

2020 Samhain A&S Competition Entries

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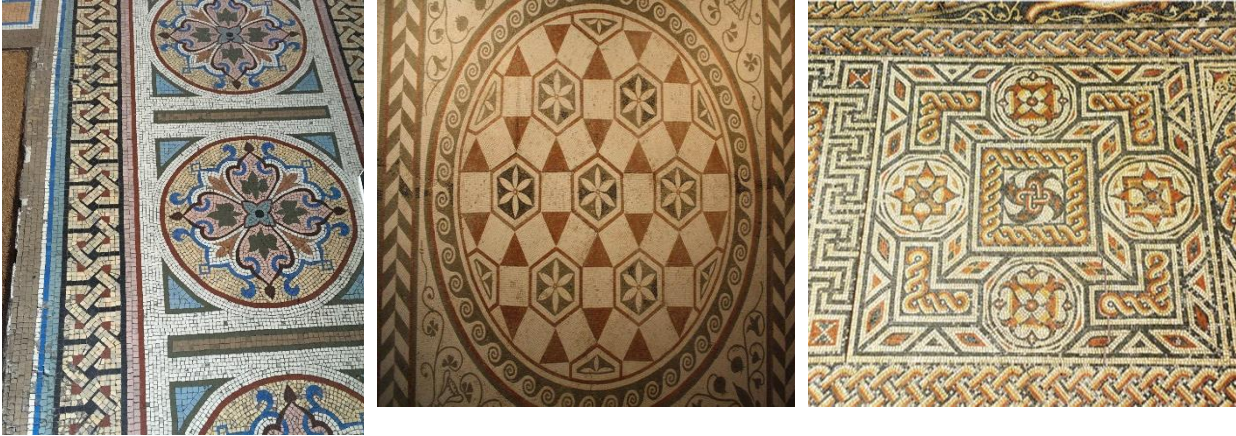
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Entry 1: Roman Inspired Floor Cloth

By: Bushra Al Jaseri bint El Nahr (Morrigan) of Barony of Montengarde, Kingdom of Avacal

Roman Inspired Floor Cloth

Roman mosaics on floors and walls were staples in the middle class and upper class homes of the ancient world. The mosaics were complex, plentiful and very beautiful even after the passage of thousands of years. The geometrical blocks were called tesserae and were placed together to create shapes, patterns and figures. They were made with natural stone, cut brick, tile and pottery. Marble and glass were occasionally used, as were small pebbles and precious metals like gold¹.



Above are some examples of floor mosaics found with a simple internet search for roman mosaic images.

When Countess Saxa, a Roman persona wanted me to paint her a floorcloth, the idea of doing one in the style of mosaic sounded like a fun challenge. Mosaics were symbols of wealth and status in classical times and what a great way for Saxa to be able to express her persona at an SCA event.

I very quickly found myself overwhelmed with the diversity and complexity of designs and began to panic about exactly what on earth had I signed up for.

Floorcloths – are they period?

No they are not. “Area canvas rugs, today known as floorcloth, had their start in 18th century England. Initially used by the wealthy, the designs and patterns mimicked parquet flooring, tile and marble.”²

However, painted canvas made to look like flooring is a great way to make the SCA look more period and beautiful. Floorcloths are durable, washable and can be used at indoor events and outside.

Design considerations and planning

As natural stone was the common foundational material for mosaics I chose an earth-toned colour palette. Design wise, I wanted to have a border and some round motifs. I decided on stencils as the way to go to get the look I wanted.

¹ [Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_mosaic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_mosaic)

² [Wikipedia.org/Floorcloth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Floorcloth)



The base of the floorcloth was a cotton canvas painters drop cloth purchased at a hardware store. It was washed in hot and dried, to ensure that no size or coating remained on the fabrics. The size was approximately 1.25 m x 3 m, or 4 ft x 9 ft.

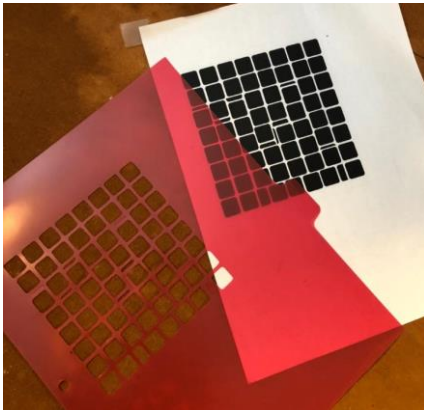
I used latex paint to lay down my base colour and let it dry in the sun.

Stencils – why stencils?

Stenciling is a period technique dating back to cave-dweller times, was commonly used in Egyptian tomb painting, and for playing cards, and wall decoration in western European medieval homes.³ From a practical standpoint, stencilling gives better paint coverage on a rough surface such as canvas than block printing. Stencilling also ensures a consistent design elements.

The stencils for the border and roundel motifs came from <https://www.stencil-library.com/> out of the

UK. I could have cut my own stencils but for this I wanted a good quality stencil that would endure a few different projects and applications. The stencils from the Stencil Library are three-deep, nested stencils. This gives me a lot of design flexibility for future projects.



I did cut my own stencils for “filler” mosaic motifs. I used a plastic project folder from the dollar store to accomplish this.

My paint choices are all from Rona Hardware’s “metallic expressions” line. I used gold, bronze, pearl and red as my colours. Metallic expressions paint is a good quality, waterbased latex paint so I knew it would not peel off the pre-painted canvas.

The Process



³ <https://stencilsforwalls.com/blogs/about-stencilling/the-history-of-stencilling>

The circular corner motifs were laid down first. Then the border was painted in working from the edge of the corner roundels to the edge. Quality Control Cat stopped by to ensure the work was going well.



Once the border was down and Quality Control had signed off on it, it was time to plan the middle design.

I decided to forgo actual math and place the middle roundels working from each short end towards the middle. Once I got to the middle I could fudge any extra space needed with a line of stencilled mosaic tiles.

Bushra Al Jaseri bint El Nahr (Morrigan)
Barony of Montengarde, Kingdom of Avacal



Working from the small ends towards the middle involved a lot of waiting for paint to dry, folding, and patience.

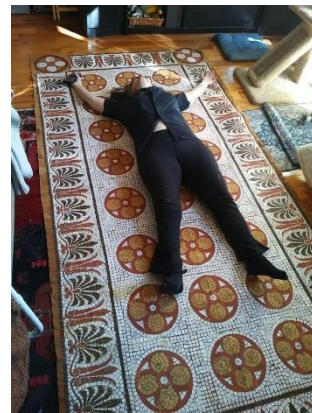
You will notice the corner motifs are painted differently than the middle circular motifs. That was a design choice, that looking back on it, I am not sure I would have done the same thing again.



Detailing

Remembering in my cursory research that gold was used in mosaics, I used a series of fine brushes and paint to bring in some personality to the stenciled patterns.

Protip – detailing is super handy at covering up mistakes by having too heavy of a paint load on the stencil brush.



I blew through a good stencil brush, spent about 70 hours on the project and it is done! A clear coat of minwax polyurethane and its finished!

Bushra Al Jaseri bint El Nahr (Morrigan)

Barony of Montengarde, Kingdom of Avacal

Supplies used in this project:

Canvas

Paint

Stencils

Painters Tape

Stencil brushes

Fine brushes for detailing

Forceps (for holding down the edge of the stencils)

Wine (well, it is Roman after all)

Entry 2: Medieval Ladies Hood

By: Bushra Al Jaseri bint El Nahr (Morrigan) of Barony of Montengarde, Kingdom of Avacal

Medieval Ladies Hood.

Over the summer I challenged myself to do two things – one to work on improving my sewing skills generally, and secondly to craft something I had never made before.

And of course, using up odds and ends of fabric is always a bonus.

I settled on making a woman's hood. The project used up less than a meter of fabric. Happily, I had blue wool and purple linen in my stash. As Quality Control Cat signed off on how the colours went together, I began researching on how best to accomplish the project.

Further research yielded a lot of information. From the mid thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, headwear worn by low- and middle-class men and women were found in many surviving manuscripts, such as the Luttrell Psalter⁴.

I was pleased to find an excellent online tutorial by Morgan Donner in the style I was looking to recreate. "How to Make a Short Medieval Hood"⁵. Her tutorial covered measuring, cutting and instructions on inserting gores.



The tricky thing about making this hood was the two inset gores at either shoulder into both the lining and the outer woolen layer. Here you can see the gores in both the wool and the purple linen lining.

Apparently, I was very lucky with my gores as I had very little trouble sewing them in. I believe not using a sewing machine helped me accomplish this without too much stress.

Once the gores were in, the next step was hand stitching the lining to the wool. This was accomplished with the assistance of Quality Control cat and Netflix.

The next step was to make cloth buttons out of scrap linen. Buttons were made using a round template on the linen. The linen was then cut out in circles. Then the linen was stitched around the outer edge and then I pulled the thread tight. This created a pouch effect (like a drawstring bag). The next step was to tuck the raw edges of the linen round inside the pouch created by the loose stitching at the edge.

⁴ British Library Online – Luttrell Psalter <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-luttrell-psalter>

⁵ How to Make a Short Medieval Hood! Morgan Donner August 16, 2018
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGsroBIGxD4>

and pull it tight again. Then more stitches to close the opening and tighten up the ball of the button and create a shank upon which to attach the button to the garment.

The next step was to carefully measure and mark where the buttons would go.



My buttonholes are my major disappointment in this project. Hand stitching is not my strength, and I was severely challenged in making my stitches neat and even on the buttonholes.



I cut my button holes using a wood carving chisel which I just happened to have at the right length for the button hole itself.



Here is the completed hood! Generally, I am quite happy with the fit of the hood and I was pleased to pass it off to someone whose persona would enjoy it.

This project took about six hours to finish. I really enjoyed doing something outside my usual and felt it turned out well.

Bushra al Jaseri bint El Nahr (Morrigan)

Barony of Montengarde, Kingdom of Avacal.

Entry 3: Viking Front Panel

By: Jane Marche

I have worked on a Viking front panel. I decided it would be reversible with embroidery on both sides and tablet trim on all edges. So far one side is completed and the other almost done. Weaving just started. I have learned to use a pattern for embroidery.





Entry 4: Purple Arrows

By: Muirenn inghean mhic Raith

Samhain A&S Entry – Purple Arrows

Muirenn inghean mhic Raith, Nov 8, 2020

What did I do during quarantine? I made arrows! They are not period, but they are pretty and so I'll share them anyway.



I used 5/16 cedar shafts with a 36 spine. The paint is a Saman water-based stain and I custom mixed the colours to get the light and dark purple I wanted. I used a modern fletching jig and glue, but I want to do some research and try my hand at period fletching. I think tying on the feathers would have some similarity to how I tie on an oboe reed and it would be interesting to compare the process. Not historically, because the oboe came after SCA period, just for my own curiosity.

I also had fun adding cresting to these arrows, once again, just to make them pretty. Though I did learn quite a bit because I made my own cresting jig out of Lego and a dremmel rotary tool. It worked much better than the dremmel and two holes in a cardboard box that I tried before!

I kept this design simple, but you'll notice that the white and purple lines don't actually match between arrows. This is actually a numbering system for them so I can uniquely identify them if I want to. It is actually a binary number where I used white and purple instead of 0 and 1 to label the arrow, but even without knowing the number it is still a unique pattern of white and purple lines for each arrow. Once again, not historically accurate, just something I wanted to add.



And here are some pictures of my Lego cresting jig. The dremmel rotates an elastic band that is attached to the arrow shaft, so as the elastic turns, so does the wooden shaft. My arrows were fairly straight, but I had to move the second supporting roller sometimes in order to stabilize the shaft or else it wobbled and so I couldn't get the lines smooth.

