a fantastic gift for structure weavers interested in exploring the design potential of block weaves.

*Reviewed by Elisa Eiger
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