

Practically Period and Perfectly Practical Prettification: Basic Steps in Beaded Edging

*Presented by THL Alessandra Bentivegna da Faenza, called Yasmina
Barony of Thescorre*

Introduction

The purpose of this class is to utilize modern beading techniques to add attractive and functional embellishment to veils, scarves, belts, sleeves, tablecloths, seat coverings, or any other fabric or material that will yield to your trusty needle.

While the techniques themselves may not be precisely period, there is evidence of similar usage of beaded embellishment and embroidery throughout history. Sculpture, temple paintings and pottery display ancient Egyptian finery decorated with beads of gold and lapis lazuli. Holy Vestments belonging to medieval Churches were lavishly decorated with pearls, gold, semi-precious stones, and to a small extent glass beads. Portraits of fine ladies throughout Europe display a glorious array of pearls, semi-precious gems and gold in their clothing and accessories; from girdles to outer coats and, in a few instances... head dresses, hats and veils.

Within the Society, embellishment through beaded edging is not only attractive, but can be very practical. The beaded veil has a nice weight to it that will prevent it from blowing askew in a none-too-gentle breeze. A circle of pretty cloth with a decorative beaded edge placed over your goblet will keep dust, leaves, the occasional bread pellet, and all manner of pests out of your beverage of choice. A hip scarf embellished with coins, beads, semi-precious stones, and eye-catching discs will give the Middle Eastern Dancer a personal and unique look during Hafla. If you are making your own table runners or tablecloth to set a "fyne table" or a cover for that rather unattractive folding chair, they can be made even more pleasing to the eye with the strategic addition of an edge of looped beads with dangling accents.

In today's class you will learn some of the basic edging techniques used to add these effects, and in the end you'll leave with a sampler of each of these techniques to go back and refer to.

Getting Started

The basic supplies needed for beaded edging are:

1. Beads- Size 11/0 glass or pearl seed beads for veils. Scarves, table decorations, etc are more suitable for the larger beads. Drops, dagger beads, bi-cones, tube beads, rice pearls, etc all make very nice accent and focal beads
2. Thread- Your basic cotton or poly thread work nicely. You can work with silk thread if you so desire
3. Needles- While using beading needles is recommended; you can also work with standard multi-purpose sewing needles if you like. Just be certain that the eye of your needle will pass through all of your beads

4. Measuring implement- A hem gauge works nicely; or a small craft ruler. You can also be creative with your measuring gauge; as with the small plastic mesh included in your kits (shamelessly borrowed from Lady Sarra Bossard)

5. Scissors - Embroidery scissors or any kind of small kit scissors that are well-sharpened to snip cleanly through your thread

6. Bead Cup - Preferably a wide shallow one with a tightly sealing lid to hold your beads; depending on its size you could probably hold your measuring gauge and needles in it as well

Additional items can include:

7. Fabric work-mat- I guarantee that at some point during this process you will drop beads. It is inevitable. Having a fabric mat (craft felt is wonderful... and cheap) under you while you work will help to prevent runaway beads from bouncing hither and yon! Wearing a skirt or throwing a blanket over your lap is also an handy alternative if you're out and about at an event

8. Bead Grabber- There are numerous methods to stringing your beads. Many bead stores sell bead grabbers; which are basically a plastic finger ring with a circle of Velcro (the "hook" or hard plastic side)... with which you dip your finger into your beads

Things to Consider

1. Have an idea of what you want to do for your project; particularly if it is something that requires laying down a base row of loops. I have often sat with pencil and paper and sketched out a few ideas (drawing lots of circles), and have strung a series of beads on needle and thread just to see how they look together.

2. Gather all of your supplies before you begin. Assume the worst - that you'll run out of beads in the middle of your project; and make certain you have a way of obtaining more of a particular bead color or type if that happens. Unless you do a LOT of math and are extremely accurate at those "guess how many jelly beans in the jar" games, it is nearly impossible to guess exactly how many of which beads you will need for a particular project... its better to have more that you can use later than to run out and not be able to obtain more!

3. Try to not work with more than an arm's length of thread (folded in half). More thread = more of a chance of thread getting tangled while you're beading = much frustration and less love of beading, and we definitely don't want that!

4. Match your thread to your beads. You may be tempted to try and match your thread to the color of your perspective project; but in truth the color of the thread really changes the overall visual effect of your beads; particularly if you are using transparent or translucent beads. A darker thread may end up dulling the color of your beads. On the other hand, if you are using opaque beads; or beads with a colored inner lining (like silver or gold); then feel free to choose based on your fabric.

5. If you make a mistake, don't fret. Nine times out of ten you can back-track and undo your mistake.

6. Consistency. It doesn't matter if you work from left to right, or if you pass your needle down through the top of the fabric or up through bottom of the fabric... as long as you are consistent. Being left-handed, I tend to work from Right to Left, and I draw the needle up from the bottom through the fabric... this is the direction that works best for me; and that is the pattern I always use. It may take a few passes to work out what you're most comfortable with; but whatever it is; stick with it.

7. If you intend to bead a veil that you will wear on your head, be wary of too much dangle or beads that are too heavy. Large pearl drops whacking you in your ear or on your forehead while you're rushing off to class or Court is never a pleasant thing.

8. It is ok if your piece is a "work in progress." If you're working on a veil and only have a quarter of it done... you can wear the beaded portion centered on your brow; or hanging at the lowermost point. As you continue to work on it; you can change that perspective... eventually it will be complete.

9. Don't be afraid to experiment. Come up with your own combinations and patterns. Find new applications for the edging technique. Tulle bags with beaded edging were VERY popular at Joann's, Michael's and A.C. Moore over the holidays.

10. Have fun! If you find yourself getting frustrated or confused, put it down and walk away for awhile. Come back to it, go over the directions and illustrations again... look at your sampler if you have one. It should be a relaxing and rewarding pastime, not frustrating.

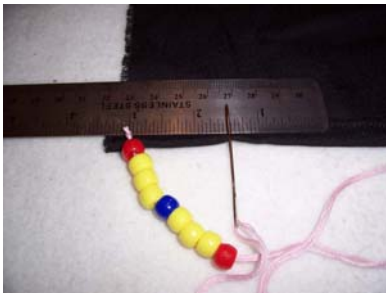
A. Spiraled Loop

1. Thread your needle and knot the end (arm's length recommended)
2. Anchor the knot at beginning point. Knot will define the "wrong side" of the edge/hem (your choice of inserting needle from front to back or vice versa; just be consistent)
3. String an odd number of 7 or more beads and slide along thread until snug with edge/hem
4. Measure out desired width of loop (less distance, more beads = more loop)
5. Insert needle at that point in same manner as step 2 (front to back or back to front)
6. Repeat steps 3 - 5 until you have a length of thread 2x the length of your needle remaining
7. Make a small loose stitch, thread the needle through the loop; then repeat loop to create a small knot. Cut excess
8. To continue/add on to the spiral: Thread needle (step 1), anchor knot as close as possible to ending loop



B. Anchored Loop & Knot

1. Thread and anchor your needle. String 9 beads and slide along thread until snug with edge/hem
2. Measure out desired width of loop and insert needle (front to back or vice versa; be consistent)
3. Pull thread snug but not too tight, and then pass the needle through the last bead from top to bottom. Bead will appear to hang "perpendicular" from the edge/hem
4. String 8 beads onto thread
5. Repeat steps 3 - 4 until you have a length of thread 2x the length of your needle remaining
6. Make a small loose stitch, thread the needle through the loop; then repeat loop to create a small knot. Cut excess
7. To continue/add on: Thread needle (step 1), anchor knot as close as possible to ending loop



C. "V" Loop

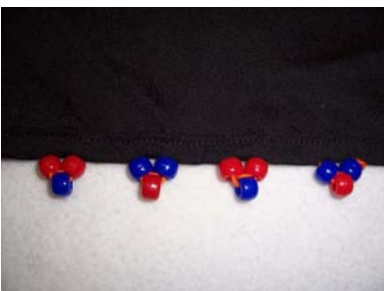
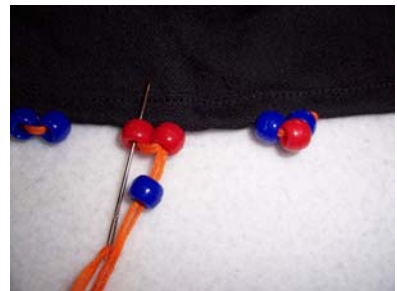
1. Thread and anchor your needle. String 5 normal beads, 1 pendant or tube bead, and 1 normal bead (hereafter referred to as a "Cap" bead)
2. Pass needle back through tube bead. Pull thread snug (but not too tight) against first 5 beads
3. String another 5 beads on thread
4. Measure out desired width of loop and insert needle (front to back or vice versa; be consistent)
5. Pull thread snug but not too tight, then pass the needle through the last bead from top to bottom. Bead will appear to hang "perpendicular" from the edge/hem
6. Repeat steps 2 - 6 until you have a length of thread 2x the length of your needle remaining
7. Make a small loose stitch, thread the needle through the loop; then repeat loop to create a small knot. Cut excess
8. To continue/add on: Thread needle (step 1), Anchor knot as close as possible to ending loop



D. Trefoil

This is a two-thread pattern, which involves setting foundation beads in one direction, then reversing direction to complete the pattern.

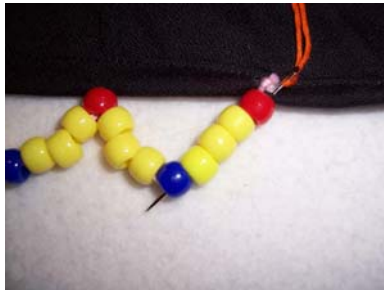
1. Thread and anchor your needle.
2. String 2 (A, B) beads onto thread
3. Pass needle into hem close to Anchor point, and traveling inside the hem in your desired direction, bring the needle out of the hem about an inch (or desired width) away from bead pair
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until you have a length of thread 2x the length of your needle remaining
5. Make a small loose stitch; thread the needle through the loop; then repeat loop to create a small knot. Cut excess
6. Thread and anchor needle near the ending knot (preparing to move in reverse)
7. Pass needle from fabric up through bead B
8. String 1 Cap bead (C) onto thread
9. Pass needle through bead A into fabric. Travel inside hem to next pair of beads.
10. Repeat steps 7 - 9 through first pair of beads
11. Repeat step 5 to tie off



E. Netting

This purpose of this two-thread technique is to add a 2nd/additional row of beads to your project.

1. Begin by creating a base of Anchored loops (Technique B)
2. Thread your and needle near the ending knot, preparing to move in reverse
3. Pass needle up from Anchor bead through "Center bead" (for example, in Technique B, the loops are A-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-A-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-A. Bead #4 is Center bead)
4. String 4 normal beads, 1 pendant or tube bead, and 1 Cap bead onto thread
5. Pass needle back through tube bead. Pull thread snug (but not too tight) against first 4 beads
6. String another 5 beads on thread
7. Pass the needle through the Center bead of the next loop
8. Repeat steps 4 - 6
9. When nearing the end of your thread, make certain you have remaining thread to travel back along from the Center bead through Anchor bead and create basic knot
10. To add new thread, begin with step 2 near the Anchor bead you tied off from



F. Variations on Netting

There are any number of ways to string on beads once you have the base Anchored loops. These are just a couple of variations; but experimentation often yields the best results!

1. Begin by creating a base of Anchored loops (Technique B)
2. Thread your and needle near the ending knot, preparing to move in reverse
3. Pass needle up from Anchor bead through "Center bead" (for example, in Technique B, the loops are A-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-A-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-A. Bead #4 is Center bead)

Quatrefoil

- A. String 7 beads onto thread
- B. Pass the needle back through the 4th bead to create a loop
- C. String an additional 3 beads onto thread
- D. Pass needle through Center bead of the next loop
- E. Repeat



F. Variations on Netting - *cont.*

There are any number of ways to string on beads once you have the base Anchored loops. These are just a couple of variations; but experimentation often yields the best results!

1. Begin by creating a base of Anchored loops (Technique B)
2. Thread your and needle near the ending knot, preparing to move in reverse
3. Pass needle up from Anchor bead through "Center bead" (for example, in Technique B, the loops are A-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-A-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-A. Bead #4 is Center bead)

Dangling Strand (perfect for coins, Focal beads, or small tassels)

- A. String desired number of beads onto thread
- B. String a Focal bead (drop, coin, top-drilled bead, larger bi-cone, etc) onto thread
- C. Pass needle back through strands to Center bead; and through beads to Anchor bead
- D. Pass needle through fabric to make a stitch, then repeat step 3

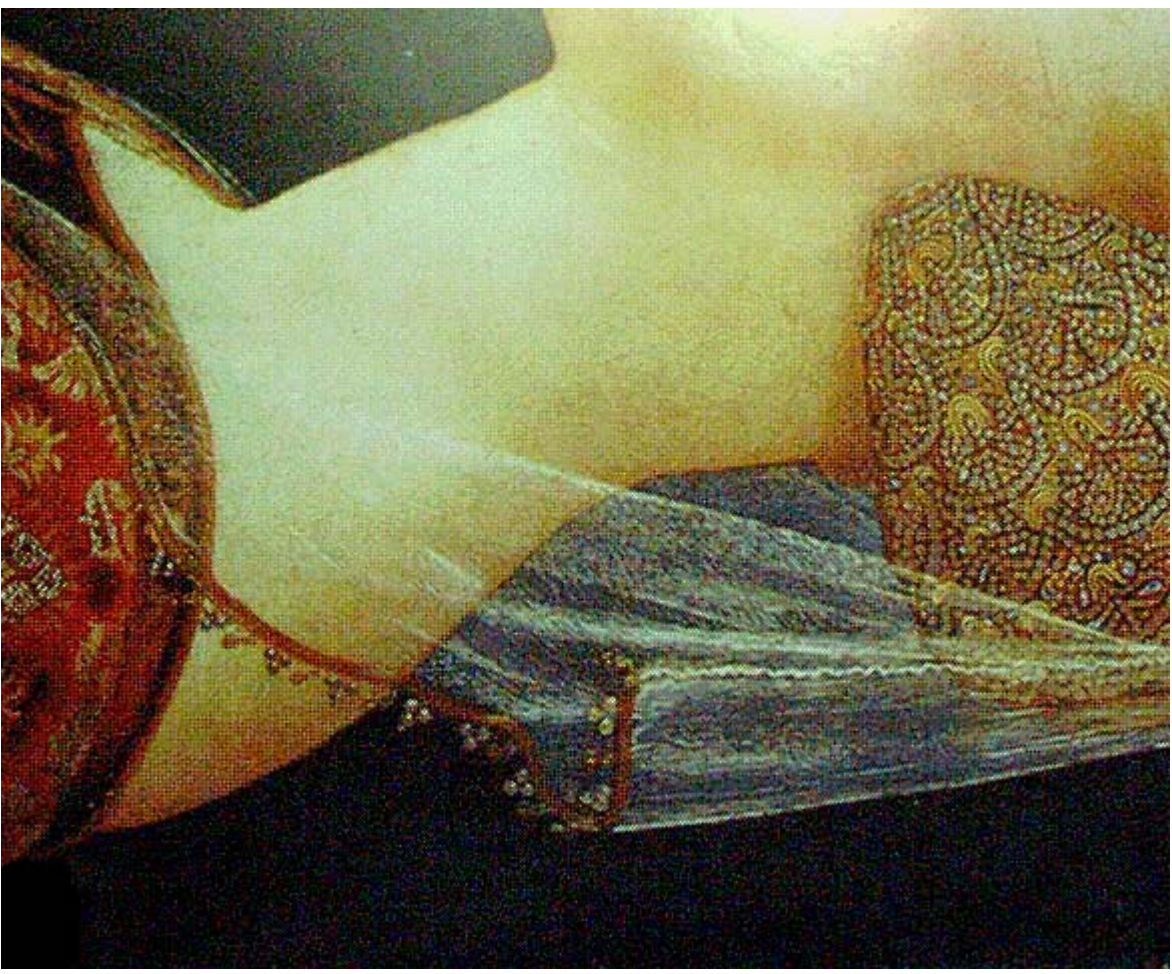


A



Caterina de Francesco Tanagli
Memling. **The Last Judgment** c. 1469
Detail from exterior of the triptych
Muzeum Narodowe
Gdansk

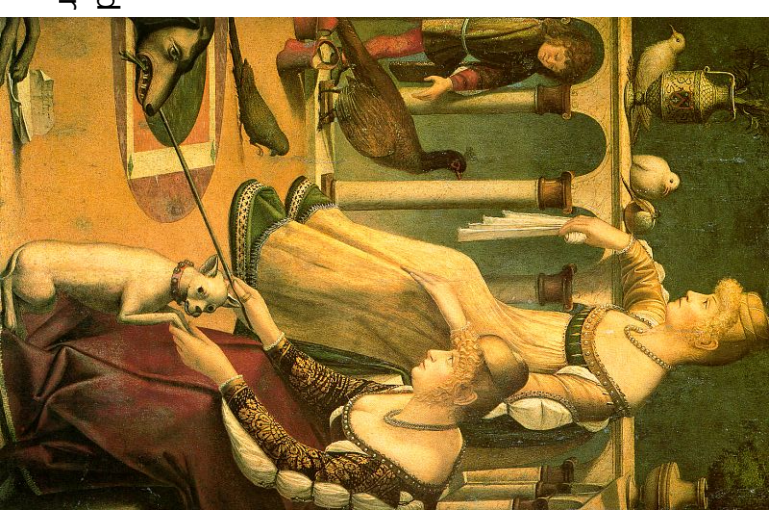
B



Florentine School.
Portrait of a Lady in Red c. 1460
Oil and egg tempera on wood
National Gallery
London



C Titian. Portrait of a Lady. c. 1555.
Oil on canvas.
The National Gallery of Art,
Washington DC, USA.



D Carpaccio. Two Venetian Ladies c. 1510
Oil on wood
Museo Correr
Venice





М



Supporting Information

Supply Sources

Fire Mountain Beads and Gems - <http://www.firemountaingems.com>

Bead Land - <http://www.beadland.com>

Bead Studio - <http://www.beadstudio.com/catalog.php>

A.C. Moore - <http://www.acmoore.com/>

Joann etc - <http://www.joann.com>

Let's Bead (local store in Rochester, NY) - <http://letsbead.com>

Research Sources

Renaissance Dress in Italy: 1400 - 1500, Jacqueline Herald

© 1981 Jacqueline Herald, Bell & Hyman Limited - London/Humanities Press, Inc - New Jersey

Medieval Craftsmen: Embroiderers, Kay Staniland

© 1991 British Museum Press, British Museum Publications Ltd - London

Textiles Illuminated: An Online Study of Beadwork in the Middle Ages

<http://medievalbeads.com/>

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About me

Dona Alessandra Bentivegna da Faenza, called Yasmina *is the daughter of a 16th century Italian Merchant living in Venice. She tends to the Family business while her twin brother travels to procure fine silks, beads, jewelry and rarities.*

Within the Society Yasmina (as she is known by friends and family all) dwells in the Barony of Thescorre, is a Rapier Fighter and member of the Orders of the White Scarf & Millrind; and practices in the Scribal Arts, costuming and needlework. Yasmina is also Co-Director of the Barony of Thescorre's vocal ensemble Ravensong; who will be performing once again at the College of Three Ravens.

Angelique Armstrong has been a member of the SCA since 1994. She studied Social Work at the Rochester Institute of Technology and through series of opportunities is now working as a PC Support Technician for a well-known construction company in NYS. She is still an active member of RIT Singers, RIT's Student/Faculty/Community Chorus; and has an avid interest in Tai Chi and spiritual exploration.

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