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## **Robert Sailors**

In 1945 Marianne Strengell installed at Cranbrook an S2 powerloom that could weave 64 inches wide, selected by her teaching assistant and former student **Robert. D. Sailors** (1913-1995). Sailors (MFA 1943) had studied the new technology at the Rhode Island School of Design. He became assistant director of Cranbrook's weaving department in 1944, responsible for teaching on the powerloom, which provided an option for students that put Cranbrook in the vanguard.

In 1947 he set up his own company, which did both handloom and powerloom weaving. Eventually it employed 23 people and was represented in showrooms in major cities. Sailors was known for abstract design, but especially for textures achieved by combining unusual materials (such as mosquito netting and aluminum strips) and capturing light through use of Lurex. His own early rug designs were described as natural to the medium, with bold rectilinear patterns that echoed structure and overall forms.<sup>1</sup> His specialty in his studio was bamboo and wooden slat window shades that he wove for restaurant chains in the Midwest. He was among the first to incorporate those materials into drapery designs.