

# History Of Paper Quilling

Quilling - also known as paper-rolling, or paper scrolling - has a long and interesting history. The origins of quilling are not recorded, but some think it began with the invention of paper, in China in 105 AD or in Egypt, where some tombs have been found to contain wire shapes similar in appearance to modern quilling.

It is believed that in the 300s and 400s, silver and gold wires were quilled around pillars and vases, and jewelry made using this technique. Quilling was practiced by Greeks who used thin metal wires to decorate containers and boxes. The earliest works ever were from the medieval period. Also they were found in religious houses across Europe.

With many nationalities claiming the origins of the craft of quilling, it is almost impossible to determine which one invented it. In the 13th century, metal filigree was used for decoration in many countries. But when traditional materials became scarce and unobtainable to the layperson, the paper was used as a substitute.

In England, with the appearance of first paper mills around 1495, the establishment of paper manufacturing was significant factor in the development of quill work. Paper, elaborately constructed into design and then gilded, substituted more expensive metal. There are records of French and Italian nuns using the torn edges of gilt-edged Holy books from 1200s - 1600s. These pieces were wrapped around goose quills to create coiled shapes for decoration of reliquaries and holy pictures. They used paper and then gilded or painted the finished work replicating expensive intricacies of wrought iron or carved ivory. This practice of using quills resulted in the craft's name - quilling.

Many sources claim that in Europe the ladies of affluence were taught quilling along with the needle work in Edwardian and Victorian times. Special reassesses were made in tea caddies, baskets, portraits, screens and even in furniture sides to allocate the surface for intricate paper coils and shapes. The instructions and templates were published in magazines of the time. The quality of quilling was at its highest standard. These were mostly genteel women in Europe, and particularly in England, where quilling was seen as a proper hobby for young ladies to take up along with needlework. It flourished among the ladies of upper classes who had no need for gainful work and were spared domestic chores.

Quilling guild of England makes references to The New Lady's Magazine of 1786: "... it affords an amusement to the female mind capable of the most pleasing and extensive variety; and at the same time, it conduces to fill up a leisure hour with an innocent recreation ...". Another source, an Edwardian book of household management entitled 'Floral Mosaicon,' provided a reference to Queen Mary and Queen Alexandra purchasing paper pieces.

Only those with money could afford to purchase the supplies needed for quilling such as foil, mica or flaked shell, which were often used as backgrounds. Wooden frames were sold for the sole purpose of being decorated with pieces of paper rolled, shaped and glued into patterns. The projects were usually finished by painting or gilding. The ladies were to use quilling to while away their hours in the pursuit of becoming accomplished women, comfortable knowing that in time, an eligible bachelor would likely take them as a wife. Quilling thereby became a means of signaling wealth and leisure time to prospective husbands.

Until then they decorated screens, cabinets, frames, tea caddies, cribbage boards, wine coasters, work baskets and work boxes, urns and over time, even furniture. Certainly the craft was popular in the early 1810s (the Regency period), but its popularity waned soon after. In 1875 quilling was reintroduced in Europe by William Bemrose, who produced a kit called 'Mosaicon' that included a handbook on quilling. But by the beginning of 20th century it was only introduced as part of a school craft education.

Many European museums hold examples of quilled work, and two major exhibitions of quilling have been held in 1927 in London, one reportedly displaying items quilled presumably by Charles I.

The exhibition of 1988 in New York at the Florian-Papp Gallery presented for exhibition and sale some exquisite examples, mostly of European origin. Patricia Caputo also writes extensively on the revival of quilling in America. She has mentioned the American Quilling Guild, surviving suppliers, exhibitions, and overall growing popularity of the craft in 1970s-1980s. The Quilling guild of England is a very popular organisation across Europe and Australia, staging exhibitions and providing classes extensively in both modern and classic styles of quilling. British quilling guild staged festivals of the craft across the country since the 1990s, and hopes to have a permanent display of its archives.

Many examples of quilled art can be found on cabinets and stands, cribbage boards, ladies' purses, a wide range of both pictures and frames, work baskets, tea caddies, coats of arms and wine coasters. Storage boxes, larger than most jewelry boxes with drawers and/or tops that opened, quilled lock boxes, are popular. In recent times, quilling jewelry has become a trend for fashion lovers, as it can be very light and easy to carry on them. Some items were specially designed for quilling, with recessed surfaces. Quilling was also combined or married with other techniques such as embroidery and painting.[1]

Today, quilling is seeing a resurgence in popularity. It is sometimes used for decorating wedding invitations, for Christmas, birth announcements, greeting cards, scrapbook pages, and boxes. Quilling can be found in art galleries in Europe and in the United States, and is an art that is practiced around the world.[2]