

Constructing a 14th Century Embroidered Pouch

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Chief Characteristics of all bags:

- Shape – either rectangular or trapezoidal
- Feature love scenes in the outdoors
- Completely filled background (most often done with couched gold threads)
- Have both a hanging cord and drawstrings,
- Tassels along the bottom and possibly the side





Pouch 2 – source <http://cottesimple.com/articles/aumonieres/>

Chief Characteristics:

- Background is filled in, but not with gold thread
- Band at top for drawstrings to go through
- Hanging cord



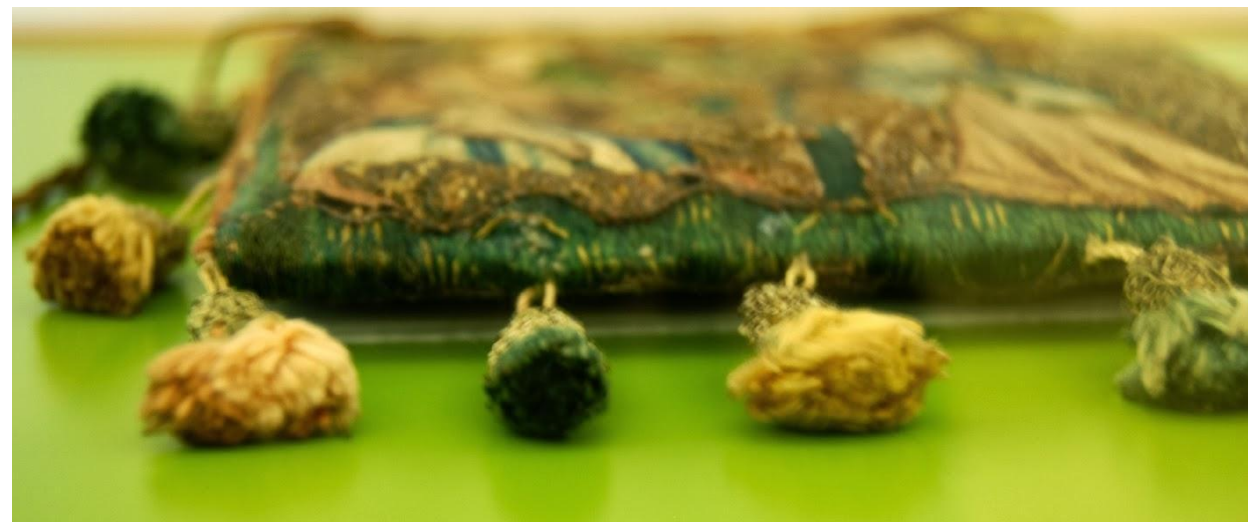
Pouch 3 – source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/466693?img=0>



Pouch 4 – Source: <http://cottesimple.com/articles/aumonieres/>



Pouch 4 Other side: source - <https://www.mkg-hamburg.de/en/collection/permanent-collection/fashion/bag-with-a-scene-of-courtly-love.html>



Pouch 4 Other Angles - Source:
<https://thomasguild.blogspot.com/2013/11/aumonieres-and-purses-from-germany.html>

Embroidery



For faces you can create more realism by having your stitches follow the contours of the face. You could also do the skin tone first over the whole area and do the face detail overtop of the skin embroidery. Hair can be done with either individual stitches or with knots.



Have your stitches flow in the direction that makes the most sense. For example if you are sewing a draped gown have the stitches follow the contours of the gown.

Construction guidelines

1.Cutting

1. Trim extra fabric away from embroidery – leave at least a half inch on each side of embroidery to sew pouch together
2. Cut lining fabric to the same size as the shell, or slightly smaller.
3. Fold and sew (separately) the sides of the pouch together and the lining together

2.Make cords

1. Fingerloop braid three cords – one hanging cord and two drawstrings.
2. Sixteen inches is a good length for the cords
3. Instructions for fingerloop braids can be found at <http://fingerloop.org/>

3.Sew hanging cords to both sides of the pouch

1. Turn the pouch inside out, fold down the top, sew at least one inch of the cord to the pouch.

4. Fold down the edge of the lining and sew it to the top of the bag

5.Finish edges

1. Finish the sides and top edges
2. Edges can be finished with either a tacked down braid, or by doing tablet weaving and using the weft thread to sew the weaving to the edge.
3. If doing braids use two loops and each time you pass one through the other tack it down.
4. A really good source for doing a braid for the edges can be found at http://m-silkwork.blogspot.com/2007/04/finishing-seams-of-14th15th-century_29.html

6.Run drawstrings through eyelets

7.Make tassels and attach to bottom and drawstrings.

1. Tassels can also be added to sides (less common)
2. To make a tassel, take thread and wind it around a flashcard (I usually do around 50 turns). Next take a thread and work it under the threads and up to the top of the tassel. Use it to gather the threads and tie a knot. You can use this thread to sew the tassels onto the pouch. Slide the tassel off the card and take another piece of thread and create a “head” on the tassel by wrapping the thread around the tassel.
3. Many tassels in period also had Turks head knots covering the top part of the tassel.
 1. Best video for learning to make a Turks Head Knot can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-biPxnzvm0>

Embroidery Sample Info

| | Source | Country | Year | Description | Size | Tassels | Drawstring area | Hanging Cord |
|----------------------|---|---------|----------|--|----------------|---|-----------------|---|
| Pouch 1 | http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/11437349/11604258 | France | 1340 | A small pouch made of a long piece of fabric sewn in half, reinforced on the sides with a silk tape, with a binding in the top part and a hole for a string used to tighten and loosen the pouch. At the bottom, there are decorative elements (tassels) consisting of gold circles made of thread and long single tassels. The whole pouch is embroidered with split stitch, long and short stitch and fishbone stitch. On one side, there are four human figures among thin trees with palmate leaves resembling oak leaves. On the other side, the same young woman is being led up a hill by the old man. Although interpretation of the scenes on the alms pouch is not certain, it is most likely they depict episodes from the story of Tristan and Iseult. The tale of unhappy love of brave Tristan to beautiful Iseult, the wife of king Mark of Cornwall, was written down for the first time in the 12th century and has been reappearing since then in many countries and language versions. Scenes embroidered on the pouch, enrooted in the Arthurian tradition, depict the clash of a sophisticated world of courtly ways (young and beautiful lovers) with wild forces of nature (the old men). There are only several alms pouches with similar decorations preserved until now. | 15.5cm x14.5cm | 5 along bottom, 1 on each drawstring | Solid color | Looks like one cord that is used for both hanging cord and drawstring |
| Pouch 2 | http://cottesimple.com/articles/aumonieres/ | France | Mid 14th | French, mid-14th century, now in the Sens Cathedral. Scenes from La Chatelaine de Vergy, a romantic French poem of the 13th century: a woman receives a ring from her love on one side and on the other, is reunited with him after he returns from the hunt. Twenty one x 18 centimeters; linen ground with silk embroidery in split stitch and couched gold. (Schuette and Müller-Christensen, pp. 136, 311) | 21cm x18cm | 5 extant along bottom - probably 7 originally. 1 on each drawstring | Solid color | Runs up from side finishing |
| Pouch 3 | https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/466693?img=0 | France | 14th C. | Purse with scenes from the story of Patient Griselda, 14th century French This embroidered scene depicts the popular medieval tale of Griselda, a poor maiden who was tested long and cruelly by her noble husband and thus exemplifies ideal Christian patience. The story appeared in various forms, the best known of which is "The Clerk's Tale" in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. The needlework may have been made professionally, or by its owner, inasmuch as needlework was considered an essential part of a woman's education. | 15.2cm x14.3cm | Evidence of tassels on side of bag - 2 on each side | Solid color | Attached to side |
| Pouch 4 | http://cottesimple.com/articles/aumonieres/ | France | 1340 | Parisian purse from 1340, other side Made in Paris, circa 1340. Lovers playing a game with a hood in a garden. Six and 1/4 x 5 1/2 inches; topside-couched gold and silver threads on linen with silk polychrome embroidery in split, chain, stem, and knot stitches. (Color picture and some information from Camille, p. 50; additional b+w photo and further detail from Schuette and Müller-Christensen, pp. 136, 311) | 15.8cm x14.5cm | 6 along bottom, 2 more on side and 1 on each drawstring | Solid color | Comes up slightly from the edge of the corner |
| Pouch 4 - Other Side | https://www.mkg-hamburg.de/en/collection/permanent-collection/fashion/bag-with-a-scene-of-courtly-love.html | France | 1340 | The little bag is thought to be a love or a wedding gift. It shows a couple in an unmistakably erotic encounter. The clothes are tied up for dancing and the young girl is holding the youth by the tip of his hood. In her other hand she is holding a wreath as a symbol of her virginity. The back of the bag is embroidered in equally delicate silk with a scene showing the arrival of the cavalier. The particularly refined finish and the charm of the depiction combined with the excellent preservation of the object make it one of the gems of the courtly love embroidery. | | | | |
| Pouch 4 - New Pics | https://thomasguild.blogspot.com/2013/11/aumonieres-and-purses-from-germany.html | France | 1340 | Aumonieres (pouches used for carrying money or alms for the poor) and reliquary pouches (pouches containing relics from saints, like pieces of bone or cloth) were often made from expensive materials and could be beautifully embroidered. Still, surviving examples from medieval times are a rare find. We did encounter several of those pouches in museums in Germany and luckily we were able to take some photos of them. The first aumoniere shown here is from the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe (Arts and Crafts Museum) in Hamburg. The museum has a small part dedicated to medieval reliquary items, such as the Osterteppich, some aquamaniles and also an embroidered aumoniere. The aumoniere in the museum dates from 1340 and is a typical example of the type made in the mid-14th century in Paris, France. The aumoniere is made of linen and are embroidered with silk and gold yarn using the stem stitch. Many tassels decorate the edges of the purse, as well as the ends of the drawstring. The image on the aumoniere is that of two lovers in a garden. The backside of the aumoniere is embroidered with a different image, but of the same theme. | | | | |

Resources

Period Examples:

- Aumônières, otherwise known as alms purses.
http://www.cottesimple.com/alms_purse/alms_purse_history.html
- A ca 1340 French pouch. http://m-silkwork.blogspot.com/2011/07/ca-1340-french-pouch_14.html
- Camille, Michael. *The Medieval Art of Love*. London: Harry N. Abrams, 1998.
- Schuette, Marie and Sigrid Müller-Christensen. *A Pictorial History of Embroidery*. Trans. Donald King. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963.
- Staniland, Kay. *Medieval Craftsmen Embroiders*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.
- Newton, Stella Mary. *Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince*. Suffolk: St Edmundsbury Press, 1980.

Modern Examples:

- An aumônière as it might have appeared in 1380, Paris.
http://www.cottesimple.com/alms_purse/my_purse.html
- Embroidered Lovers' Purse. <http://www.threegoldbees.com/projects/5-embroidered-lovers-purse>

Period Illuminations:

- Codex Manesse. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Manesse
- http://diglit.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg848?&ui_lang=eng

Techniques:

- Finger Loop Braids: <http://fingerloop.org/>
- Side Braids: http://m-silkwork.blogspot.com/2007/04/finishing-seams-of-14th15th-century_29.html
- Brickstitch Embroidery: <http://www.wymarc.com/>
- Embroidery: Bentham, Tanya. *Opus Anglicanum*. Ramsbury: The Crowood Press Ltd, 2021
- Turks Head Knots: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-biPxnzvm0>