

Book Review

Anatomy of a Tapestry: Techniques, Materials, Care

**Jean Pierre Larochette and Yadin
Larochette**

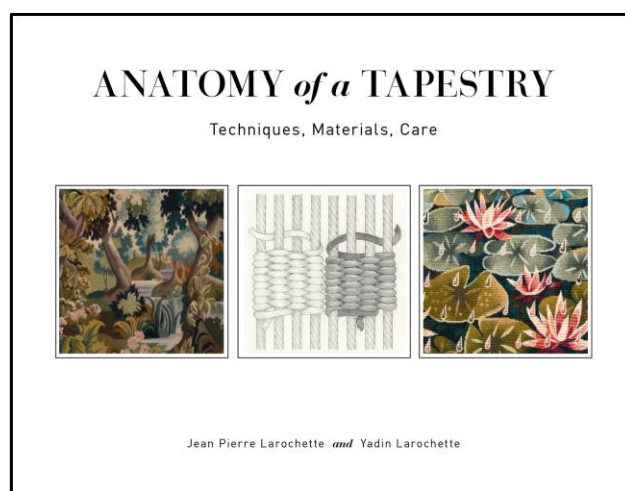
illustrated by Yael Lurie

Schiffer Publishing, 2020

Hardcover

ISBN 9780764359330

Review by Sally Reckert, July 2020



'Anatomy of a Tapestry: Techniques, Materials, Care' is a spiral-bound hardcover book in a landscape format. This format suits the layout for technique as the book remains open and flat to work from. There are hand-drawn diagrams and cotton weft front and back samples on the left, and verbal appraisal of the technique with large, woven examples in colour on the right. However, the section on techniques occupies only a third of the book, and this is not an instruction manual.

Jean Pierre Larochette trained as a weaver in the Aubusson techniques in his father's studio in Argentina. His appreciation and understanding for colour-shaping and -shifting were further developed in France under Jean Lurçat, who had reintroduced the medieval concept of a simplified colour palette between the wars in the twentieth century. Yadin, Jean Pierre Larochette and Yael Lurie's daughter is a practising textile conservator.

The book focuses on the accrued knowledge of classic Aubusson weaving skills which Jean Pierre has absorbed and practised over his lifetime. Together with Yadin Larochette's experience as a conservator, this book will add to the knowledge of weaver, tapestry viewer and collector. It covers in detail the history of materials, Aubusson techniques, looms, and the hanging and care of tapestries, small and large. The notes on textile conservation are to museum standard but read interestingly to the lay person.

Whilst the technical weaving sections are fascinating inexperienced weavers may find the diagrams difficult to interpret if they are unused to weaving from the back; Yael Lurie's diagrams are all drawn from the back and with the tapestry woven on its side. However, the woven sample colour photographs show the individual techniques from the front and weft-hanging.

"The techniques we have compiled in this book are empty diagrams, stray letters of a meaningless alphabet, unless they are used in the service of an idea", writes Jean Pierre Larochette. At the end of the book, he introduces us to a handful of weavers, all friends of his and Yael Lurie's, most from Mexico where they have one of their studios, who have taken this "meaningless alphabet" and translated it in such different ways.

Schiffer Publishing has simultaneously brought out 'The Art is the Cloth', by Micala Sidore and Charissa Bremer-David. The two books complement each other, one being technical in all things tapestry, and the other giving woven examples from around the world and across time. As Jean Pierre Larochette says, "A comparative overview of the contemporary tapestry landscape would merit a book in itself".

End-notes and a comprehensive bibliography, focusing mainly on conservation, round off this stimulating book. It would be interesting to know who the reader is that Schiffer have aimed this book at. It's too technically weighted towards tapestry conservation for the average art lover, and it's not an instruction manual, though the technical aspects of Aubusson weaving are interesting and well-illustrated. Snippets of weaving history and materials are fascinating but only form part of this interesting and beautifully illustrated book. At about 45 USD/45.99 GBP, you would need to be devoted to tapestry to buy it – and I am.