

14th c Splitstitch

Pouches made from cloth were common in the 13th and 14th century and we have several beautiful examples still extant, depicting scenes worked in silk splitstitch, such as the one shown here.

As with the previous design, these pouches would have been worn hung from the belt by men and women. By this stage, men's pouches were worn close to the belt on the upper hip, while women wore their pouches at about thigh level, or even lower, often hidden beneath the outer layer of clothing and accessed through bound slits.



Alphonso Psalter c1284n, English, British Library (*Brown p16*)



Purse 1340. Silk and gold on silk with linen backing (*Staniland p43*)

The designs on these pouches were very similar to those seen in manuscripts of the time, so I have drawn upon these for my deer. Fine deer run across the base of many gothic mss, and I have chosen to adapt the well fed example from a late 13thc source.

The most common ground for these purses was laid and couched gold. Since this would not provide the required red background, the designs should be worked in splitstitch on silk (over a linen foundation), then applied to a red velvet ground. This technique was commonly found in ecclesiastical embroideries of the time. It also has the advantage of reducing the amount of time required.

Materials:

- Silk stretched over linen (or calico) for the embroidery
- Red velvet for the ground fabric
- Linen or silk for lining
- Madiera silk thread in yellows (2211, 0113 & 0105, or 0113, 0105 and 0112) and silver greys (1803 and 1804), or equivalent silks
- Silk or silk-like woven cords

Notes:

This must be worked in a hoop or frame. Work the lines of splitstitch to emphasise the flow of the muscles on the deer and shade the stars like compass roses. Dotted lines on the diagram show suggested patterns. Trim finished work to 5mm, fold under and appliqué to velvet (stretched in frame) with fine slip stitches.

Finishing:

The holes for the draw cords may need strengthening with embroidered eyelets to avoid wear on the velvet. The sides of the bag could be strengthened with tablet woven edges, or by sewing the hanging cords to the edge in similar fashion. The draw cords could also end in tassels. The hanging cords should allow the bag to rest at hip height for a man or mid calf for a woman (usually worn under overdress).

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