Blends Color Harmonies Into Fine Garment Fabrics

Pola Stout Began Art in Vienna Which Has Put Her Name in Product of One American Mill

By VIRGINIA POTTER

Mixing the colored yarns that go into the fabrics of the world is like mixing a cake, says Pola Stout. She blends her fibers and works out her color harmonies until the results are perfect and a little of that, until the desired effect is achieved. For some years this designer, who has been spoken of as the "queen of the Textile region of America, has been testing her knowledge of color and yarns in her own business, which has supplied plush, felted woolens to many of the big dress houses of New York.

Now Mrs. Stout's experience is to be put to much broader use. The Betty Worsted Mills have engaged her to head a division within their organization, to be known as Pola Stout Studios. Butterfly is the first time that a woman has had so large an opportunity to design and make fabrics for the women industry of America.

Although Mrs. Stout was trained to work with handloomers in the Viennese workshops of her youth, she likes to know that today her designs are being executed on power looms. "Because," she explains, "she imagines into the world of American women a little of the atmosphere of the old weaving, and of the perfection of the design that is visible in any type with which she is familiar. She has made a specialty of "Fabrics for American Women," she says.

Designs Created on Train

This creator of textiles asserts that she lives with her work twenty-four hours a day, for she is forever busying herself in the elaboration of the multitude of ideas as they pass through her unconscious mind. She travels back and forth on the train to her country home, where she has the most ideal of homes "on the side of Brewster, N. Y." Then, in these woods, which look so much like a garden, she feels free to work when the land looks rolling green meadows and faraway hills, she puts her projects in order of the large workrooms with her four daughters, Rebecca, aged two and eight years, and two younger. When she set them all to work the day after a good meal, she turned seven, watching them in silent awe.

Mrs. Stout's face lights up with joy as she tells of taking various lengths of raw fabric to her fingers to test them for quality and strength. When she has found the ingredients that will produce the desired texture they are spun into yarn. The soft woolen strands that will eventually be worked into glowing tweeds are laid in patterns and counted--so many inches to the yard, and so many across--as the designer develops the traditions of new weaves. Samples, called blankets, are made in long banner-like strips. The first part of the process is done with yarns in their natural colors, then the "tweeds," she says, Mrs. Stout likes to work out a range of colors which is so true that any two colors, even though they are at the opposite ends of the scale, can be put together harmoniously.

The designer's talent first manifested itself when she was nine. She smiled her way into the good graces of the scribes of the native town of Stryj, in Poland. Her winning manner persuaded them to give her the scraps that fell from their cutting tables. With them she dressed her dolls in a somewhat cubistic manner, she rejected fashions and would set them in the front windows of her home so fashion-conscious boys could admire their finery.

Parents Supported Art Career

Young Pola's parents refused to listen to her pleadings that she be permitted to take up art as a career. They wanted her to enter a German seminary and went to the University of Leibnitz to study philosophy. They urged her to learn some talent mastered her; in secret she planned to run away. At Leibnitz, after her classroom work was done, she sped to a milliner's, where she spent her spare hours making hats. When she had earned enough to pay her fare to Vienna, she took such few possessions as she could carry in her hands and left for the Austrian capital.

The day of her arrival she went to the Kunstgewerbe Schule and made a specialty of practical training, for she was obliged to earn her living; during her studies, her textiles were accepted by the Wiener Werkstatte. Then, eager to try her strength, she had the opportunity to travel to Paris, where she found employment in the fabric houses that supply the couture. She moved on to Berlin and observed new schools of art. Finally, her venturesome spirit led her to America.

Her need for immediate money took her far afield, and she negated the fact that she was designing fabrics for millinery, making lampshades and finally interior decorating. All professed moneymakers, but they lacked the soul-satisfying qualities she sought. The old urge proved so strong, however, that last she turned to the designing of hand-loomed fabrics and the cloths in which they were to be made. Then she began her work, which was carried out on power looms.

Mrs. Stout in the house of Text Stout, the author. While she is spinning yarns in one wing of their hill-top farmhouse, he is spinning his yarns about Nero Wolfe in another.