

Heraldic Embroidery
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Heraldic motifs are just one of the design options available to the period needleworker. One must have a feel for period design and execution in order to understand its heraldic execution. I plan to cover the following in this class:

- What are heraldic motifs? What makes them different from other designs?
- What are the stitches used in period for this work? (and examine examples of period work)
- Go through the design/planning process with a simple heraldic charge.

Lots of designs are heraldic. With needlework you can replicate any device or badge design. Heraldic "allusion" is often used in garb and needlework projects, where pieces of the design are alluded to, but the full device is not used.

For example, my device is "Sable, on a chevron throughout argent an escallop vert". For the blazon-challenged that translates as: On a black field, a white chevron that goes to the top of the shield, and in the upper point of the chevron a green scallop shell with the fan pointing down. [The Shell Oil scallop shell is an "escallop inverted" or fan pointing up.] If I wanted to use heraldic allusion on an outfit, I could use the simple shell outline in any color.

What makes a design heraldic? It's the use of stylized charges. A charge being the design motif (cow, shell, fess, chevron, roundel, star, etc.) used on shields to identify individuals. A heraldic design should have good contrast, follow certain space-filling rules, and be static and stylized in presentation.

Types of Embroideries (non-exhaustive):

- Ecclesiastical: copes, albs, chausables, mitres, etc.
- Household Linens: sheets, curtains, bed hangings, tapestries, pillowcases, runners, more.
- Garb: hems, cuffs, other decorative panels and motifs
- Regalia: favors, wallhangings, banners, funeral cloths, etc.
- Personal items: book covers, Boxes, Purses/Pouches, etc.

Design considerations:

- What are you trying to accomplish?
- What kind of finish are you looking for? (shine vs. matte, nubby vs. smooth)
- What culture/timeperiod are you looking to recreate?
- Pattern/design/motif [depends on your period, culture, and social status]
- Color: Keep color scheme simple, but the colors do not have to be realistic. [Look at color scheme of the Bayeux Tapestry for effective use of "unnatural" color, the main colors are blue, red, and mustard so there are lots of blue horses and pigs and dogs and other beasties.]
- Think heraldically [no metal on metal, no color on color]. Use dark/light combinations that have good contrast.
- Most period work is outlined, then filled in with a packed filler stitch.
- How much time do you have to finish the piece?
- What level of detail do you want displayed? (outline, silhouette, picture perfect)

Period Stitches and Techniques:

- Appliqué
- Assisi work (negative imaging)
- Beading
- Brick stitch
- Couching and Laidwork (including metalwork)
- Chain stitch
- Cross-stitch
- Diapering
- Double running stitch (blackwork)

- Long-armed cross-stitch
- Or nué
- Plait stitch
- Quilting
- Split stitch (Opus Anglicanum)
- Stem stitch (sometimes called outline stitch)

Materials used:

Handedness (lefties will need to translate): Left Handed Stitchery by Sally Cowan

Fabric

- Silk: check out the Little India district of Vancouver, BC for best "local" deals
- Linen: check out church supplies, "domestics/linens" departments at dept. stores, look for white sales
- Cotton
- Wool
- Velvet

Thread

- Wool (crewel, Persian, and tapestry weights)
- Silk (Soie d'Alger is the silk equivalent to DMC floss, Soie Platte is flat silk)
- Cotton (floss, perle cotton)
- Metals (silver & gold)

Needles

- On cotton: medium to short needle with a long eye
- On silk, satin: short, very sharp point, gold plated needle
- On wools: large "Crewel" needles with very long eyes
- On evenweave canvas: blunt point Tapestry needle

Scissors/snips

Hoop/frame (optional)

Marking pen/pencil/chalk: fine line mechanical pencil is best

Technique tips:

- The key to beautiful needlework is consistency. Even big stitches can be beautiful if done evenly (same stitch size and tension throughout).
- To avoid having threads knot up when working:
Use shorter working thread, Use thread with the spin or grain of the yarn (not against the grain), Let thread untwist every few stitches, Keep waste tails trimmed while working.
- Neatness counts (sometimes!): The back of the Bayeux Tapestry is reportedly messy. In period the goal of the backside of the needlework was that it shouldn't be so messy as to cause the front to rip out in use, so depending on how it's used is how important neatness counts. For wall hangings it's less important to be neat than for a cloak which will get worn (cloaks were usually lined to keep this from being a problem). Knots may look lumpy when pieces are appliquéd for example. However, modern/SCA tastes usual dictate a neat reverse side, especially for competition.
- Watch tension; avoid puckering, maybe your project needs backing fabric.
- Stitch ergonomically, turn project so you're comfortable.
- Keep hands clean! No lotion, perfumes, or food that will rub off onto the project.
- Wash both fabric ground and threads if you are worried about sizing and dye running later. Most of my projects have been boxes or wallhangings that aren't getting wear and tear, but it's better to be safe than sorry, especially if you've got a dark color thread on a light background (blue or red on white for example). Most stitchers recommend using Woolite or Ivory soap flakes with a gentle handwashing (no machine!) for needlework projects. Like I said, I haven't done it myself, so be careful. See the article in TI #132 for needlework finishing techniques.

Resources used for this Class:

- Airmid Godwin, "A Catalog of Medieval Embroidery Stitches", In The Known World Handbook, 3rd ed., Milpitas, CA: Society for Creative Anachronism/Office of the Stock Clerk, 159-163.
- Cateline de la Mor, "Opus Anglicanum", In Tournaments Illuminated, Winter (1989) #93, 34-35.
- Coss, Melinda. Reader's Digest Complete Book of Embroidery. Pleasantville, New York/Montreal, 1996.
- David of Moffat, "Opus Anglicanum: the Stem and Split Stitch", handout from Needlework Ithra, 28 March 1998.
- Dean, Beryl. Ecclesiastical Embroidery. London: B.T. Batsford, 1989.
- Dean, Beryl. Embroidery in religion and ceremonial. London: B. T. Batsford, 1981.
- Freeman, Margaret B. The St. Martin Embroideries. Greenwich, CT: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1968.
Discusses in details one set of 15th c. embroideries. Excellent closeups.
- Gabrielle Chasseresse de Chevreuil, "Mounting Needlework for Framing or Display", In Tournaments Illuminated, Autumn (1999) #132, 22-26.
- Jones, Mary Eirwen. A History of Western Embroidery. New York: Watson-Guption, 1969.
- Karen Larsdatter. "Cross Stitch Embroidery in the Middle Ages and Renaissance"
http://lg_photo.home.texas.net/florilegium/files/p-x-stitch-art.html
"It is rare to see cross stitch done as the sole stitch on any pre-Renaissance embroidery in western Europe. Generally, cross stitch was used in addition to other work, as split stitch, satin stitch, and so forth. One such example is seen on an English seal bag dating back to 1319. It features the arms of the city of London -- an escutcheon with St. Paul holding a sword and book. St. Paul (as well as the sword and book) are worked in split stitch and underside couching, but the field of the escutcheon is worked entirely in cross stitch." [see picture of this item in the packet]
- Kingdom of Atlantia. Ministry of Arts and Sciences links megasite, "Embroidery and Needlework Links"
<http://moas.atlantia.sca.org/topics/embr.htm>
I like this site for ideas and tips on documentation, especially books and resources I have not used before.
- Mitchell, Timothy J. (writing as Master Richard Wymarc), "A stitch out of time: 14th & 15th century German counted thread mbroidery." Compleat Anachronist pamphlet series, July 1996, Volume 86. Also online at:
<http://home.flash.net/~wymarc/asoot/stitch/cover.htm>.
- Lugg, Vicky and John Willcocks. Heraldry for Embroiderers. London: B.T. Batsford, 1990.
- Siban ni Sheaghda. "Simply Embroidery". <http://members.aol.com/tbyrnes883/armoye/embroidery.html>.
- Staniland, Kay. Medieval Craftsmen: Embroiderers. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.
Good discussion of opus anglicanum. Author is Keeper of Costume and Textiles at the Museum of London. Full of period example pictures.

Further reading (embroidery):

Antrobus, Mary Symond and Louisa Preece. Needlework through the Ages. London: Hodder & Strough, Ltd., 1928.

Includes non-European work. Fewer plates than Schuette.

Christie, A.G.I. English Medieval Embroidery. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938.

THE book on opus anglicanum methods and materials with many black and white pictures. Discusses both style and technique. Out of Print; available through ILL.

Crowfoot, Elisabeth, Frances Pritchard and Kay Staniland. Textiles and Clothing c.1150-1450. London: HMSO, 1992.

Don, Sarah. Traditional Embroidered Animals. NY: Sterling Publishing Co., 1990.

Period embroidery techniques within the context of the title, that of animals. It's a general survey book-- there's a section here and there on just about every major period embroidery technique. And, it has projects.

Estep, Katherine. (writing as Doña Clare de Estepa). "Clare's Favorite Embroidery Books"

<http://www.planetc.com/users/derwyddon/favbooks.html#bath>

Annotated bibliography of needlework books for SCA purposes. See her page on Assisi embroidery as well: (<http://www.planetc.com/users/derwyddon/assisi.html>)

Gostelow, Mary. A World of Embroidery. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1975.

King, Donald. Opus Anglicanum: English Medieval Embroidery. London: The Curwen Press, 1963.

Exhibition catalog. Quality of pictures better than other works.

King, Donald and Santina Levey. The Victoria and Albert Museum's Textile Collection Embroidery in Britain from 1200 to 1750. New York: Canopy Books, 1993.

Miller, Joyce. "Almoner's Purse, French, circa 1340"

<http://www.doctorbeer.com/joyce/emb/almpouch/almpouch.htm>

Documentation for use of heraldic images on needlework purse based on 1340 extant example. Scans of the original included.

Montclare, Kay. Patterns From Seventeenth Century European Samplers. (self-published; Available from Special Projects, 232 Osgood Road, Milford, N.H. 03055-3430.)

Salazar, Kim Brody. "Heraldic Lion from The New Carolingian Modelbook, Plate 38:3".

<http://www.geocities.com/Paris/9197/lionchart.htm>

Permissions allow use for making an item but not for printing out the pattern for class packet.

Schuette, M. and S. Muller-Christiansen. A Pictorial History of Embroidery. New York: 1964.

Available in both English and German. Good general work; LOTS of pictures of period examples, and good section on technique. Out of print, very expensive, use Interlibrary Loan.

Snook, Barbara. English Embroidery. London: Bell & Hyman, 1974.

Warner, Pamela. Embroidery, A History. London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1991.

Whiting, Gertrude. Old Tyme Tools and Toys of Stitchery. New York: Columbia University Press, 1928.

Further reading (heraldry):

Bruce Draconarius of Mistholme & Akagawa Yoshio. A Pictorial Dictionary of Heraldry as Used in the Society for Creative Anachronism. (aka "The PicDic") [available from Free Trumpet Press West, <http://www.sca.org/heraldry/ftpw/>]

Dennys, Rodney. Heraldic Imagination. New York: Clarkson and Potter Inc., 1975.

"While ostensibly a discussion of heraldic monsters, the book is introduced with an extensive section of early medieval heraldry, and is well illustrated with photographs of medieval material."--St. Gabriel website

Elizabeth Braidwood. The Medieval Pelican. <http://gateway.kwantlen.bc.ca/~donna/sca/pelican/>

Nice compilation of period pelicans, lots of needlework examples.

Eowyn Amberdrake. Heraldry for Scribes. http://www.sca.org.au/lochac/scribes/hb_32.html

Written for scribes, but it does such a nice job of explaining blazon and posture, as well as have swell outline pictures of many beasties. Very good from art point of view, includes how to draw heater shield and other design techniques easily transferred to needlework.

Foster, Joseph. The Dictionary of Heraldry: feudal coats of arms and pedigrees. New York: Arch Cape Press : Distributed by Crown Publishers, 1989.

Reprint of a period armorial. Lots of good pictures. Try to find the reprint edition done in color.

Friar, Stephen. A Dictionary of Heraldry. New York: Harmony Books, 1987.

"A dictionary of anything you might related to the science of heraldry: names of charges, heraldic titles, knightly orders, ranks of nobility, etc. Most of the material is post-period, but a surprising amount is useful once you read it carefully. Heavily illustrated."--St. Gabriel website

Neubecker, Ottfried. Heraldry: sources, symbols, and meaning. London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1977.

List of Suppliers (mostly geared for the Three Mountains/Dragon's Mist area)

Acorns & Threads, Owner: Roz, (503) 292-4457
4475 SW Scholls Ferry Rd. #158, Portland, OR, 97225

Her shop is targeted at fine cross-stitch and hardanger artists. Will special order fabrics and books. No minimum order & my order arrived from Europe within a week!

Fabrics-store.com

<http://www.fabrics-store.com/Shop/enter.html>

Online discount fabrics house. Reportedly fabulous 100% linen.

Jo-Ann Fabrics & Crafts, (503) 639-2434

208 SW Tigard Plaza, Tigard, OR, 97223

Aida cloth and other evenweave fabrics available off the bolt (especially the wide stuff).

Michaels Arts & Crafts, (503) 684-8255

17880 SW Lower Boones Ferry Rd., Lake Oswego, OR 97035

Michaels carry a nice line of wool-blend tapestry weight yarns, plus lots of other needlework supplies.

Needlepoint Plus, (503) 641-7100, M-S 10-5, except Thursday 10-9

8640 SW Scholls Ferry Rd., Beaverton, OR 97008

Really nice shop with twisted silk and lots of colors and sizes of DMC perle cotton (especially hard to find #3!)

Northwest Wools, (503) 244-5024

3524 SW Troy St., Portland, OR

Their shop is targeted towards weavers. Lots of yarn and goodies including card weaving supplies. Carries Cleckheaton brand wool tapestry yarn.

Pastiche, SCA merchants: Foggy & Asha, email: pastinc@aol.com

3634 NE 19th, Portland, OR 97212

They carry Kreinik Silk Embroidery floss (flat silk). Catch them at events, especially large Kingdom events, like Twelfth Night and Kingdom Arts and Sciences, or send them an email to make an appointment to drop by or what their next event will be. They also sell fabrics and books.

Phoenix Textiles, <http://store.yahoo.com/phoenixtextiles/>

Online discount fabric supplier, great prices, good quality.

The Playful Needle, (503) 235-1636

8235 SE 13th Ave. #10, Portland, OR, 97202

Reported to have great wool and silk.

Robin and Russ Handweavers, Inc., (800) WEAVE-91

533 North Adams St., McMinnville, OR 97128

<http://www.robinandruss.com/index.html>

THE store for weavers -- not only do they have a new website but their mail order catalogs are pretty spiffy too.

Threads & More, Owner: Pat McGarraugh, (503) 538-3577

602 E. 1st St. #B, Newberg, OR

Reported to have great customer service.