

WCoB Competition Documentation – Voided Work

Category: Voided Work



Figure 1 – Late 15th - Early 16th century Voided Work Band, Iberian Peninsula¹

Background

There are several types of voided work (where the background is stitched and the pattern left empty or void) from the SCA period. Examples include:

- Assisi Work – perhaps the most famous form of voided work due to a resurgence in popularity in the style in the 19th Century. Surviving examples from the 16th Century of Assisi style voided work show it was done on linen, using a variety of filling stitches, including (but not limited to) long-armed cross stitch, cross stitch and double running stitch. Some patterns had the designed outlined in the same colour as the field, in later times, the outlining was done in black. Silk was the thread of choice and popular colours for the work were red and blue, with examples in green.
- Reversa Work – a lesser known variety of voided work produced on the Iberian Peninsula. It has many similarities with Assisi work, including stitches and colour choice. Other characteristics include in later periods to the use of yellow as a filling colour and the outlining of patterns in either black or another colour, darker than the filling².
- Other pieces of voided work include examples from Iceland³.

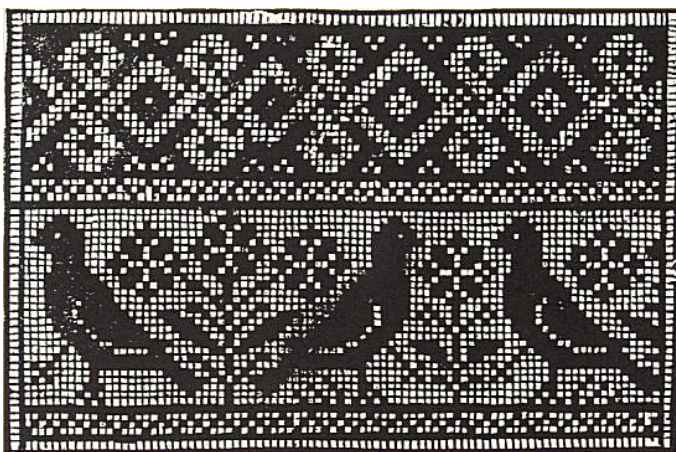


Figure 2 - Pattern Used – Plate 44 from Bassees’ “New Modelbuch” of 1568

Pattern

The 16th Century sees the rise of the printed pattern book in Europe. These books were produced and popular in England, Germany and Italy. There are several surviving examples of these pattern books. The same patterns were often used in multiple books, in a time free from copyright laws.

I have used a pattern from a reprint

¹ Textile Fragment (embroidered band), late 15th - early 16th century, M.88.127.1 – Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

² Maestra Clare de Estepa - <http://www.planetc.com/users/derwyddon/embroider.html>

³ 14th Century Icelandic wall hanging done in *refilsaumur* or laid and couched work. This piece is a black wool ground, with the design carried out in white wool thread. National Museum, Copenhagen

of Nicolas Bassee's *New Modelbuch* of 1568, creating an original piece, rather than re-creating an extant work. I have chosen to make what we would call today a small table runner, in the 16th Century, a small piece like this may have been used on a small altar or table.

Materials and Techniques

I have tried where possible to use as original materials, in this case using 28ct⁴ white linen for the ground fabric and two stands of Eterna stranded silk for the pattern stitching. I chose a bright, Turkey red, a popular colour in period for voided work and still popular today for modern Assisi embroidery.

I have stitched in long-armed cross stitch, a stitch I have never worked in before. I chose not to outline the design, as I believe the strong coverage given by the long-armed cross stitch negates the need. This is also a period choice, in that not all historical pieces were outlined.

The work is finished with a plain hem. I had great difficulty in finding in any of the sources used any mention of how these pieces were finished. Many surviving examples are in less than perfect condition, often bands of embroidery which appear to have been cut from larger pieces. The only example I could find with an edge finishing treatment was a pair of Italian cushions held at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum⁵. These cushions are finished with what appears to be some sort of buttonhole edging in red silk. When modern sources do mention edging treatment, it is usually in terms that it is not done like modern Assisi work.



Figure 3 – Completed Band

Notes

This piece was the first time I'd used stranded silk thread. This type of thread is supposed to be the closest available to that used in the SCA period. As a non-cross stitcher, it had some difficulties making sure that the thread was sitting correctly after stitching.

⁴ This type of voided work was usually done on very fine fabric, however, due to my eyesight, I try not to work on anything finer than 28ct fabrics where possible.

⁵ Italian, 1550-1600, white linen tabby embroidered with crimson and green silk yarn entirely in double running stitches, #94a L 51.4 cm x W. 36.1 cm and #94b L 50.5 cm x W. 36.8cm. The pieces join by means of toggle-like buttons and corresponding loops.

Bibliography

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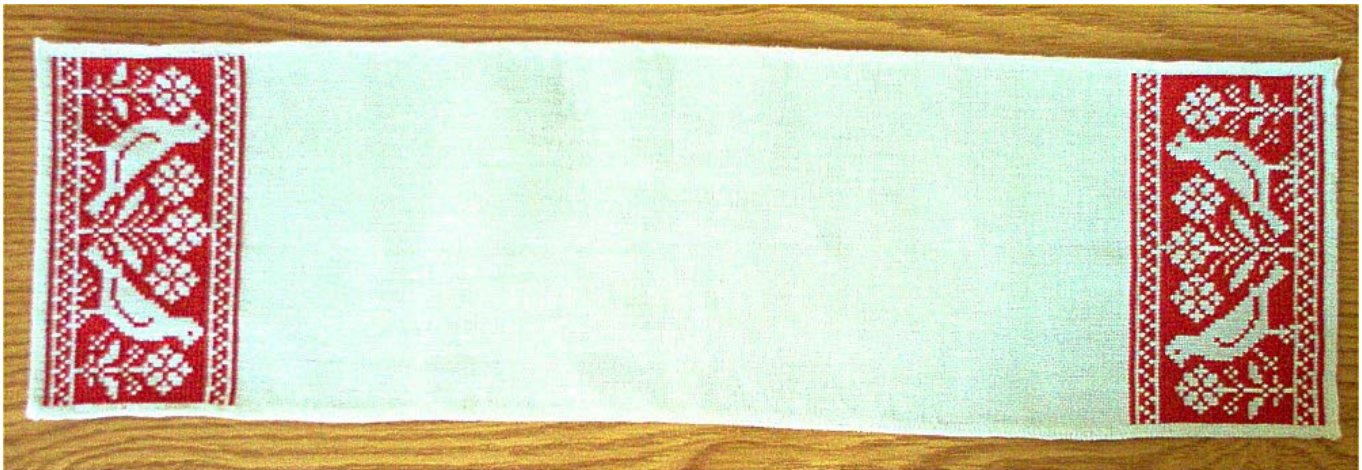


Figure 4 - Completed Cloth