

Skeletal Materials

Category Rules: The category is for entries created out of bone, antler or horn. Such entries include bone or horn corset stays, needles, pins, buttons, beads, and multiple piece items such as reliquaries, diptychs and polytychs. Consideration must also be given to the legality of owning certain materials, such as new elephant ivory or whalebone/teeth. Natural substitutions for ivory and whalebone such as bone, tagua nuts, antler or animal teeth will **not** be penalized. Even though ivory trade is not necessarily restricted, it is preferable to find other materials. However the use of plastic, poly saturated linen or other synthetic ivory substitutes must result in a less than perfect score ***unless adequate documentation is given as to why a particular piece could not be made out of a natural substitute.*** *Examples-* Due to the size of the entry no natural material (other than ivory or whalebone) would be available of a sufficient size. *Or,* a particular shape is readily available in plastic and would have been readily available in ivory or whalebone (i.e. spheres such as cue balls).

Notes on Materials: Skeletal materials are often, by nature, hard and brittle. Carving is the most common method of working skeletal materials and is totally subtractive by nature. If too much material is removed, the error can never be satisfactorily corrected, to the detriment of the piece. Intricate pieces, with the ever present danger of chipping, offer the most complex challenge to the craftsman. There are many books and articles, as well as museum pieces, which cover the diversity of objects made from skeletal materials during the SCA period. It is suggested that documentation for this category include these visual records to aid in confirming the intent, creativity and success of an entry. Drawings of the artisans' intent (or photographs of a period piece) might also be included to show the original intent and compare it to the execution.

Throughout history, ivory has been a popular medium for carving and was valued by artists and patrons alike for its beautiful color, fine texture and natural sheen. As stated above, although not all forms of ivory are illegal to own, reasonable substitutions for this material are allowed in this category ***with proper explanation in the documentation.***

Objects carved from bone are frequently overlooked as poor substitutes for ivory carving. Bone, in contrast, was a readily available and widely used commodity throughout the Middle Ages. In fact, many artifacts made from bone have been incorrectly identified as ivory by archeologists who have little knowledge of the physical properties of the different materials. It is also appropriate to note that many period articles utilized bone and ivory in the same piece.

Antler possesses unique properties which make it useful for carving and which were well understood and exploited for a variety of objects by the medieval carver. Historically, both fresh antler from hunting kills and dropped antlers found after shedding were used in period.

Horn is an extremely versatile material. In its natural form, horn served both practical and symbolic purposes throughout history. It can be heated and molded into a variety of shapes and cut into sheets and lends itself to a variety of uses. Horn is flexible and relatively transparent in thin sheets. Horn was the plastic of the Middle Ages.

Special Note: Shell should be considered to be in this category due to the way it handles when worked. Coral, a calcium-based structure, and in some ways more similar in texture to bone than it is to anything else although it is harder and doesn't have as much organic material in it. Coral may be considered in the Skeletal Materials category or can be shifted to the stone work category, depending on the type of coral used and the end product.

Caution: The dust produced from the creation of items out of skeletal materials is unhealthy if inhaled so entrants are advised to wear the proper respiratory masks when working. The dust is also abrasive. Eye protection should be worn when working with skeletal materials.

Documentation (0 to 4 points):

- 0: No documentation provided with entry.
- 1: Minimal information consisting of time, place and style.
- 2: As in #1, plus use of general sources; emphasis on tertiary sources with perhaps one secondary source (ex: use of encyclopedia articles with a possible additional use of a book or article that refers to a period source.).
- 3: As in #2, plus a developed discussion making use of critical references; sources are largely secondary (ex: sources refer to period references; documentation discusses, compares, and contrasts the source's views).
- 4: As in #3, plus explanation of original research/experiment and relation of source material to it. Primary sources, if available, are emphasized (ex: sources used are from the appropriate period for the entry, such as period manuscripts, paintings or artifacts).

NOTE: *Consideration must be given to those entries where there is no original artifact of this type but the entry could be logically shown to have existed, either as a derivative (i.e. this piece exists in wood or stone or metal and therefore could have been made in skeletal materials) or there is evidence of similar articles before and after the time of the article (usually pre-600 and post-1600) so therefore it is logical that the piece existed in some form within period. Must be shown in the documentation with a well developed narrative. **This applies to both the Documentation and Methods and Materials scores.***

Methods and Materials (0 to 4 points):

- 0: Entry is completely modern with no relationship to period elements or practices.
- 1: Use of completely modern materials (such as chemical dyes or using plastic as an ivory substitute) and methods (such as pressure steaming) to produce a work that would not be accepted in period but either bears some relationship to an authentic work or which might be useful within SCA Culture (ex: modern images or designs worked in plastic, the use of modern chemicals or methods on natural bone or antler, photographic application of images to bone, etc.).
- 2: Use of **both** materials (such as chemical dyes or using plastic as an ivory substitute) and methods (such as pressure steaming) to produce a work that looks, or feels authentic to the time period it purports to be (ex: design elements vary from each other culturally and chronologically).
- 3: Use of **either** materials (such as chemical dyes or using plastic as an ivory substitute) **or** methods (such as pressure steaming) to produce a work that looks, or feels authentic (ex: some modern shortcuts were taken, but otherwise an dependably authentic article; material is authentic, appropriate or defensible; methods are authentic, appropriate or defensible).
- 4: Use of totally authentic materials (or allowed substitutes) and methods (ex: all tools, including abrasives, are period [or direct modern derivatives] and the design elements are culturally and chronologically correct or are defensible as direct logical descendents.

Scope (0 to 6 points): Rank the ambition, **not** the success, of the entry on a scale of 0 to 6 for **each** of the following elements and average for the total Scope score (Total of element scores divided by 4, 5, 6, or 7). *Note: Don't think of judging the complexity as comparing a Viking T-tunic to an Elizabethan Gown. They can both be complex. Think of the complexity as comparing a single under-garment to a completed outfit with all of the accessories.)*

- Size and/or complexity of the entry (number and combination of pieces or materials).
- Type and number of techniques utilized (Is the entry just cleaned and simply worked (like a needle)? Are several small pieces joined to make a larger piece? Is the entry hot or cold formed or just tool worked? Is there decoration? Is there more than one type of decoration?)
- Type of intended finish.
- Extent gone to ensure authenticity of patterns, techniques and materials

Judge these elements only if they are appropriate to the entry:

- Type of decoration i.e. carving (bas relief, full relief, in-the-round), coloring (dyeing, heating, bleaching), etc.
- Intricacy of carving.
- Variation of color.

Skill (0 to 6 points): How well is the entry made? Rank the success of the entry on a scale of 0 to 6 points for **each** of the following elements and average for the total Skill score (Total of element scores divided by 4, 5, or 6). Skill should reflect appropriate style and choice of materials for a given time and place.

- How materials are used (i.e. Does the piece do what it is suppose to do? Is it a cup, a blast horn, a flute, a corset stay? Does it work properly?)
- Application of techniques. (How well did the artisan execute the entry? Are their lines clean? Is the decoration clear?)
- Handling of grain. (Did the artisan only work with the grain or were they able to accomplish work cleanly against the grain?)
- Finishing. (Is the piece finished in any way? Is it polished? Is it colored? Did the finishing affect the coloring? Does the piece have a non-period finish?)

Optional Elements, if applicable:

- Precision of images.
- Joinery (If more than one piece is joined together in the creation of the entry, how well are they put together? Is the method of joinery correct? i.e. Is the piece held together with superglue or modern screws or bolts **OR** did the entrant heat meld the pieces or join them like a piece of wood with pegs or joints ?

Creativity (0 to 4 points):

- 0: Standard style with no innovations. (Entry is an exact copy of a period piece with no innovation - also applies to extremely simple projects like a plain nalbinding needle, or a drinking horn or corset stay with no decoration, etc.).
- 1: Logical combination of elements with some innovation or embellishment or techniques, all logical to period context. (Entry is a copy of a period piece with some variation such as adding or changing decoration, increasing or decreasing the size of the original, etc. i.e. a drinking horn with surface carved decoration or a plain cup with a wooden plug bottom with no decoration)
- 2: Logical combination of elements with more innovation or embellishment or techniques, all logical to period context. (Entry is the next logical step in the evolution of the period piece.)
- 3: Same as #2, plus much individual interpretation and interpolation logical to period. (Entry is two or three steps beyond the original or uses the same technique as was used to make the original but is a new and separate article.)
- 4: Same as #3, plus each element is logically innovative to itself. Elements work together in a cohesive fashion. (There is no original artifact of this type but the entry could be logically shown to have existed or there is evidence of similar artifacts before and after the time of the article (usually pre-600 and post-1600) so therefore it is logical that the entry existed in some form within period. Must be shown in the documentation.

Judge's Observations (0 to 6 points): Rank the entry as a whole. How well do all the separately judged parts fit together? The entry's overall effect is judged in this section. *This is the only section of the Criteria where the judge may allow her/his personality, private opinions and personal preferences to influence scoring.*

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