

## HOW TO

### *Make a Pouch Bag with Mandy Pattullo*



**I have always been interested** in bags found in museums but they are usually highly decorative, precious, and are there because they have been valued and preserved. You rarely see examples of bags used by the lower classes, as they were made of less sophisticated materials, were used regularly, wore out and were not kept. I have a lovely collection of bags, some of them from my own family, that were used to hold papers, coins, handkerchiefs and stockings.

In an era when we are becoming more aware of the environmental impact of plastic and we are no longer offered free plastic bags when we go shopping, it is good to see that more people are using cloth bags. For many years I used a lot of sealable plastic bags in my studio to store different projects, but recently I have tried to eradicate plastic from my workspace and have endeavoured to make multi-functional bags from fabric and zips I already have or from pieces of old quilt. My Kindle nestles inside a little bag made from a segment of an Irish quilt, my iPad is also protected by a thick quilt sleeve, and I make numerous pouch bags of different sizes out of furnishing-fabric samples to keep needlework tools in and for sewing projects that I want to carry around and work with on the go. The ones I have made for myself and for friends give me great joy. They do get a bit grubby and because they are made from an old fabric they have a limited life, but they can be repaired and darned and re-patched. I have never seen an antique bag made from a piece of quilt (there are plenty of contemporary examples) but this does not mean that resourceful women did not recycle their quilts into receptacles – just that they were never photographed or preserved.\*\*\* **Mandy Pattullo**

Photographs by Michael Wicks

Left: Fabrics pinned on the base fabric with a 2cm overhang. On the right you can see the back with the fabrics attached and embroidered, the overhang slip stitched into place, and the lining partially stitched in.

Right: Three hand-stitched pouch bags. Average size 15 x 13cm. Recycled fabrics, including quilt unpickings, attached to a base fabric, folded and hand stitched up the side.

## Making a Collaged Pouch Bag

It is easy to make a bag by simply folding a piece of quilt so that you have a pocket and a flap, and a little more labour can turn textile collage techniques into something a bit more functional. Perhaps think of making a bag that has an element of a piece of fabric unpicked from a quilt mixed in with other vintage fabrics. This is important: do not go out and buy fabrics for this project, tempting as it may be – use what you already have.

1 First, think about what you are going to put in the pouch and then make the bag big enough to hold it. Play about with bits of folded paper until you get the right size. Draw round this paper template on to a piece of bonded curtain lining, cotton quilt batting, or use a piece of blanket, wool felt or wadding as an alternative. We will call this the base fabric. When cut out and folded it will be the exact size of the pouch bag.

2 Next, gather your fabrics. Try to have a colour story which might be led by one of the pieces of fabric or a postcard image. The French artist Pierre Bonnard is good to look at for interesting colour combinations. For this project it is best not to use a thick piece of quilt so instead you could unpick the top layer of a quilt and use that.

3 Pin the fabrics onto the 'fuzzy' side of the curtain lining. Have a 1–2cm overhang around the outside edge that will eventually be turned in. Fold to the purse shape so that you can see what is going to happen on the front, otherwise the front flap could obscure something really interesting. When it comes to sewing the pieces down, leave the edges raw and

turned, but you could piece it together on a machine or finger turn all the edges if that is what you prefer. Stab stitch or overcast stitch are both good to attach pieces of fabric.

4 Now turn the whole piece over and wrap the edges round the base lining and sew down. This can be a tacking stitch, as it will be covered by the lining, but try to ensure that it does not show on the right side. Add any decorative hand stitching that you want to the surface collage. Next choose a lining fabric and attach using slipstitch over the inside turned edges.

5 To make the purse or bag, fold into shape as required and stitch up the sides with an overcast stitch. Perhaps make a feature of this using big stitches and a perle thread. You can also use a decorative stitch such as buttonhole, cross stitch or herringbone.

6 You next need to consider how the bag will close. You could attach poppers, or hook-and-loop tape, or create a buttonhole by hand or on the machine. It can be nice to use a detached buttonhole stitch over two strands of thread to make a looped closure. It is a bit fiddly; use a thick cotton thread, perle or cotton a broder rather than a stranded embroidery thread for this. \*\*\* **Excerpt from *Textiles Trans-formed: Thread and thrift with reclaimed textiles* by Mandy Pattullo, Batsford, 2020, £22.95.**

