

USITT Fort Lauderdale 2018 Costume Commission Poster Session

Hooked Together— A Practical Experience with Aari and Tambour Embroidery

Rebecca Rose Callan, MFA
Costume Designer/Costume
Shop Supervisor

THE COLLEGE OF
WOOSTER

Abstract: This poster shares the results of my examination of the similarities and differences between the practical applications of Aari and Tambour beaded embroidery. The poster follows the processes of both styles from practice to a timed, completed sampler. Through the practical demonstration of both styles of hooked chain stitch embroidery this poster examines the similarities and differences in tools and application methods and discusses some of the pros and cons of both. This poster also evaluates the time commitment required to complete a design and the logistics required to implement that design.



Tambour Embroidery

- French or Western European
- Named after drum-like frame—tambour
- French word with Persian roots
- *Crochet*— Hook is made from wood, bone, stone, etc. with a screw post allowing for different size hooks.
- Beads are loaded onto a working thread and applied to the reverse/wrong side.

Aari Embroidery

- Indian
- Named for the tool used to create chain-stitch.
- *Aar*— Hook is a fine hooked metal needle that may have a wooden or plastic handle.
- Historically there was no frame
- Beads are loaded onto the hook and worked on the right/top side of the fabric.



Hooks
Tambour, acquired awhile ago in Las Vegas, also available from Amazon.com.

Tambour Hook

Aar Hooks

Aar, acquired from London School of Embroidery, also available on Etsy.

For both versions of hooked embroidery, the needle movement is the same.

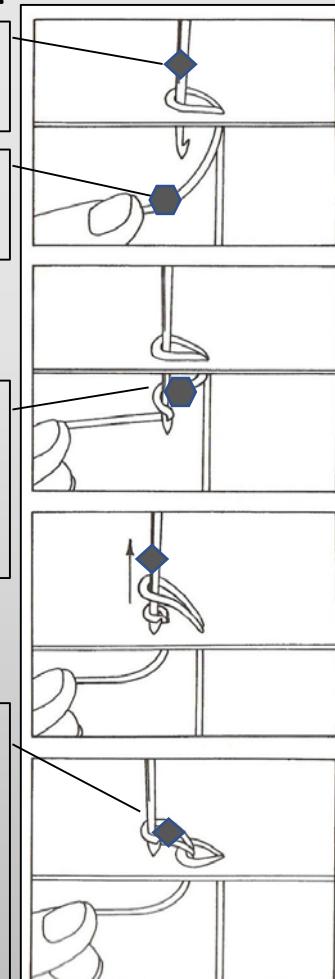
- The needle is put through the taunt fabric.
- The lower working thread is caught on the hook with a twist of the needle.
- The needle is brought back up through the fabric and previous loop.
- The chain starts to form.

Aari— beads/sequins loaded onto needle.

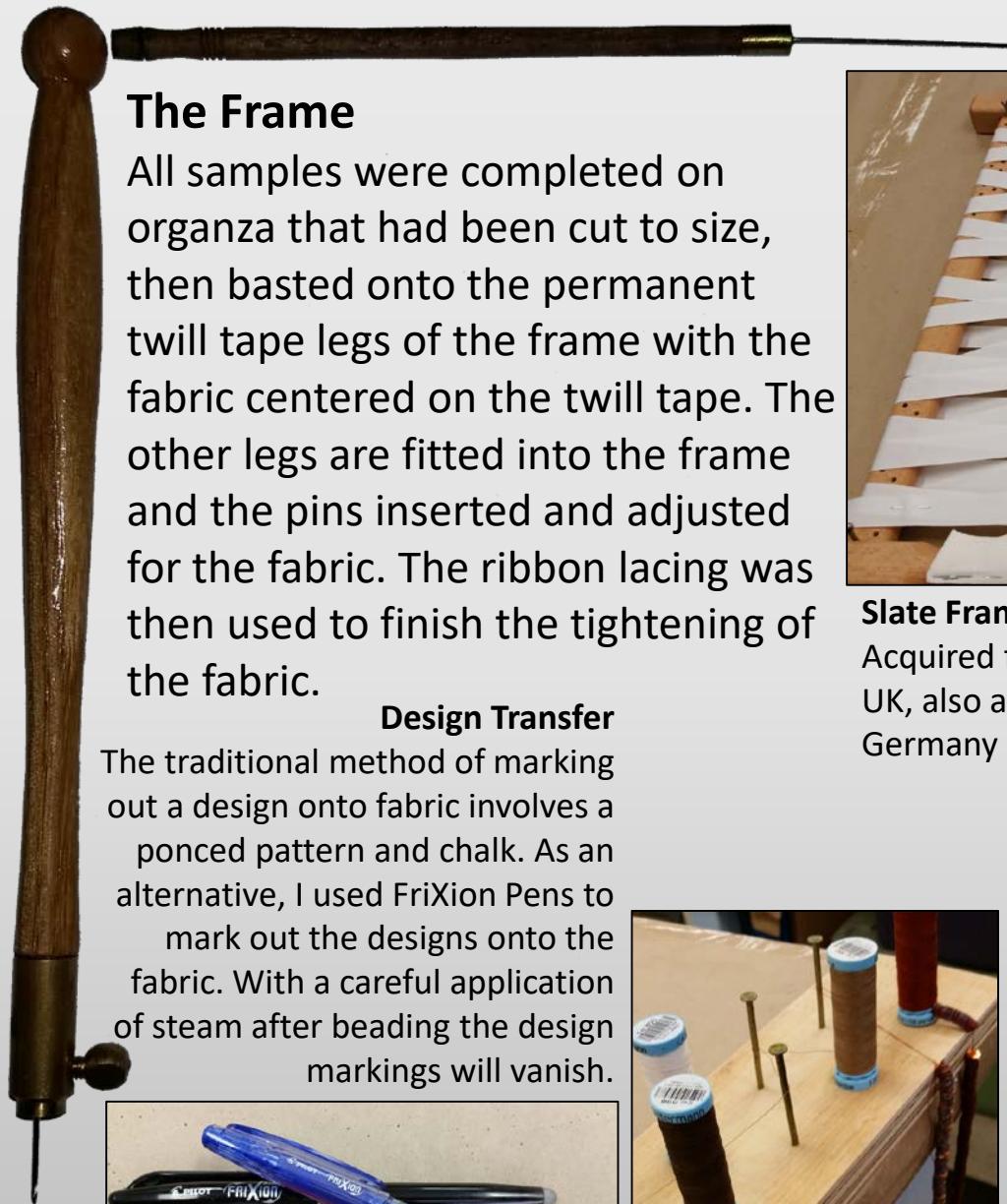
Tambour— beads/sequins strung onto working thread.

Tambour— Before the lower threads is caught and brought back up a bead/sequin is slid into place.

Aari— After the loop is brought to the top a bead/sequin is slid down onto the upper loop and the needle put through to the bottom to secure it in place.



Additional graphics added to an image from *Tambour Work*, Fukuyama.

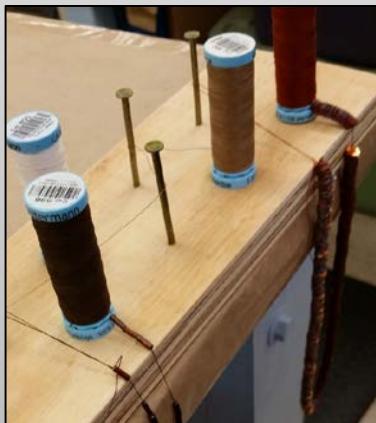


The Frame

All samples were completed on organza that had been cut to size, then basted onto the permanent twill tape legs of the frame with the fabric centered on the twill tape. The other legs are fitted into the frame and the pins inserted and adjusted for the fabric. The ribbon lacing was then used to finish the tightening of the fabric.

Design Transfer

The traditional method of marking out a design onto fabric involves a pricked pattern and chalk. As an alternative, I used FriXion Pens to mark out the designs onto the fabric. With a careful application of steam after beading the design markings will vanish.



Slate Frame

Acquired from the Royal School of Embroidery in the UK, also available on Etsy and other sources in Germany and England.

Tambour—embellishments need to be threaded onto working thread.

Aari—embellishments loose and in a dish/tray to contain them.

Thread and Spool Holder

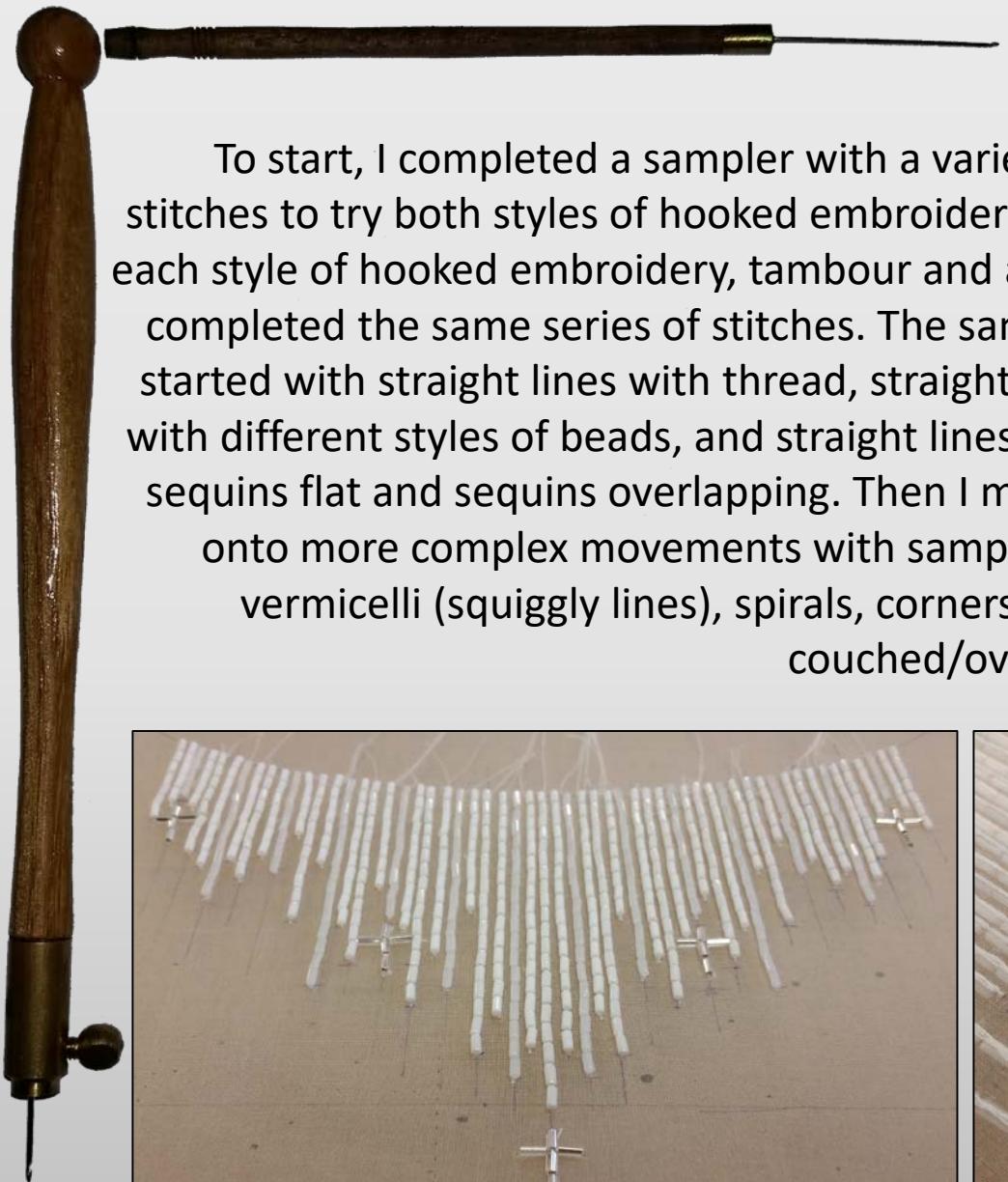
I used Gutermann Silk Thread that was available at local fabric store.

I created a spool holder (plywood and some nails) to allow for even distribution of the thread and embellishments.

Sequins and Beads

For tambour it is best to have pre-strung beads and sequins. Pre-strung beads (in hanks) are not difficult to find in the US, but pre-strung sequins (worms) are difficult to acquire in the US— mostly vintage sequins are available— most sources of sequin worms are from France. For aari, the embellishments are not stung. Loose sequins and beads are quite easy to source.

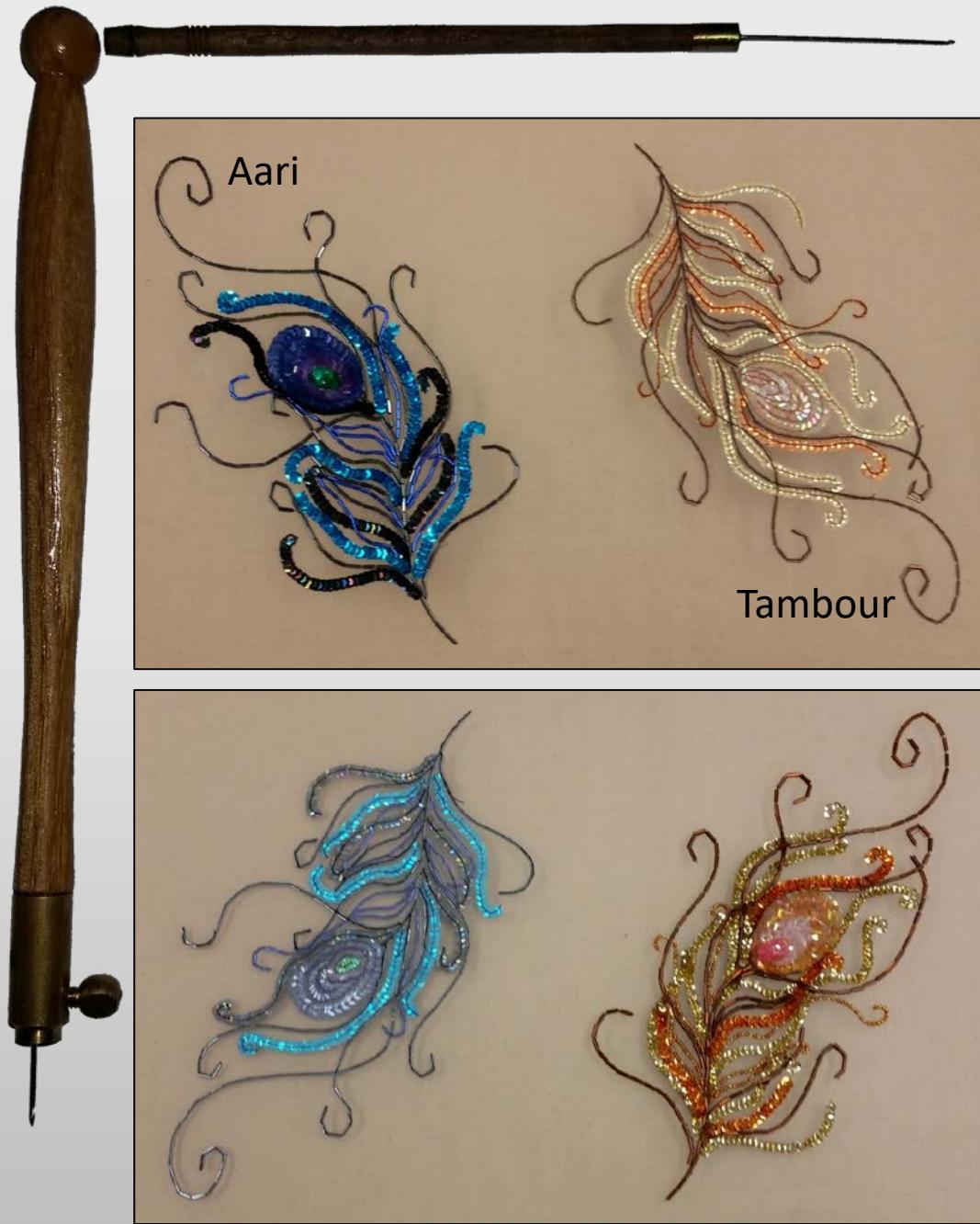




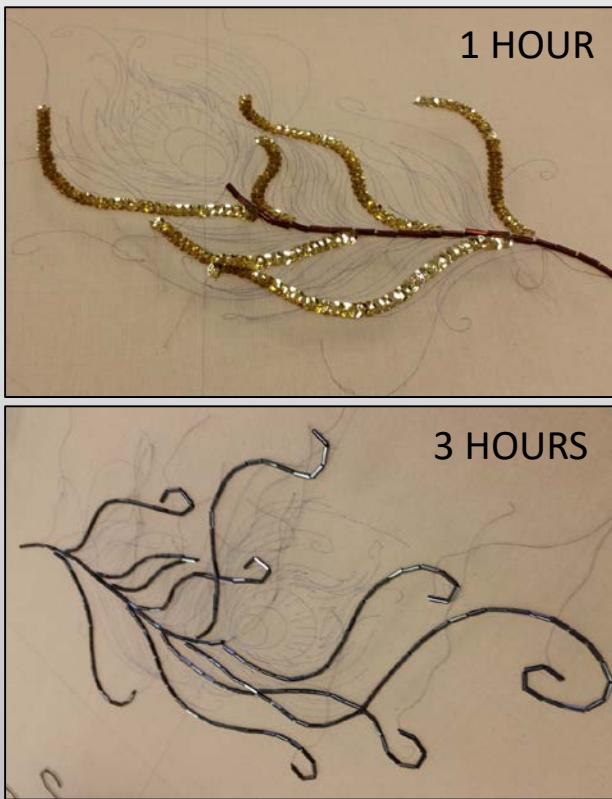
To start, I completed a sampler with a variety of stitches to try both styles of hooked embroidery. For each style of hooked embroidery, tambour and aari, I completed the same series of stitches. The sampler started with straight lines with thread, straight lines with different styles of beads, and straight lines with sequins flat and sequins overlapping. Then I moved onto more complex movements with samples of vermicelli (squiggly lines), spirals, corners, and couched/overlay.



I created a simple linear design for my daughter's First Communion dress. Using a FriXion pen, I marked out the design on the stretched organza. I completed the design using the tambour hook using a variety of white and silver bugle beads, it took about 4-5 hours of beading to complete the design and then an hour to finish/clean up the threads on the reverse by weaving the thread tails back up into the design. After the garment was constructed it was steamed to remove the design lines from the FriXion pen.



The last samplers that I completed for this examination were two peacock feather designs in both styles of hooked beaded embroidery. The starting design was the same, but variations in the two were determined by the beads and sequins that were available. The last component of this phase of the project was tracking the time each method required for me to bead and finish the feather design.



Tambour Sample—

- 7.5 hours of beading
- 2 hours of finishing work
- Smooth application of beads and sequins.

Aari Sample—

- 13 hours of beading
- 1.5 hours of finishing work
- Beads and sequins like to jump off the hook and fly around.

Viability in the Costume Shop

- Need the time and materials.
- Need trained artisan or time to train someone in technique.
 - Detail-orientated, focused individual.
- Supplies are becoming easier to locate— and sequins and beads can be strung by “unskilled” labor.
- Difficulty of design needs to be taken into consideration.
- Need to keep these specialized handicrafts alive, we should be finding ways to introduce the techniques of the past to our students.

Final Thoughts

- Speed— Tambour was twice as fast for me.
 - Fought with aar splitting the thread and sequins and beads were uncooperative. Tambour was easier, for me, to control.
- Issues with loose stitches with aari.
- It was a bit easier to follow the lines with tambour.
- Tambour has the disadvantage that it is worked blind, so opaque fabric adds another challenge.
- Final results of both styles are very similar.

How To Resources

La Broderie de Lunéville [en Français]—Gravelier/Fouriscot

Perles & Paillettes [en Français]—Boinay/Groléas

Tambour Work—Yusai Fukuyama

Tambour Beading and Embroidery—Robert W Haven

Expert Village—

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL041048735589F251>

RM4Global—

<https://www.youtube.com/user/RM4Global>