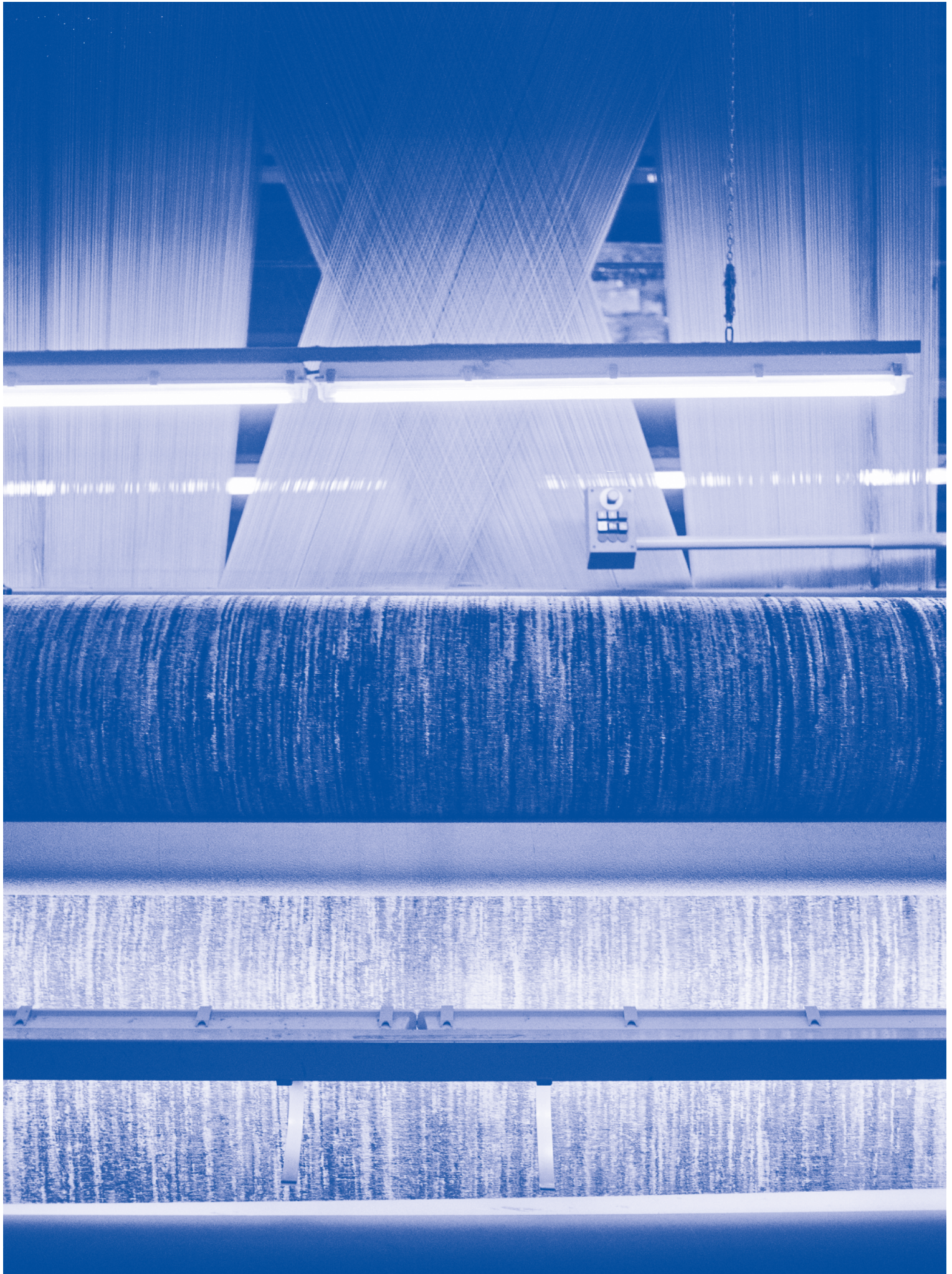


**louis de
poortere**

+

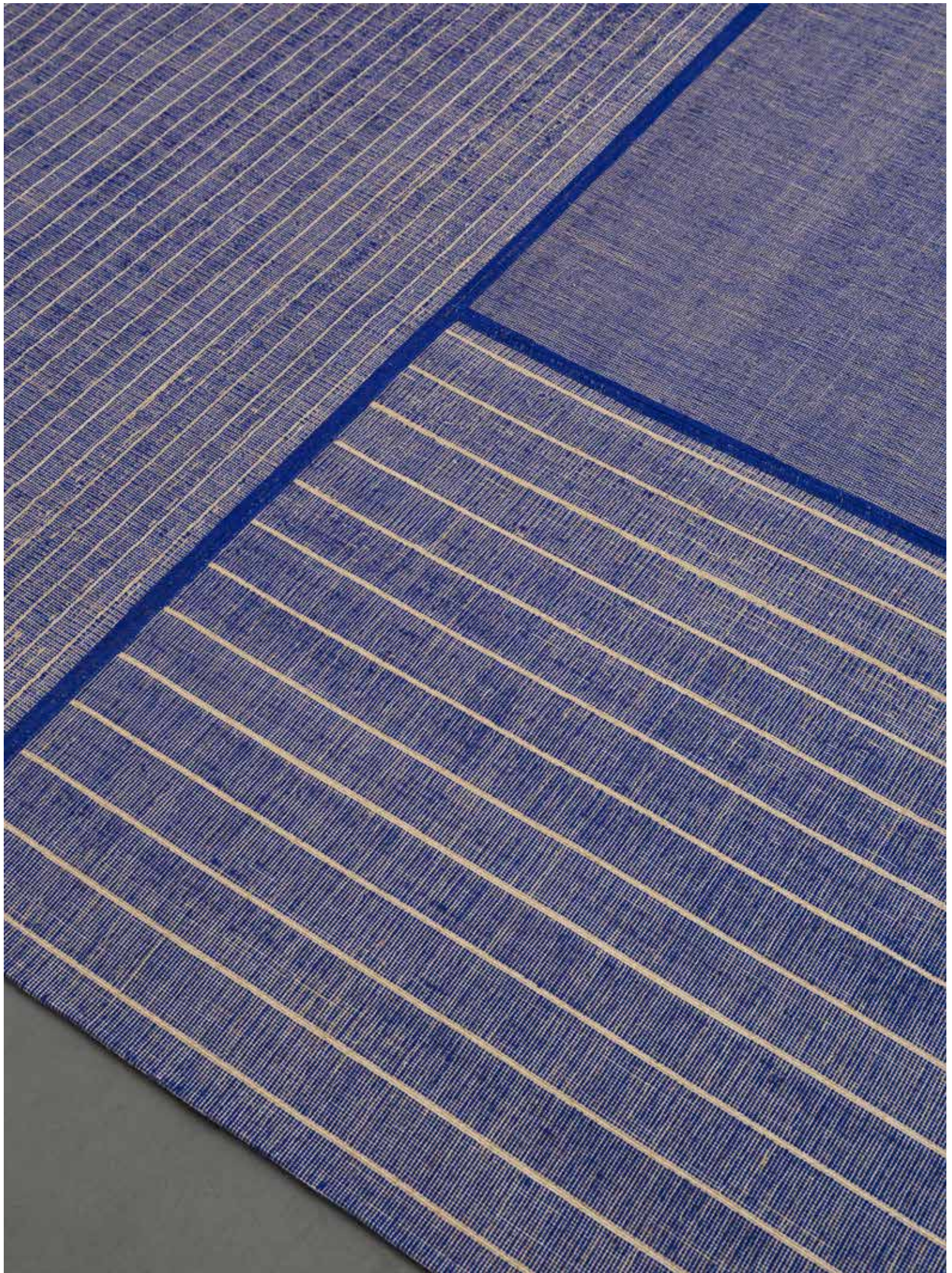
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The Monochromes

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Folkform
+ LdP



Colour as Material

Exploring the Craft of Machine Weaving

“Only those who love color are admitted to its beauty and immanent presence. It affords utility to all, but unveils its deeper mysteries only to its devotees.”

So spoke artist and colour theorist Johannes Itten in his 1961 book *The Art of Colour*. Itten was fascinated by colour’s application and appreciation across art and design, and his reflection proves instructive for understanding The Monochromes Collection, a textile research project from Stockholm-based art and design studio Folkform.

The winners of the Designer of the Year Award at the 2023 Scandinavian Design Awards, Folkform creates objects that are both inspired by and challenge traditional manufacturing techniques. In all their work, studio founders Chandra Ahlsell and Anna Lovisa Holmquist set out to communicate how industrial processes work, before using this knowledge to subvert or extend what is possible within the field.

Within The Monochromes Collection, colour plays a crucial role in revealing the secrets and intricacies of industrial weaving. Working with historic Belgian carpet manufacturer Louis De Poortere (LDP), Ahlsell and Holmquist became fascinated by the company’s Wilton rugs, an 18th-century

carpet style that typically features a short pile and hard jute backside to keep the carpet in place on a floor. While this construction is normally purely functional, Folkform believed that it also held aesthetic potential – all that was required was the addition of colour.

The Monochromes Collection is a series of Wilton rugs in which the backside has been flipped to become the front. The jute backing has been retained, but now moves front and centre, where its construction is highlighted by the addition of brilliantly coloured wool weft threads. As the wool weft weaves its path through the jute warp, colour is allowed to build up or fall away as dependent on the density of the weave – different shades of the same colour emerge through the treatment of a single thread.

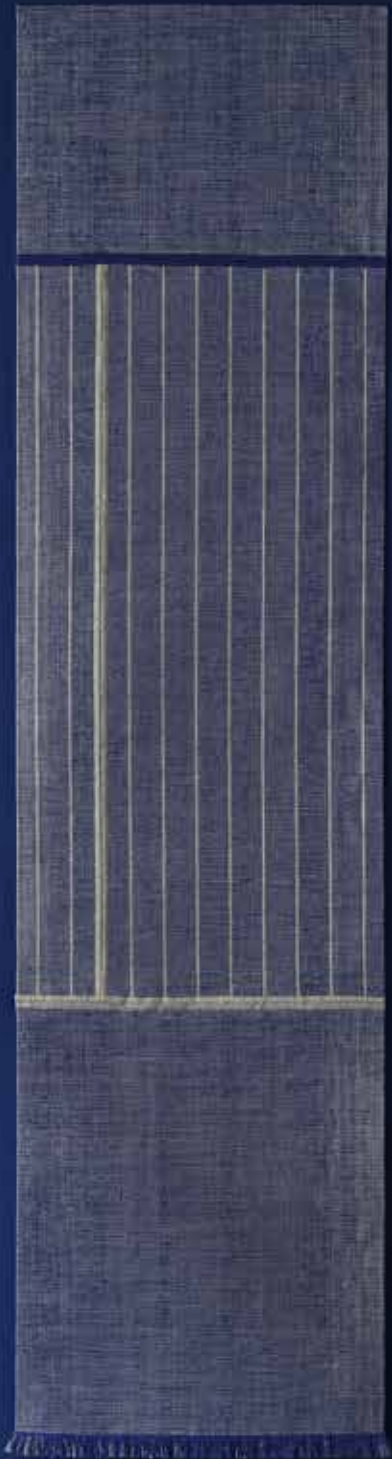
The collection has been created in 13 colours and 8 sizes, with Ahlsell and Holmquist designing a series of patchwork forms to minimise material waste. But across these textiles, the same idea is at play. The coloured wool not only brings beauty to the rugs, but also explains and illuminates three centuries of weaving construction. For those who follow the passage of colour through The Monochromes Collection, deeper mysteries about the creation of textiles become apparent.





From the Folkform exhibition *The Blue Tapestries*, Stockholm 2022.











Experiments in Blue

The collection began life as a study of the colour blue, *The Blue Tapestries* (2022), but has now expanded to a spectrum of different colours.

Blue is associated with harmony, faithfulness, confidence, the imagination, cold, and occasionally with sadness. It is the colour of distance and infinity: because of an optical effect, we see blue in clear skies and deep seas. Despite its many associations, however, blue has a purity. It can appear to come from beyond the visual world. “Almost without exception,” wrote the painter Wassily Kandinsky, “blue refers to the domain of abstraction and immateriality.” Fellow artist Yves Klein, meanwhile, developed *International Klein Blue*, his own shade of pure ultramarine, to represent pure form and space.

Blue has long fascinated Folkform, with the Stockholm-based art and design studio having often used different shades of the colour in its artworks, furniture and other objects. With its latest work, a series of textile works developed in collaboration with historic Belgian carpet manufacturer Louis De Poortere (LDP), Folkform has experimented with the colour like never before. This new series was conceived in autumn 2021, when Folkform’s Chandra Ahlsell and Anna Lovisa Holmquist were introduced to LDP by Linda and Alexander Dahl, founders of the Dahl Agenturer design agency. During a visit to the LDP weaving factory, Folkform discovered a striking ultramarine blue yarn and determined to centre it in its resultant work: *The Blue Tapestries*.

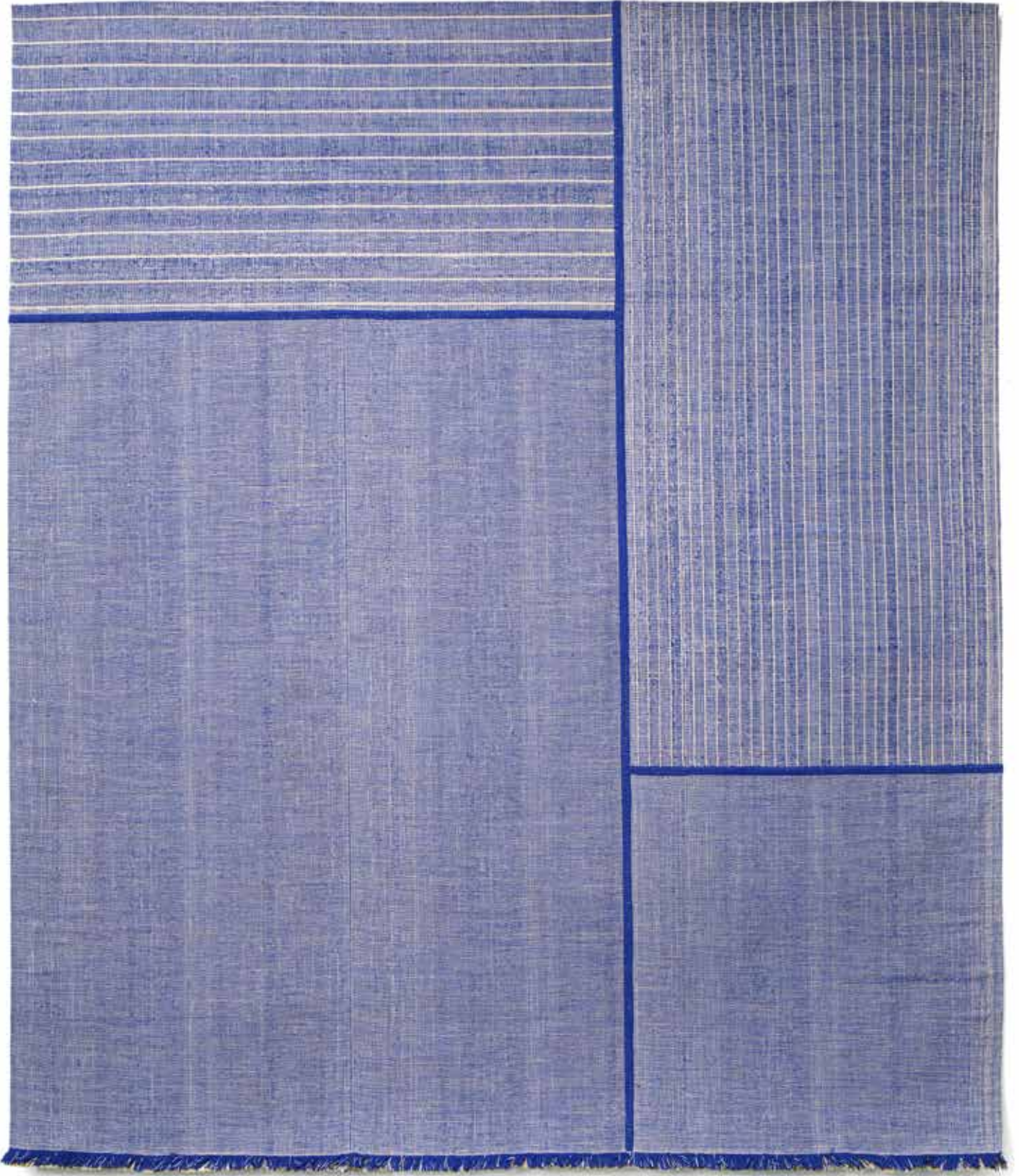
Folkform often creates objects that are both inspired by and challenge traditional manufacturing techniques, and *The Blue Tapestries* are no exception. Their pieces draw on the Wilton carpet, a type of woven textile developed in 18th-century England, which use a single backing woven around the pile yarn. Historically, this backing was often made from jute: a long, soft fibre imported into England from Bengal. The *Blue Tapestries* subvert this tradition by combining jute with LDP’s blue wool yarn and bringing it to the front of the textile. The resulting tapestries see rich ultramarine intersect with the beige of jute. Subtle gradations of colour create a spectrum of different tones. The immateriality of blue meets with an earthy, natural shade, merging heaven and earth. This blurring of boundaries is particularly suited to a series of works that can serve as either floor pieces or wall decorations, with no distinctions drawn between the two uses.

In the interests of sustainability, and of supporting small manufacturers, Folkform seeks to be transparent about how furniture and other objects are made. It traces raw materials, production methods, and the health of the working environment that these processes lead back to. We often perceive transparent things, such as water, as blue. As such, it is apposite that in its exploration of blue, Folkform is devoted to a different type of transparency. Blue may be the most mysterious colour, but even within its infinite borders, work of clarity and lucidity is still possible.



Colours Overview

The Monochromes Collection is a series of rugs in which the backside has been flipped to become the front. The jute backing has been retained, but now moves front and centre, where its construction is highlighted by the addition of brilliantly coloured wool weft threads. As the wool weft weaves its path through the jute warp, colour is allowed to build up or fall away as dependent on the density of the weave – different shades of the same colour emerge through the treatment of a single thread.



The Blue Monochrome in an apartment in Stockholm (2023).



Pink Monochrome Patchwork, jute and wool, Folkform (2023).



















Plain Yellow Monochrome, jute and wool, Folkform (2023).



Dark Brown Monochrome Patchwork, jute and wool, Folkform (2023).





Dark Brown Monochrome Patchwork at the
Royal Academy of Art in Stockholm (2023).

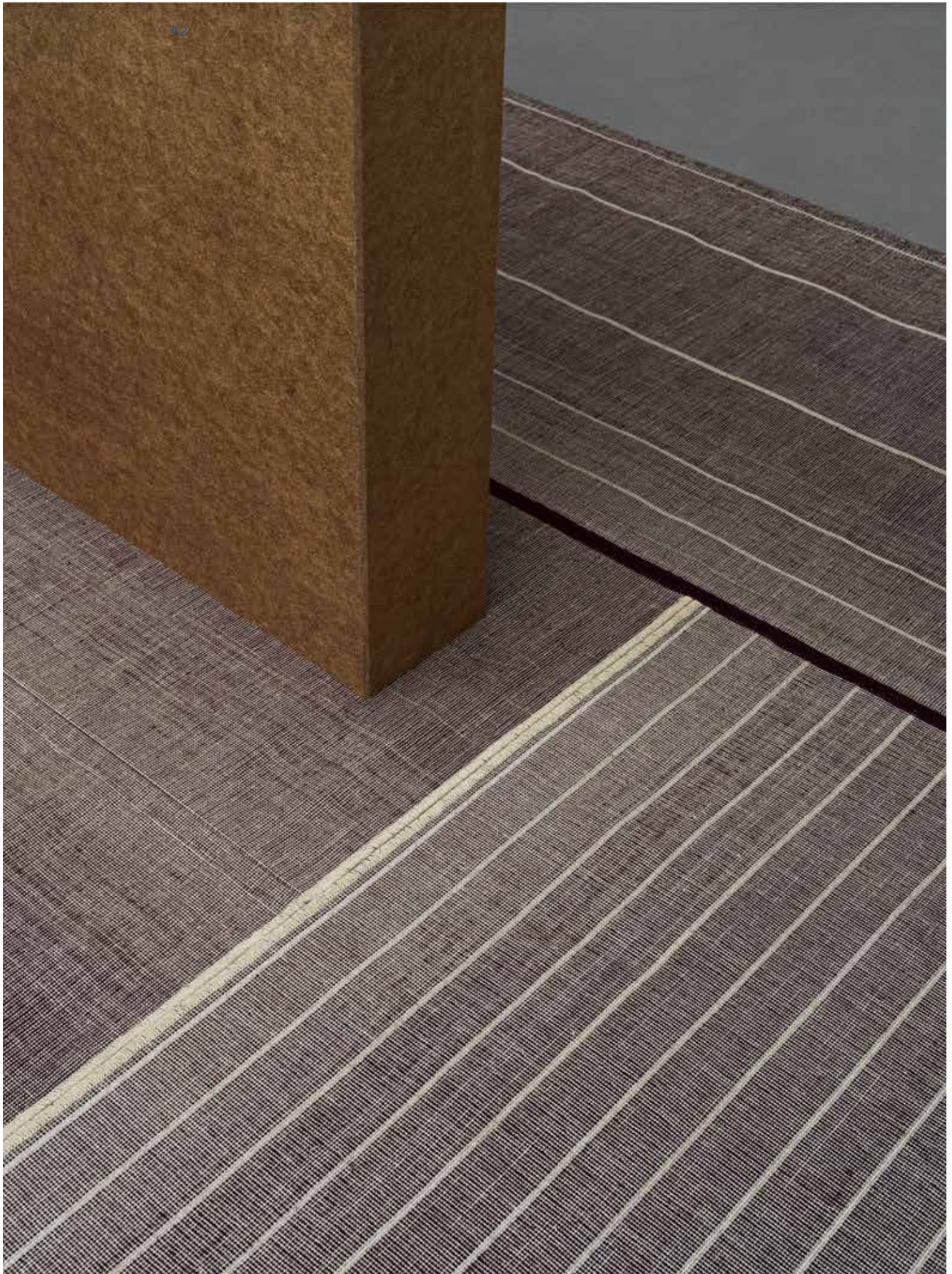


Brown Monochrome Patchwork, jute and wool, Folkform (2023).



Green Monochrome Patchwork, jute and wool, Folkform (2023).





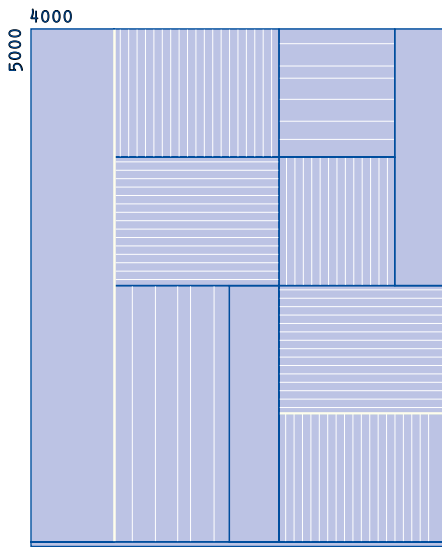
Collection Overview

The collection has been created in 12 colours and 8 sizes, with Folkorm designing a series of patchwork forms to minimise material waste. But across these textiles, the same idea is at play. The coloured wool not only brings beauty to the rugs, but also explains and illuminates three centuries of weaving construction.

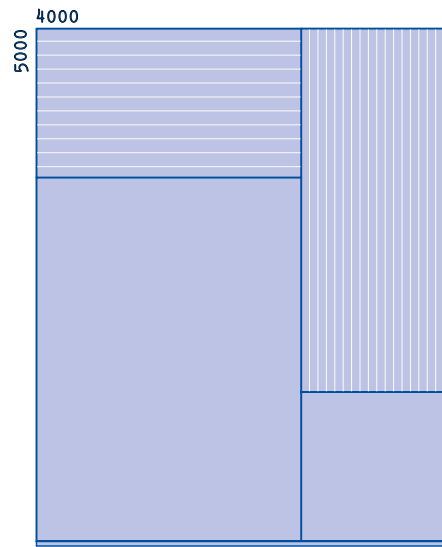
SIZES AND PATCHWORKS

The collection has been
created in 8 sizes.

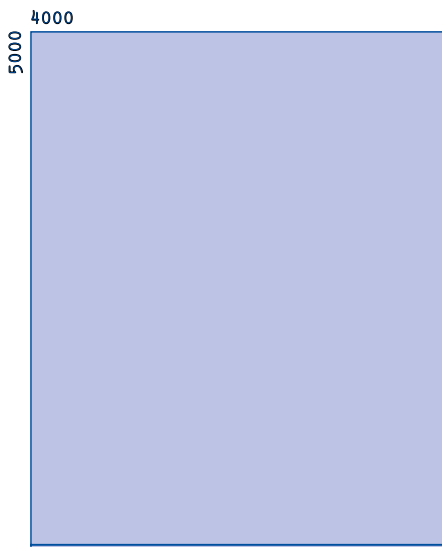
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Patchwork A

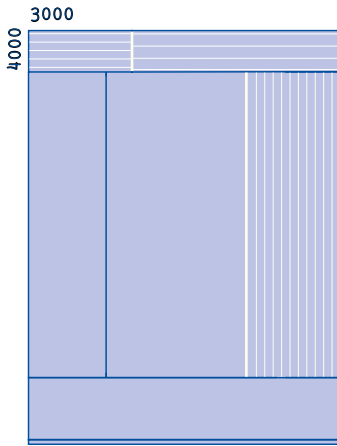


Patchwork B

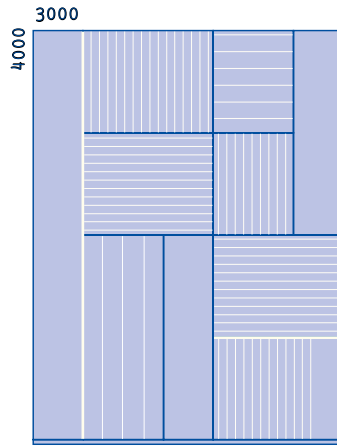


Plain

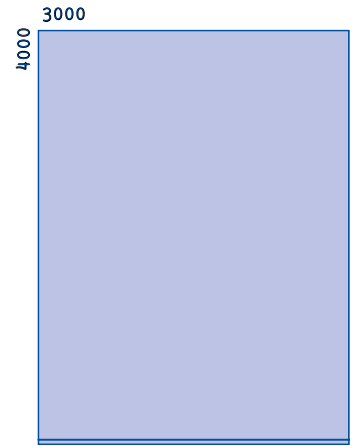
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Patchwork A

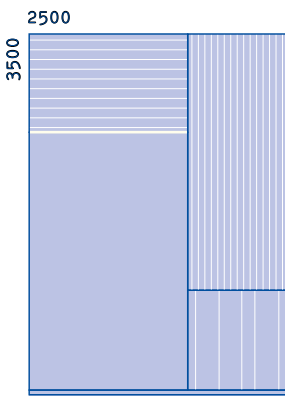


Patchwork B



Plain

No.3

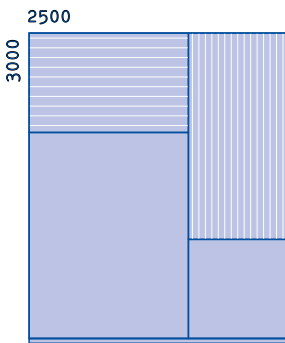


Patchwork

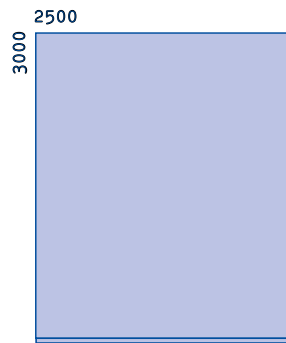


Plain

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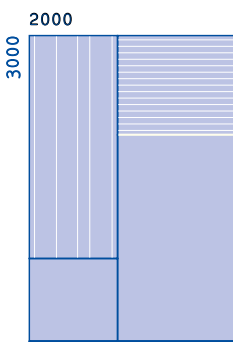


Patchwork



Plain

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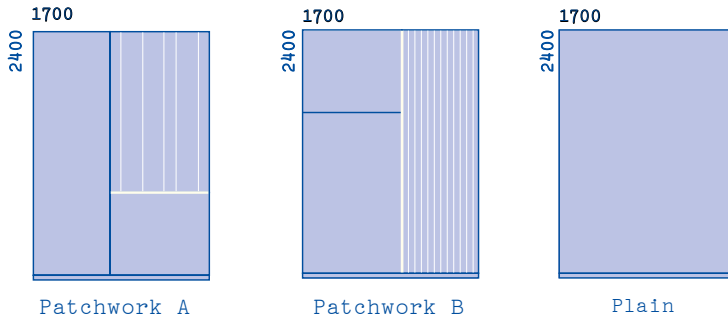


Patchwork

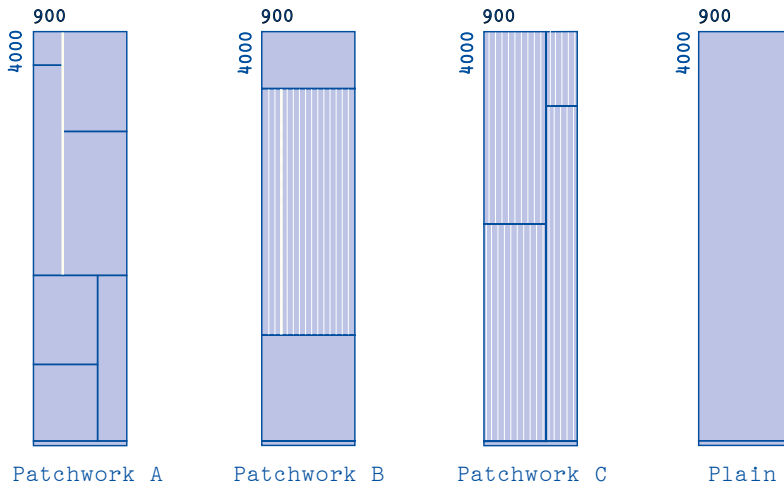


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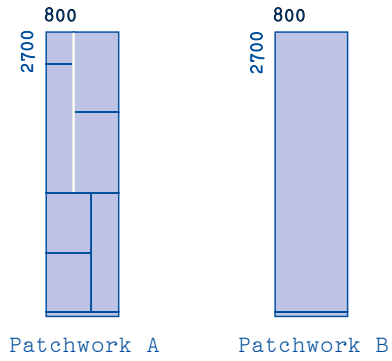
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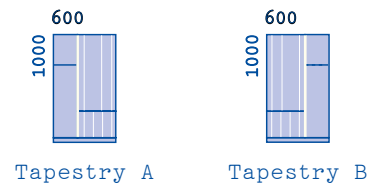
No.7



No.8



Ltd. edition tapestries



COLOURS

The collection has been created in 13 different colours, but can be made in other colours upon client request.



2411 FF Blue



5093 Pink



6517 Dark Brown



3585 Dark Green



3304 Green



5290 Red



7151 Copper



6020 Brown



3137 Concrete



2585 Dark Blue



5503 Burgundy



4101 Yellow



7712 White



About the Collaborators

Folkform

Art and design studio Folkform was founded in 2005 and is run by Stockholm-based designers Chandra Ahlsell and Anna Lovisa Holmquist. The studio's founders began collaborating while studying industrial design at Konstfack College of Art, Craft and Design in Stockholm; Ahlsell went on to study at the Pratt Institute in New York, while Holmquist pursued her studies at Goldsmiths in London as well as the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. Folkform's work is represented in the collections of the Swedish Nationalmuseum in Stockholm and the Nasjonalmuseet in Oslo. In 2019, Folkform won the Bruno Mathsson Award, the most prestigious design prize in the Nordic countries.

Louis De Poortere

Louis De Poortere is a Belgian carpet manufacturer that was established in Kortrijk in 1929 by Louis De Poortere. Previously, De Poortere had gained experience in Belgium's celebrated textile industry through his family's company De Poortere Freres, cloth manufacturers and merchants since 1859. This history was combined with De Poortere's own desire for innovation, which saw him diversify collections and explore new production techniques. As an innovator, designer and pioneer, Louis De Poortere imprinted his desire for progress on his company. Today, Louis De Poortere is still a family-owned business that honours its history, but thanks to its investment in high technology, it already has one foot in the future.

Dahl Agenturer

Dahl Agenturer is a Swedish design agency operating from two showrooms in Stockholm and Gothenburg. With a devotion to textile carpets, Dahl Agenturer has been supplying carpets (and lighting) to projects since the 1970s, working across offices, hotels, retail, schools, private homes and many others. The agency aims to be involved as early as possible in each project and offer its unique mixture of inspiration, knowledge and experience to architects and interior designers.



The Thousand Blue Threads

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Epilogue

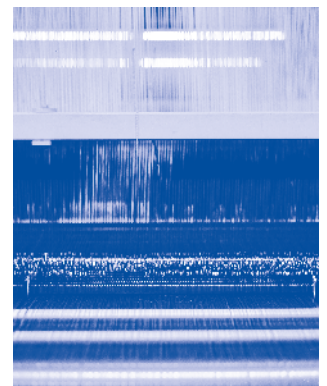
Production Novella by Folkform
October 2021

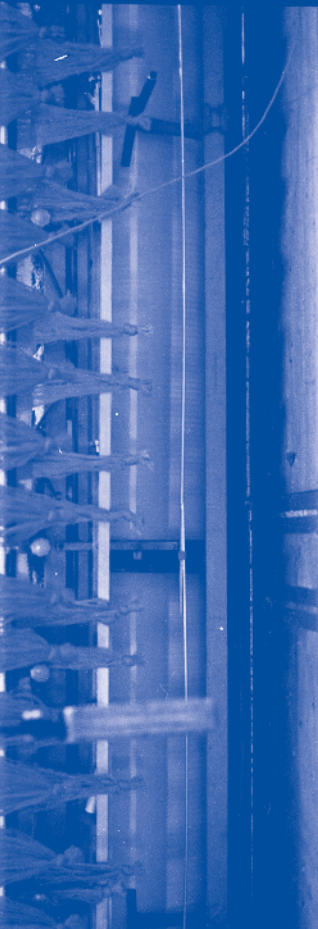
It was already autumn when we visited the weaving mill in Belgium for the first time. The air was cold in the early morning when we arrived by train at Kortrijk station, having travelled there to witness the textile production process at one of Belgium's oldest carpet weavers: Louis De Poortere (LDP), a company established in 1929 and named after its founder.

We walked along the asphalt towards our destination, one of the many brick factory buildings lined up one after another all along the Rue de la Royenne. At the main entrance to LDP, a staircase led up into the building, a large sign bearing the company's name displayed on its facade. The company is still owned by the same family, Louis's descendants. Everything is now as it was then.

We were visiting the mill to meet the owners of the company and learn more about their production process because, later in the autumn, we were going to work together on a series of new carpets. Machine weaving was not a manufacturing process that we had ever worked with before, but there was something we found fascinating about the material and history of the technology. The mechanisation of weaving was a significant driving force in early industrialisation, but manual weaving techniques are ancient. In a typical loom, warp threads are stretched vertically, with a thread called the weft passing through them horizontally. A weaver would traditionally pass a shuttle that carries the weft through the warp by hand, but in industrial weaving an air stream is used to drive the shuttle instead.

The type of loom used at the LDP factory is a jacquard loom, a technology invented around 1800. Programmed using punch cards, the jacquard loom could weave more intricate patterns than previous power looms, because each individual warp thread could be controlled independently of the others. The Jacquard loom revolutionised the textile industry as it no longer needed to be operated by several





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▲ 8

KODAK PORTRA 800-2

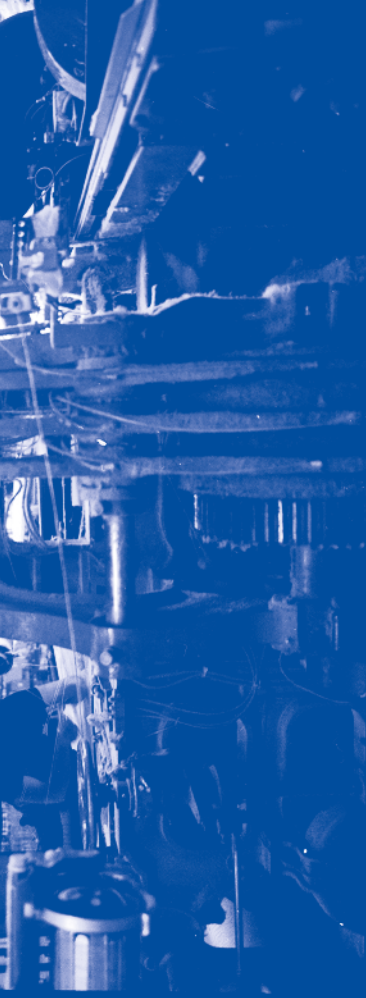
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KODAK PORTRA 800-2

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KODAK PORTRA 800-2

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▲ 6

KODAK PORTRA 800-2

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KODAK PORTRA 800



▲ 9

▲ 10



weavers – as had been required by previous looms – while up to 10,000 threads could be used simultaneously. Today, the LDP mill is one of the few remaining in Europe where this type of industrial weaving technology is still in use.

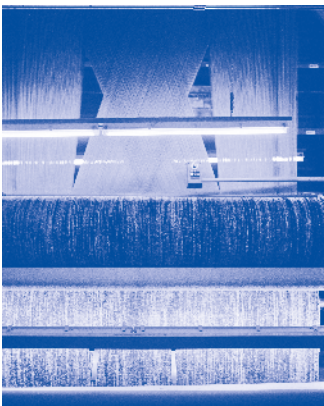
To remember all the production steps involved in the loom's use, Anna had brought along her little black notebook, as well as having invited photographer Magnus Laupa to join us on the trip.

We entered the building. The floor and even the majority of the walls in the room we stepped into were completely covered in carpet. Rows of material samples hung down, while larger woven carpets for living and dining rooms had been mounted on the walls as artwork. Some carpets featured richly ornamental patterns, while others had been woven to resemble flowers or abstract geometric shapes – being surrounded by these textiles as we passed through the building and into the room where we would have our meeting was an overwhelming experience. Inside the meeting room, an oil painting of the company's founder leaned against the wall.

In the centre of the room rested an oval conference table, where we sat down to introduce ourselves over coffee. We shared our own experiences of design and production from Folkform and, in turn, were introduced to material samples, one after another. We started to feel tired from our journey. Rather than continue the meeting, we asked if we could instead have a tour of the production facilities before lunch.

Sunlight streamed down through skylights set in a high ceiling as we entered the factory. We continued through one of the halls and on into a large warehouse with tall shelves, where rolled-up carpets were stacked in rows. From here, we moved through to the part of the factory where the large modern looms were located. Ten thousand red, blue, and green wool threads ran high above our heads, already mounted in the machines. The stretched threads were beautiful, the sun shining through the gaps between them, casting dramatic shadows on the factory floor.

Anna had brought a small plastic jar of blue acrylic paint from Sweden. This jar was currently sat snugly in her pocket, where it rubbed lightly against her leg. The question was, could we find a wool yarn in this exact shade of blue to use in our carpets? Bert, a developer at the factory, led us upstairs and opened the door to a room filled with yarn samples in all different hues: the factory's colour archive. Small yarn samples had been saved from across different time periods, all used in various LDP carpets and projects. Each sample was carefully marked with a number written on a white sticker. It turned out that the factory dyed



all its yarns onsite, and there were so many different shades of carefully archived blue on offer. We searched for a long time among the samples, eventually finding three different shades that matched our colour sample fairly well. Cutting off a small piece of yarn, we walked up to one of the large windows, to see how the shade changed in the daylight. We had already experimented with this particular blue in many of our furniture pieces, and we were enchanted by how the colour changed in different rooms and under different lighting conditions. Anna slipped the yarn clipping into her pocket, along with the jar of blue paint.

We continued through to the older parts of the factory, passing between enormous looms from which the suspended threads formed sculptural thread figures. Some of the looms had been there since 1929 – we even passed a small machine that still produced the traditional punch cards that operated them.

As we moved between the modern parts of the mill and the large room where the older machines stood, we found a small fragment of carpet discarded in a waste bin. It was raw and

unfinished, the brown jute threads visible on its back. But we found this unfinished back to be so beautiful, its state of incompleteness rendering the natural jute threads all the more pronounced. Anna added this little piece of carpet to her pocket, nestled alongside the blue paint and yarn. We continued through the factory.

In the textile dyeing facility the air was humid, with steam rising from its large metal tanks. The yarn used in LDP's carpets are dyed here, and the company also operates a small pigment laboratory where its fibres

are tested and dyed. We also passed by the large assembly tables, where the carpets' fringes were being created by hand and the carpets put together and edged. A woman in a blue work coat leaned over the table, cutting the material with a large pair of scissors.

When we finally sat back down around the conference table an hour later, we took out the sample of carpet we had found in the bin. It turned out that the fragment was the backside of a Wilton carpet, a machine-woven carpet with a shorter pile that is often used as a wall-to-wall carpet. Wilton carpets typically have a harder jute backside to keep the carpet in place on the floor. Our idea was to use that beautiful jute back as the carpet's front instead.

In this way, we wanted to challenge the aesthetic expression of the carpet's backside, using it as the front to overturn traditional material hierarchies. We decided to make a sample carpet to test our idea. The weft thread in these carpets would be blue in contrast to the natural beige jute typically used in these textiles – just like the blue thread Anna had in her pocket. When combined with the jute, it obtained an





uneven raw texture. Joined with a wide blue seam, they became like a collage assembling different pieces together.

Returning to our studio in Stockholm, we began sketching different compositions, combining the surfaces, the horizontal and vertical lines, and their junctions. The blue monochrome seams in the wool yarn emerged to create clearer compositions and highlight the blue weft. We remember that we sketched on blue cardboard with a white pen. We made so many proposals. We started printing

the 2x3m carpets at full scale to get an idea of how the compositions would work when they became larger.

It was snowing in Stockholm when the first sample carpet was ready in February. Now, only a few years later, that sample has developed into a whole series consisted of 10 carpets and an exhibition we called *The Blue Tapestries*. Our hope was that these monochromatic blue carpets would work as well on the wall as on the floor – that the carpet would dissolve the hierarchies between wall and floor objects.

We showcased the entire series for the first time in a small exhibition room with a large window facing Stockholm's Östra Järnvägsgatan. We painted the entire room with a matte blue paint, hanging the carpets across the walls. We covered the floor with an equally blue wall-to-wall carpet. Visitors would be enveloped in blue. Swept away.

/ Folkform





The Monochromes

For further details on any of the products in the catalogue, please see the website of the individual brands or contact info@folkform.se

For more information on the collaborators please contact info@folkform.se or info@ldp.be

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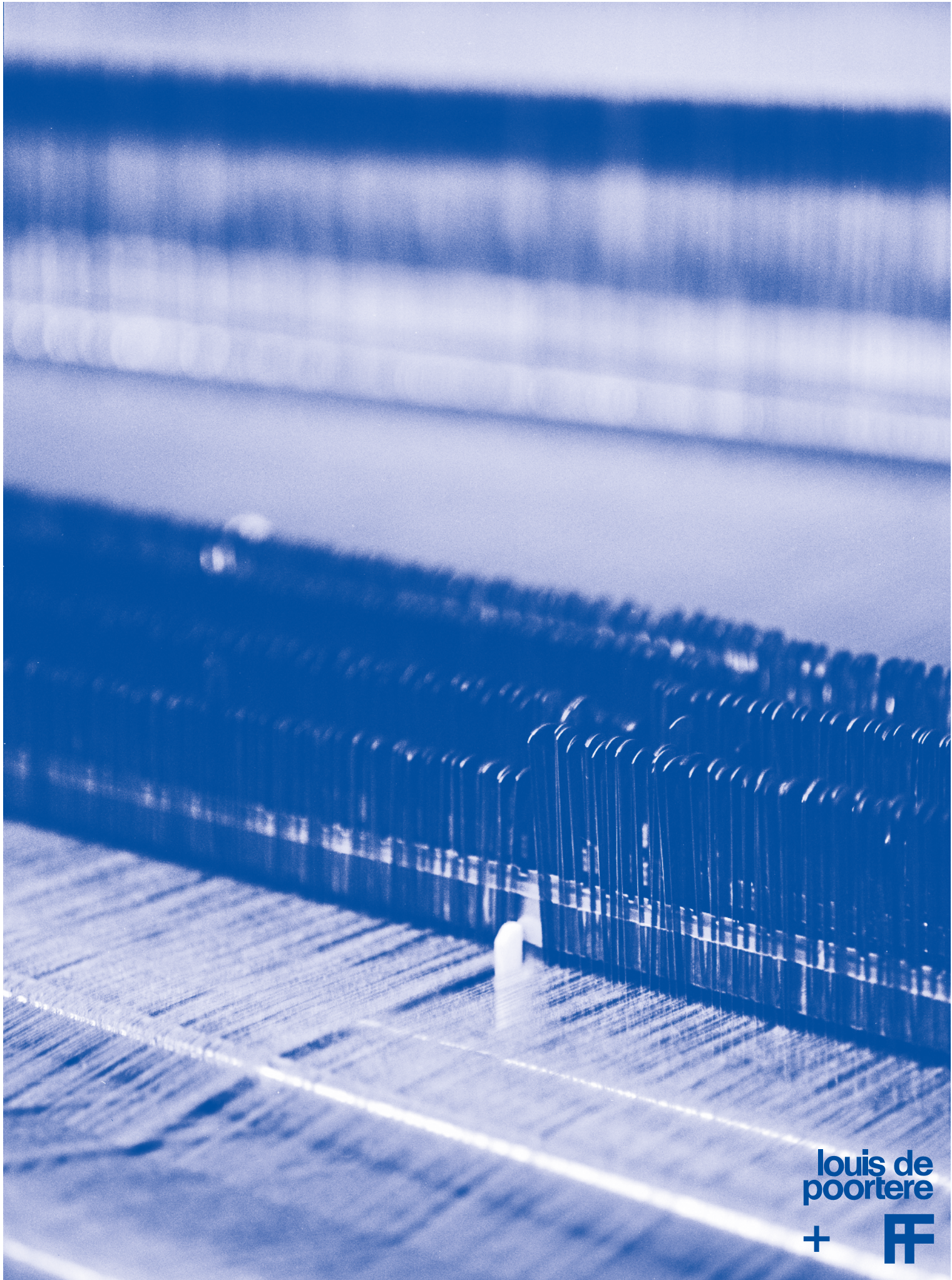
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