

ARTISANS

JUDY ROSS ENDOWS OLD KASHMIRI CRAFTS WITH NEW LIFE:
 "KASHMIRI EMBROIDERY IS STRIKINGLY BOLD AND SIMPLE," SHE SAYS

stitch in time

Right: Ross in her studio.
 Below: Manuscript and Fire, Ross's hand-embroidered, hand-woven wool shawls.



Judy Ross's luxurious tussah silk-and-wool shawls, made in Kashmir and embroidered with oversized arabesques, also moonlight as runners, throws, and wall hangings. "Apparently they're rarely hung in closets," says the Queens-born-and-bred Ross. "It seems that when they're not worn, their owners drape them over furniture."

Along with designing sports- and knitwear, Ross once hand-painted silk (she studied painting in art school). Today, she employs Kashmiri artisans to chain-stitch her scaled and color-coded sketches. According to Bashir, head of the family that oversees Ross's productions, tourists' dictates have stifled the cre-

ativity of the Kashmiri needleworkers. By giving them creative license, Ross lets them breathe new life into their craft.

Last year Ross designed a home collection which mingles handicrafts of Southern India with themes from Europe: a mosaic of vines and squares is appliquéd onto cushions, an Art Nouveau scroll is stitched across a tablecloth, cutwork bedspreads display overlapping circles reminiscent of Celtic knots.

At the outset of her career, Ross felt some kinship with the '70s Pattern painters, but even more influential were Modernist designer Eileen Gray and the Russian-born Sonia Delaunay, who applied her decorative skills to everything. Says Ross: "Like Delaunay, I want to design everything. I want to become another Marimekko."

Linda O'Keeffe