

Pin Looms

Little tools with big possibilities for rug hooking

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSAN L. FELLER

Learning often happens outside of a classroom. In this particular case, my friend Beth Zerweck-Tembo spent 45 minutes in a parking lot one evening showing me how to weave a 2" square on a pin loom. Imagine that: we made a piece of fabric while standing next to our car under streetlights!

Pin looms, my friend told me, are commonly found in 2", 4", and 6" squares. They are also available in rectangles using those dimensions. The weaving technique is called *continuous weaving* because one warp thread is wrapped three times around pegs on the loom, creating a grid pattern, and the same yarn is then woven through the grid to make the fabric piece. Continuous weaving is also done on large triangle looms to make shawls, blankets, or runners. A bias weave is possible, and other fibers can be inserted along the way for interest, sparks of color, and texture.

My mind began to race with possibilities. I could use my yarns left over from knitting. I did not have to purchase a tabletop or floor loom and dedicate another space to a new craft. I could find my own pin loom online, at an antique shop, at a yard sale—perhaps even in an older relative's craft stash or attic. Maybe my newly woven squares and rectangles could be added to hooked work. Maybe I could hook through the new loosely woven backing. Maybe experiments with colors could lead to better understanding of how colors fit together. I



Geometric Squares with pin loom inserts.

couldn't wait to get started playing with these tiny looms.

Any type of yarn or heavy thread can be used on a pin loom. Anyone who knows me will tell you that I am drawn to experimenting. So experiment I did. Why limit myself to yarn—would wool strips work? By experimenting, I found that wool strips work as well. I discovered that a #3-cut strip could be carefully woven into a 2" square. By wrapping one long strip in the sequence for three layers, tying a new strip to the one already warped onto the loom, and weaving that strip through to the end, I could weave a square with a strip of wool with only minimal fraying.

There are many ways to play on a pin loom. If you used all wool fibers in a loose weave in your squares, your hat, bag, or blanket could be felted into a tight fabric. Combining two colors by warping two layers with one color, then switching and completing the project with another color results in more obvious patterns because of the colors and contrast.

A simple over-one-thread-and-under-the-next-thread weave is an easy way to start. There are pattern books available for more complex weaves.

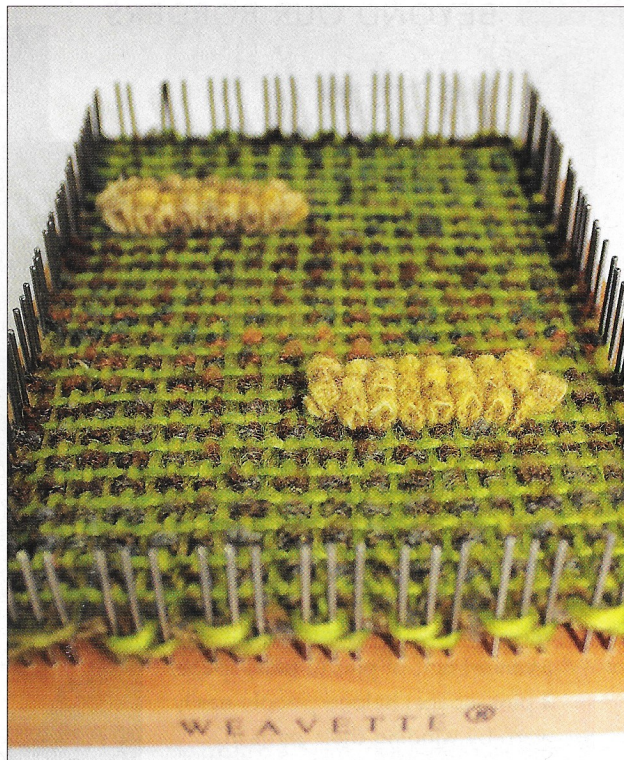
Pin Looms and Hooked Rugs

Once you have purchased a pin loom (or accumulated several—they are addicting!), experimented a bit, and created many woven pieces, you will be looking for a way to use these small pieces. I asked myself: how can pin loom fabric be incorporated into a hooked project?

Here are some ideas:

- Roll the woven rectangle or square and stitch it onto your backing—the roll will make a great tree trunk. Hook through the end loops to anchor it to your larger hooking.
- Make a geometric design and insert a square by hooking through the end loops of the pin loom piece.
- Pull loops through your woven pin loom piece (while the weaving is still on the pin loom pins). Add hooked loops to your pin loom weaving!

There have been a few aha! moments in my fiber journey. That night in the parking lot talking with Beth was one of them. Our conversation came at a time when an interest in self-sufficiency was leading me to learn new techniques and find uses for different materials. How fun to be making my own foundation material! **RHM**



Top: Hay rolls hooked into green piece.

Bottom: Hooking through a pin loom rectangle.





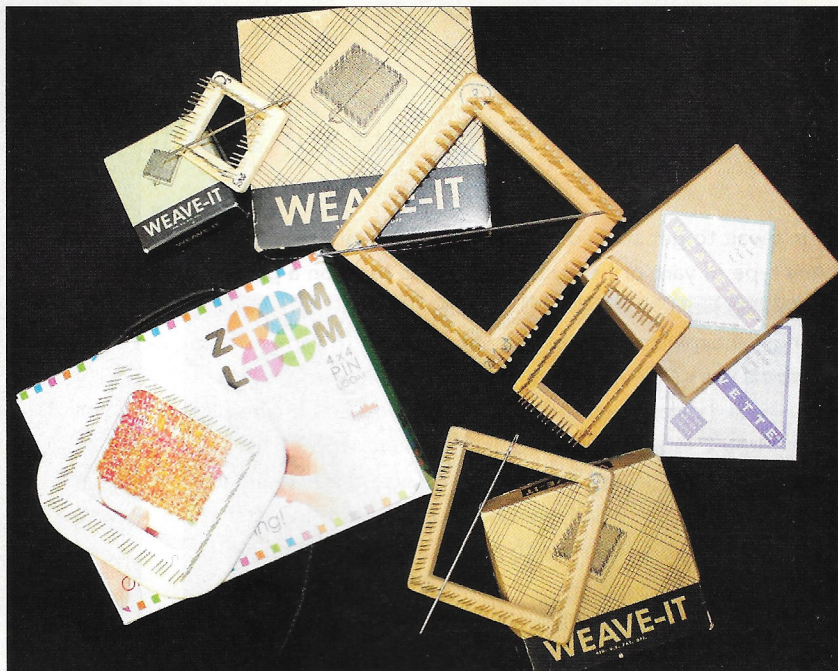
PIN LOOM PRIMER

In this day of cyberspace resources, tutorial videos, and patterns in PDF downloads, vendors and groups with Internet access are all just a click away. A quick search came up with some interesting information about pin looms.

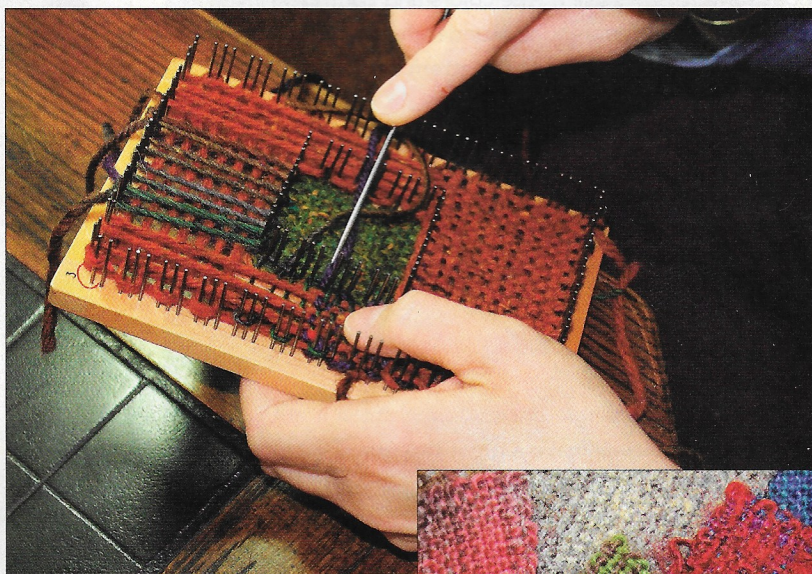
Donald P. Simonds was issued a patent in October of 1934 for the spacing of pins and construction of Weave-It Looms. Produced over the next 40 years under a variety of company names, the arrangement of pins (3 pins, space, 3 pins, space) helped people easily warp by winding their yarns in three layers. With the loom and a long tapestry needle, artists could weave a small square in plain weave or get creative and weave patterns.

Today woodworkers are creating beautiful looms with hardwoods and their own particular metal brads or wooden pins. Schacht Spindle Company, known for their full-sized weaving looms and weaving supplies, recognized a rebounding interest in pin loom projects and recently developed a new version, the Zoom Loom, which is plastic. It comes with a carry case and directions for bow ties, hats, and a few other simple projects.

You can read more about pin looms at www.eloomanation.com/looms.php. Or start your own search online with the key words "pin looms," "continuous weaving," and "Weave-It." Pinterest, Etsy, Amazon, or eBay are wonderful sites to start. On Facebook, search for groups, including Tri-Loom and Continuous Weavers.



Pin looms have been made in bakelite, wood with metal pins, looms with larger spacing with wooden pins, and plastic. This photo shows a variety of looms: Weave-It, Weavette, Zoom Loom.



ABOVE: A small pin loom inside a larger pin loom: layer upon layer of weaving.

RIGHT: Yarns of different thicknesses; variegated and solid colors; cotton, nylon, elastic, wool handspun, alpaca yarns, chenille.

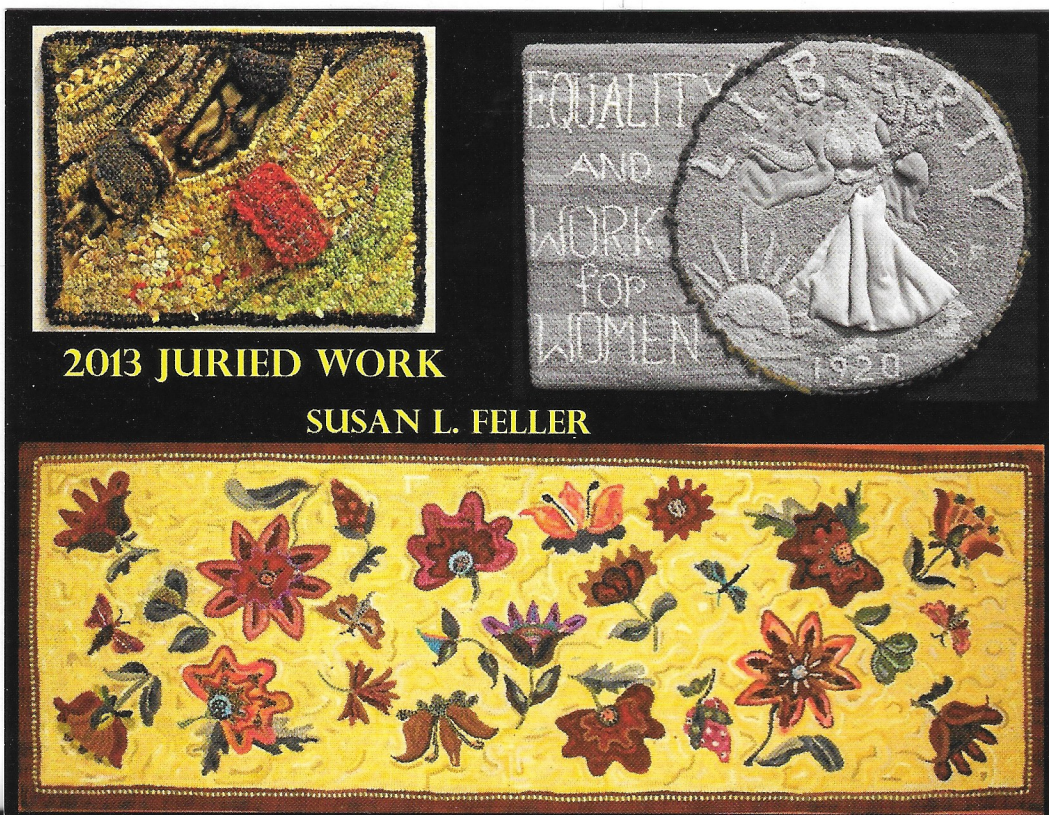






Beginning in the 1930s and continuing through the 1970s, baby garments, table covers, and afghans were popular pin loom items. Today pocketbooks, eyeglass cases, and even hats are popular projects. Today's pin loom designers are producing new, up-to-date patterns and projects for those interested in experimenting with this new/old fiber toy.

Susan L. Feller has been exploring techniques for manipulating fibers in a Year Study where she created a 5-inch square each day from November 2013 through October 2014. Pin loom weaving is found in many of her daily studies. This full collection will be exhibited at Sauder Village Rug Hooking Week in August 2015. To read about the project visit www.ArtWools.com/year-study



2013 JURIED WORK

SUSAN L. FELLER