

Quinn's COURT CUFFS

by Jana Morgan

Deep emotions and sentiments are hand sewn into each piece of Quinn's Court Cuffs. A stitch at a time, skilled and deliberate fingers deliver the beauty that has withstood time and collapse of societies. I work in strong collaboration with Lynda McAuliff, whose impeccable hand-sewing skills, creative hands, and mind allow for this joint venture to blossom. Immortal love that somehow finds us in the 21st century exists, despite contemporary society's vows (technology, wars, daily uncertainties, stress, and loneliness). To wear a cuff is to remember what you mean to each other. It commemorates ageless beauty, the beauty of age, the immortality of virtue and passion between lovers.

Romantic Raison d'Être

I don't want any part or material used in the cuffs to be recognizable as being from our era. No current commercialism is to be evident in the fabrics, techniques, and antique jewelry used in the pieces. I want them to feel as if they are discoveries from an ancient trove.

Artistically, this is my challenge and *raison d'être*. Each cuff is an assemblage of disparate, seasoned, yet complementary elements that create a whole. I search, combine, experiment, and finally assemble and sew a kind of relic. The effect is to be an interesting, beautiful, non-contextual piece — which allows the wearer her own fantasy. It is exciting to see a finished piece.

I have gathered materials everywhere from the antique shops of old town Prague and the San Telmo market in Buenos Aires to my local antique and junk shops in Gilroy, California, the Rose Garden in San Jose, California, and the Goodwill shops around the Bay Area in northern California. I have visited antique shops everywhere from the German and Mennonite counties

of southwest Ontario to the fabric stores on Queen St. West in Toronto, Canada. I like to look and love to find.

Technique

Start with an 8½" x 3–4" piece of wool felt. This is a little on the large side but it will serve as a general template for your piece. At times I hammer fish weights onto the felt to give added substance to the feel of the cuff. In such instance, use the smallest size and hammer three to both the top and bottom sides (from inches 2–7, or the middle of the cuff). You could also take green coated wires from the floral industry and zigzag stitch them onto the cuff to create an instant structure and holding flexibility to the fabric.

Find a brocade fabric with a pattern and colors that appeal to you for the back side of the cuff. Wrap the brocade around the felt and pin. ♦♦

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For the top of the cuff, which comprises your design, you will need three or four fabrics that you adore and that you feel enhance each other and therefore must be displayed and sewn into one piece. Stack these on the edges to create a frayed and aged fabric mixture. Metallic silks, crepes, and meshes are ideal. Thin fabric weights work well. Tear the fabric on the weft for the creation of fringes. With scissors, cut a 1/8-inch snip and tear along weft.

Metallic plisse (a fabric chemically treated into permanent crinkles) torn on the weft reveals a tidy interesting fringe. Satins in silk or cotton create fringes that don't shed threads. Synthetic satins fall apart more easily but can be good for luminosity in between layers. Metallic silks and silk in general are recommended. Vintage laces, particularly metallic laces on top and on the edging, add texture and create the piece.

Start thinking about what type of closure you will use and how to sew it into the design so that it blends into the design and functions easily for the wearer. You won't need the closure for a few more steps, but it is much easier to plan for now. Closures can be cloth-covered domes, hook and eyes, magnetic domes, or vintage small belt buckles.

Experiment with one fabric taking a predominant role. Perhaps this will be the fabric most exposed on the top of your design. This fabric could be ruched and tacked down in small bunches for texture. Consider using metallic threads for some embroidery stitching, or for sewing on beads or other embellishments. A central focal point is attractive, usually to give the cuff a top and center when worn. The focal point can be anything, from a part of some old opera costume you tore apart to a piece of old jewelry.

Consider the piece's dimensions. Keep the pieces rather flat and if they can be bent a bit to accommodate the circular nature of a bracelet — all the better. Pin together potential outcomes until you arrive at a pleasing arrangement. Stitch together in a manner that hides and reveals stitches for aesthetics.

Add the closure. Experiment with fit around your own wrist to sew on the closure and for a natural-flat-lay appearance. ❖

Jana Morgan lives in San Francisco, California. You can view more of her work at www.quinnscourt.com.