

Sprang

Sprang is a technique for creating fabric using only a warp. The warp is formed by running a continuous thread around fixed rods or cords at each end. The warp threads are then twisted, to become interlinked. Each twist of a thread at one end of the warp creates a mirror image at the other end. Patterns are created by manipulating the threads in different ways. When the twisting or interlinking reaches the middle of the warp, a thread is woven through the links, or the threads are chained together with a hook or needle, to keep the work from unraveling.

Historically sprang was used to create hats, belts, garters, bags, sashes and funeral cloths. Artifacts have been found in such diverse places as Denmark, Egypt, Russia, and Peru [1]. While it is not known how old the technique is, the oldest sprang artifact found in Denmark is the Borum Eshøj cap, which dates from c. 1400-1200 B.C. [2]

When a piece is created using the simplest form of interlinking, the resulting fabric will curl. This tendency can be counteracted by changing the direction of the twist.

Always moving from right to left:

Row 1: Pick up one thread from the back, move it to the front; drop one thread from the front to the back. 1-1-1-1-1-1...

Row 2: Pick up 2 threads from the back, move them to the front; drop one thread to the back; pick up one thread from the back, drop one thread from the front. 2-1-1-1-1-1

Finishing: Crochet a chain across the center, or weave a thread back and forth across the piece.

Footnotes:

1. Hald, Margrethe, Ancient Danish Textiles from Bogs & Burials, translation by Jean Olsen, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, 1980, p. 251-274. Phipps, Elena, Cochineal Red, Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, Winter 2010, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, p. 18.

2. Hald, p. 274.

Bibliography:

Collingwood, Peter, The Techniques of Sprang, Plaiting on Stretched Threads, Watson-Guption Publications, New York, NY, 1974

Hald, Margrethe, Ancient Danish Textiles from Bogs & Burials, translation by Jean Olsen, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, 1980

Phipps, Elena, Cochineal Red, Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, Winter 2010, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2010

Denblauwenswaen: YouTube videos by Blue, demonstrating sprang techniques.