

The A, B, C's of Art/Sci - Introduction

What is Art/Sci? Art/Sci or the Arts and Science Competition, is an academic, adjudicated fair that allows members of the populace to display their academic and artistic studies of the SCA period. We now have one Kingdom competition a year in and around January. Additionally, there are multiple regional and novice art/sci fairs/competitions throughout the state over the year. This IS an academic competition. The SCA is a historical, EDUCATIONAL, organization dedicated to studying, teaching and re-creating the Middle-Ages and the Renaissance. We choose our Kings by holding Crown Tournaments. During these tournaments we expect our fighters to have studied, practiced and prepared, to the best of their abilities, in order to win the tournament. Art/Sci is very similar. We now have regional competitions to help you get ready.

The main purpose of the Art/Sci competition is very basic and can be easily summarized.

1. Find an aspect of the SCA period you enjoy or want to learn more about.
2. Study that subject. You should study EVERY inch of the subject.
3. Re-create the subject.
4. Display your research and your finished subject.
5. Teach others so they too may learn.

The competition is an organized, non-biased way to judge the entrants on how well they accomplished these goals. By learning the general goals, then breaking them down into more specific steps art/sci becomes less of an overwhelming chore and should become an enjoyable, educational experience. The more completely you study and recreate your project, the higher the entrance level you should enter.

I have developed a class series program to take anyone who is interested in entering art/sci and walk them, step-by-step, through the process.

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| Class 1 | Getting into the headspace of the art/sci competition and choosing your subject. Beginning the Research of your project. Learning what questions you need to answer. |
| Class 2 | Turning your initial research into more useful research. Providing good research starting points and links. How to use various researching techniques. ex: inter-library loans, University library catalogs, Internet searches, museum requests and searches...etc. |
| Class 3 | Library Trip. |
| Class 4 | Research Stumbling Blocks and putting together documentation
*Looking at the levels and going over the judging sheets and entry forms |
| Class 5 | Understanding the 4 entrance levels of our A/S system |
| Class 6 | Displaying your work. How to set up for A/S Competition |
| Class 7 | Enter a Regional Fair |
| Class 8 | Library Trip. |
| Class 9 | Making the period subject/project and putting your document binders together |
| Class 10 | What was missing? Filling in the Art/Sci forms and completing your Documentation. Final Touch-ups for A/S and what to expect from judging |

ENTER Art/Sci!!!

The most incorrect assumption about art/sci is the need to write a thesis research paper. Documentation IS very important to art/sci. However, the documentation is only the written copy of what you should have already done when you researched your subject. Documentation is difficult when one or more of the following things happen:

1. The project is made first then researched. Often this results in the artisan learning he/she created the subject incorrectly.
2. The project is left until the last minute and therefore “thrown together”.
3. The subject is never researched therefore the “meat” of documentation does not exist.
4. OR the research was not written down as it was found, making the entrant have to “re-find” the information again.

When you research your subject you will find there may be certain aspects of your project that cannot not be re-created identically as they were in period. This is NOT a problem! The purpose of research is to learn how the subject was made, why it was used, who used it...etc. Once you have answered these questions, then it is up to the artisan to decide what “period” methods they want to choose. Many things affect this decision. However, if you can use the period method, try!

Sometimes, mundane laws prohibit a project from being completely period. For example, in parts of the United States, distilling alcohol is illegal. Therefore a substitution would be necessary for any art/sci project that would require the use of a distilled ingredient. According to SCA art/sci rules, the score cannot be affected because of mundane law. There are other reasons such as the level of your entry, health, financial and availability, that may factor into your choice not use a period material or method. There is NOTHING wrong with this AS LONG AS it is written in your documentation! If you want to make a silk banner and want to use synthetic “Silkesence” because it was cheaper, more durable and you already owned some, go right ahead. However, you must include what would have been used in period and then compare it to what you used and explain your choices.

A simple way to do this is to set up a chart. This is a great tool to use as you are researching.

MATERIAL/METHOD	What was done in period	Reference	What you did	REASON
EXAMPLE:				
Thread	Linen	Textiles book pg 8	Cotton thread	Cheap and I owned some already

Under the materials column you should list EVERY item that is necessary to make the subject. This should include ingredients, tools, patterns, skills and many other things. If you have to pick it up or have the knowledge of it, “it” should be listed as a material/method.

Under material/method, list exactly that. As you learn how even the smallest detail was accomplished, WRITE IT DOWN! Then record down where you read or learned it.

Once you begin to make your reproduction you will fill in the last two columns. At this point you may find that you lack some of the research to finish the project. BEFORE CONTINUING, go back to the books.

Where to find documentation? This is most people's hardest obstacle to overcome. Obviously the library is a good place to start for generic information-the basics. THEN EXPAND YOUR MIND! Take the subject and think about all of the people that item would have touched. Who used it then? Bring it into the modern day. Who uses it now? Let's say you are going to learn about bookbinding. Your basics are the cover, the paper and the binding. You should find out where the bookbinder would get all of the ingredients. Is the cover made of leather, if so where did the leather come from? What was the process of turning the animal into a piece of leather you can use? Where did the paper come from? Was it paper from fiber, if so who grew the plant to make the fiber? And so on. You don't necessarily have to recreate all of these steps, but you should be aware of them and record them in your documentation. If you write down all of the possible questions before you start researching, it will give you a place to start. Remember the level of your project also affects just how in depth you choose to research.

Answering the Who, What, When, Where, How and Why about all aspects of your projects will help you get all of the steps too! One place that can help you start in forming these questions is the art/sci forms. There are judging forms for each level and for the first two levels, Novice and Journeyman, there are fill-in-the-blank forms. However, you should have all of the answers already in your documentation. The questions are:

- When and where is this object from?
- How was it made in period? What ingredients were used?
- How did you make it and why? Please list all ingredients
- What was it used for?
- What was it made out of? Please list all period ingredients?
- What did you make it out of and why? Any substitutions?

Remember the SCA is a game. Entering art/sci is a game. In order to do well when playing a game you must know AND play by the rules. Make yourself aware of what is expected. Additionally, there are many categories you can enter. When you are preparing your project for display make sure you examine all of the categories. Then ensure that you are entering in the most appropriate for your entry. The category that your subject is entered will determine what the judges will be judging you on. By following this class series, we are not guaranteeing you a perfect score. However it should help you understand the processes of developing, researching and entering an art/sci competition. There are many steps to entering art/sci. Take one at a time, don't get ahead of yourself and try not to get to overwhelmed. This IS fun, if it is not, step back and take another look and come ask for help!

Category I am interested in: _____

Subject I would like to work on: _____

Any questions? _____
