

Worshipful Company of Broderers of Lochac

Guild Newsletter, Issue 9 – 12th Night Investiture, AS XXXV
(Jan 2001)

From The Guildmaster:

Greetings to all members of the Worshipful Company of Broderers of Lochac. By the time you receive this, we should have completed the round of competitions for AS XXXV, and will have a new champion to be announced at Rowany Festival. The next round of Company competitions will start at May Coronet, and I hope to see lots of you enter this year. We have chosen the competition categories in consultation with members of the Company to make them as interesting and inspiring as possible.

The May Coronet competition, 'Something New' has been chosen to encourage embroiderers to try something they haven't tried before, either a new technique, or a new style of embroidery. I'm sure that for many of you there is something that you've always wanted to have a go at, so this is the competition to spur you to action. Since the broadness of this competition makes it hard to write an article on the style or technique, it seemed that this would be a good time to run a general article on what the judges are looking for in terms of documentation and presentation, both for the competitions and for the Company rankings.

This year we have had a number of people submit items for ranking, and it became clear that we needed to formalise the process for recording the rank, and providing feedback. There is a new ranking form for this purpose, and a copy is attached to the newsletter. You can submit your work for ranking to me, either in person, or by mail with photographs and documentation attached. Documentation is essential for ranking, but you can provide either written or oral documentation - it will help, however, if you can provide pictures of the period pieces that you have based your work on.

Tristan de Poitiers has attained apprentice level in both blackwork and chainstitch. Mistress Alarice submitted several pieces for ranking in November. She has attained the overall rank of Journeyman, and has reached that standard in German counted thread work, cross-stitch and couching, but the beautiful blackwork cap which won the Midwinter competition has been ranked at Master level. Mistress Keridwen, our patron, has attained Master level for her couching, split stitch, beadwork and blackwork, and needs to submit only one more piece at that level to become a Master Embroiderer. Lord Bartolomeo has attained Master level for his Elizabethan slips, but he still needs to submit documentation for his other pieces (yes, Bart, it's a hint!). Congratulations to all those who have attained rank within the Company.

I know, too, that there are several other people who have shown me work during the time that I have been Guildmaster, but I don't have clear records of it, in several cases because they didn't supply documentation. If this applies to you, please could you contact me, and resubmit your piece with a ranking form and documentation, and I will give you a firm rank.

It has been brought to my attention that some of the information about ranking and how the guild works has not been particularly accessible. This is my fault, and mostly stems from the fact that I haven't got my act together with the charter. So this issue will also contain the new improved version of the Company charter. Please note that the charter is not set in concrete, and may be changed by the Masters of the Company (at the moment, that's just me and Mistress Vittoria degli Fiori, but we hope that will change soon), and any member can put forward a case for changing the charter. This particularly applies to the styles and techniques of embroidery which we consider period. The list is

not exclusive, and if you can provide the evidence and convince us that a style or technique of embroidery was performed in Western Europe before 1600, we'll be happy to add it to the list.

The other point to make about the charter is that in some ways it is still a 'vision statement', and represents where we would like to be, rather than necessarily where we are now, but we have come a long way towards achieving the goals we have set, and with the enthusiasm of the members will surely continue to do so.

A final reminder that Rowany Festival is not too far away (panic now, save time later), and it would be nice to see Company members display their work in the Laurels' Prize Tourney. I am looking forward to seeing what you've all been up to. There will also be the annual Company meeting (at a time to be announced) and you are all invited to come along, ask questions and put forward your points of view. It would also be nice to have some classes taught by members of the Company, so please contact me if you have any ideas for classes you would like to attend, or like to teach.

Keep stitching!
Bess Haddon



From the Guild Patron:

Greetings everyone,
Well the last few months have been quite busy and rewarding for me. I managed to sew some lovely blackwork cuffs and do a spot of beading for Rowany Yule Feast. However now I'm dithering with a few small projects that aren't quite holding my attention. It's strange how we seem to need deadlines to get anything done.

Therefore I'm hoping that the competitions we sponsor are helping you to get projects started and, hopefully, finished. The next competition at May Coronet is for "something new". If you are planning on sewing something you haven't tried before in preparation for Festival, or 12th Night or May Coronet itself, then please enter it in the competition.

As I've said before, last year was a bit of a slow year for the WCoB, due to illness, the Olympics and a million other reasons. Please give the officers of the WCoB some feedback on how it's all been going. Even if it is just a simple "I'm reading the Newsletter and it's interesting" or suggesting a competition on 14th Century Belgian embroidered pommanders ('cause you are building one and are sure to win with it!), please let us know, because a little encouragement is always good to get.

Have fun with the sewing...
mouse...



From The Chronicler:

Greetings all.
Welcome to the first issue of the Guild Newsletter for the New Year. I hope you all had happy and safe holiday celebrations. Well, convention would have it that the New Year is the time for Resolutions, so of course I made the normal ones (eat less, exercise more, stop after just one pizza... yadda, yadda, yadda!) but this year I added 'Do more needlework' to the list. May I also suggest that if any of you are still in the market for another Resolution, that 'Write an article for the Guild Newsletter' is a good one. Just a thought...

Yours in service,
Bartolomeo

Documentation and Presentation for Company Competitions and Ranking

This article aims to present the information you will need if you want to enter competitions for the Worshipful Company of Embroiderers, or if you want to submit your embroidery to be ranked. It also aims to provide you with some tips to get you a higher score or ranking, and to give you the inside story on what the judges are looking for.

Firstly, competitions and ranking are quite similar, but not exactly the same in terms of what you are required to produce. Firstly, you do not have to submit a finished piece for a competition, but can submit a work in progress (although the amount of work you have done will affect your score) and you do not have to submit documentation with your competition entry (but again, you will not score as highly if you don't document your piece). For ranking on the other hand, you will have to submit a finished piece, accompanied by documentation. The reason for the difference is that for ranking you are required to demonstrate that you have mastered that particular style or technique and that you know the historical background for it. The ranking system is also based on the period practices of medieval guilds, and is designed to help move embroiderers to a more professional level, where they would be producing work for sale. The competitions are designed more for members to have fun producing embroidery, and to display their work so that they can get feedback on it.

In both the competitions and the ranking, the judges and masters of the Company will be looking for similar things - pieces of embroidery in medieval style and technique. The ideal piece of embroidery would be one which is closely based on period examples, but is not necessarily a copy - indeed the piece that would score highest is one that is an original design on period lines, or something that 'could have been'.

To achieve this sort of piece, it is vitally important that you think about the design *before* you start the embroidery. 'Backwards documentation', where you try to show how something you have already made is like something made in period, is unlikely to be very successful. It is much easier to think about the issues at the time you are designing the piece. Here are some questions you might find useful to ask yourself when you are planning your embroidery:

- What is it for? Embroidery in the Middle Ages and Renaissance was nearly always for a purpose (although sometimes we no longer know what the original purpose was). The idea of doing embroidery just to make a picture that you might frame and put on the wall is pretty much a modern one. Period embroidery was designed to be used - on costume, on bedding or household linens, for wall hangings, for religious purposes, for heraldic decoration etc. In such cases the purpose of the embroidery would have a major impact on the sort of embroidery that was done. For example, what materials were used, what the scale was, what the stitches were, how much it is necessary to worry about the back of the embroidery etc. could all be determined by what the piece was to be used for.
- Are the materials appropriate for the style of embroidery? Different sorts of threads and ground fabrics are used for different styles of embroidery in the Middle Ages. To produce a piece of period style embroidery, you will need to get the materials right. For example, it would not be appropriate to do a Bayeux Tapestry style of embroidery on a velvet background, or apply Elizabeth slips to plain linen. To get an understanding of the materials that were used in the style of work that you would like to do, it is best to look at as many period examples as you can. This will also help you to get a feel for the styles of different types of embroidery. You may sometimes need to make substitutions

for materials on the basis of availability and expense, but if you keep in mind the need for the substitute to look as close to the original as possible, you will still be able to produce a piece which is close to a period look and feel.

- Is the design appropriate for the style of embroidery? It is particularly important to keep this question in mind when you are embroidering clothing. Blackwork is a period style of embroidery, but it is only appropriate for sixteenth century costume, and will look out of place on a 12th century garment. Similarly, there are many religious motifs in period embroideries, but almost all of these will appear on religious items. A crucifixion scene in beadwork may be period, but it would be inappropriate (not to mention tasteless) on the front of a bodice.
- Are the techniques appropriate for the style of embroidery? A period design will not look right if the stitches are not the ones that were used for that style of embroidery. I have a book at home which shows scenes from the Bayeux Tapestry rendered in counted-thread coloured cross-stitch. It's worth keeping for amusement value, but it wouldn't score highly in a WCOB competition!

The WCOB competition form outlines the categories for which your embroidery will be judged. They are:

- **Documentation.** If no documentation is present, the work must score zero in this category. The documentation should provide the sources (books, original pieces, etc.) on which the piece was based, and may also provide a discussion of them. The documentation should also provide information on the date and place for the work (e.g. Elizabethan England), and on the materials used, including any substitutions made and the reasons for them (e.g. 'I have used DMC cotton rather than the more period silk, because it was cheaper').
- **Use of Sources.** These points are for the way in which the embroiderer has used the period pieces and documentation in making the piece. If there is no documentation, this will need to rely on the knowledge that the judges have of this particular style. This category will cover the level of 'authenticity' of the piece and points will be awarded for creative uses of sources in a period style.
- **Technique.** These points will be awarded for the execution of the embroidery - i.e. how well the embroidery is done. The assessment of technique will depend on the style of the piece, and will include a judgement of how appropriate the technique is.
- **Use of Materials.** These points will be given for the appropriate choice of materials for the style and purpose of the piece. This section will also take into account appropriateness of colour, weight of thread and type of ground fabric, both as they relate to period examples and to the overall style and consistency of the project.
- **Presentation.** This category enables the judges to award points for style. Judges should also award more points to pieces which have a purpose, and which are finished, or include a substantial amount of work (especially with larger projects).

A similar range of considerations apply to ranking, although your work will not be awarded points, and the size and scope of your project will also be taken into account. For more information on how the ranking system works, see the Company's charter.

Competitions

Worshipful Company of Broiderers of Lochac Championship, A.S. XXXVI

May Coronet, A.S. XXXVI

Something New – any item in a technique you haven't tried before!

Midwinter Investiture, A.S. XXXVI

Underwear – an item of embroidered or beaded underwear (chemise, petticoat, coif etc), technique open.

Spring Coronet, A.S. XXXVI

Headwear – an embroidered or beaded item to be worn on the head (hat, headcloth, coif etc), technique open.

12th Night Investiture, A.S. XXXVI

Metal thread work – any item worked in metal thread, technique open.

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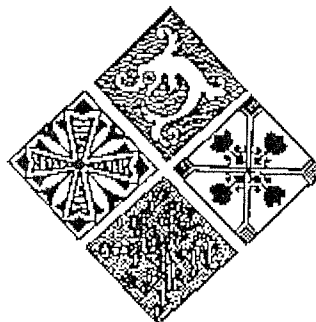
Other Resources

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Guild Website <http://users.drak.net/needlework>



Historic Needlework List (For those who have e-mail.)

To subscribe; mail to majordomo@Ansteorra.org with the message "subscribe h-needlework" or "subscribe h-needlework-digest" in the body of the message (do not include quotes).

To post messages to the HNW List;

mail to h-needlework@Ansteorra.org

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