

Handbook for the Artisans of Ansteorra: Participating in the Arts and Sciences in Ansteorra

“Our “Arts & Sciences” are the crafts, skills, and technologies from the time period and cultures that the SCA covers. Participants research, study, and practice these skills and then share their results with others. You will see them in use and on display at our events - the recipes used for a feast, the armor worn in combat, the scrolls presented in Court, and the costumes we wear, just to name a few.”

- <http://www.sca.org/activities/AandS.html>

INTRODUCTION

When you join the SCA, you begin an exciting adventure in learning about medieval and renaissance life and times. Part of the journey includes learning about “crafts, skills and technologies from the time period and cultures the SCA covers”. SCA members participate in the Arts and Sciences (A&S) at all levels, from dabbling in areas of interest and curiosity to long-term study and independent scholarship and research. The availability of books and on-line resources facilitates individual study. Attending craft nights, guild meetings and classes at SCA events gives you the opportunity to learn from like-minded individuals who may be further down the road in learning about a topic that interests you. There will be opportunities to share and display your work as well as compete with other artisans. Just as with fighting and service, there is an award track that recognizes advancement in the Arts and Sciences.

WHAT DO PEOPLE DO WITH THEIR ART?

There are many uses for arts and sciences in the SCA. You can make something to wear, to eat, to spruce up your campsite or feast table, to add ambiance to an event, to give as largesse, to donate as prizes, to make items for newcomers, and to inspire and educate others. The applications are endless and along the way you will be increasing your knowledge and making a valuable contribution to the game we play.

GETTING INTO THE ARTS

You may already have a well-developed hobby or skill that translates well to the SCA. Perhaps all of it is new to you and you don't know where to begin. A good starting place is your own persona. What clothing, hat, shoes, and jewelry would your persona wear? What types of foods would he or she eat and how would they be prepared? How did your persona tell time? What were the scientific beliefs at the time of your persona? What kind of art was being produced? Alternatively, if you don't pursue the A&S of your persona, there may be people in your local group doing something you think is cool, like spinning or brewing. Don't be afraid to ask

them what they are working on. People enjoy talking about their hobbies. Part of the fun of A&S is discussion, sharing, and bouncing ideas off of other people. If the art or science that interests you isn't being done locally, it doesn't mean you can't do it. Follow your own bliss. Start learning about your area of interest and bringing your projects to events to work on. Soon people may begin approaching you with questions. It's possible that others will become involved as a result of your interest and activity!

Local Minister of Arts and Sciences (MoAS): The local Arts and Sciences officer will be able to point you towards other individuals with expertise in the areas that interest you and answer any questions you may have about A&S in your group. Officer contact information should be listed on your group's website.

Networking: Find someone who has been in the group a long time and ask them to introduce you to people doing arts and sciences. It's a great way to quickly build up a network of friends with common interests.

A&S Craft Nights: A regular A&S gathering where people bring a variety of projects to work on. Participating with other in the arts and sciences is a good way to build up a network of friends as well as to find help and encouragement in your art. If there is no regular A&S gathering in your area, you may wish to speak with your MoAS about starting one.

Guilds: A guild is a group of SCA-folk who have a common interest in a particular medieval art (or science). Guilds meet on a regular basis and may hold specialty workshops, classes, field trips, etc. Meeting announcements are generally published in the group's newsletter and/or e-mail list.. If you are interested in starting a guild or reviving an inactive guild, speak with your local MoAS.

A&S Classes: Check event announcements to see if any classes are being offered. Ansteorra also holds an annual "King's College" which is entirely devoted to learning about arts and sciences. Occasionally, a college/symposium will be held which focuses on a single topic, such as cooking or fiber arts.

Ansteorra E-Mail Groups: Ansteorra has some kingdom-wide special interest groups that have online mailing lists. You can go to the Ansteorran web page to see a list of those groups (<http://lists.ansteorra.org/>).

On-Line Special Interest Groups/Social Media: Search on-line communities such as Yahoo!, Facebook, etc. for groups dedicated to the arts and sciences. Try keywords such as "SCA", "Ansteorra", "Artisan", "A&S" or the name of the art. You may want to ask on general interest boards if anyone can recommend a group. Look at Pinterest boards for sources of inspiration. The Kingdom of Atlantia has extensive links on their A&S page: <http://moas.atlantia.sca.org/wsnlinks/>

A&S Demos/Displays: See event announcements for information on A&S demos or displays. If listed as part of the event, there will be an area set aside for projects to be displayed and/or demonstrated. This is a good venue for beginners to share their work without the pressure of competition. By participating you can expect to get some informal feedback and to make connections with others interested in your art. Note: If an event has no display/demo component, you can always share your work in your own pavilion or an area agreed upon with the event steward ahead of time. Don't forget to post to your group's list to let them know you'll be demonstrating carving at your pavilion, etc.

A&S "Solars" at Events: Occasionally an individual or group will host an area for people to get together to work on A&S at an event. This may be a specific type of art or more general. It's an invitation for you to drop by and chat and work on your project. If you would like to provide space and/or host such an area at an event, speak with the event steward ahead of time.

RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Inter-Library Loan: If your local library does not have a book available that you would like to read for your research, check with them about an Inter-Library loan. This is a service where one library will request materials from another library, including those that are out-of-state or even out-of-country.

Tex-Share (Texas libraries): The TexShare card allows you to borrow materials from participating libraries such as universities where you would normally need to be a student or pay a fee to use their library. The TexShare card can be obtained from your local public library. For more information, see <https://www.tsl.state.tx.us/texshare/cardpage.html>

Museum Websites: A number of museums have websites with digital archives of their collections. Often they will include bibliographies for individual items in their collections. The museum gift shop sales section is a good source for discounted reference materials. Museums may also list contact information where you can send questions about something you are researching.

Other SCA Artisans: Other SCA artisans are a good source for recommendations on reference materials. Many have purchased a number of books pertaining to their areas of expertise. The Ansteorran Laurels website has photos of Laurels and their areas of expertise and contact information. <http://laurel.ansteorra.org/ALWLaurels.htm>

ANSTEORRAN A&S AWARDS

Other than local awards, all arts awards come from the Crown of Ansteorra. If you feel that someone is deserving of an A&S award, send an award recommendation to the Crown using the recommendation form on the Ansteorra website. If you live in a barony, it is an expected courtesy to notify your local nobility that a recommendation has been made.

- **Local Award** – Any type of arts award created specifically for your group.
- **Sable Flur** – A non-armigerous award given by the Crown at an event for a singular act for extraordinary artistry.
- **Sable Thistle** – An AoA level award (Lord/Lady) for a single art form. An individual can receive more than one Sable Thistle for different arts. See <http://heraldry.ansteorra.org/OP/op-awards.php?submit=List&id=39> for the variety of art forms that have been recognized in the past.
- **Iris of Merit** – A grant level award (Honored Lord/Honored Lady) usually given to acknowledge either a more advanced form of a single art form or for more advanced forms of multiple arts. Generally an Iris-level artisan has begun to teach their art form and is a recognized artisan within their region.
- **Order of the Laurel** – A peerage level award (Master/Mistress) given to acknowledge the peerage qualities of a person as well as exceptional talent. In other kingdoms it is common for a Laurel to be given for a single art form. In Ansteorra, Laurels can be made for a single art form or for a high level of expertise in multiple art forms. The Crown will poll the members of the Order of the Laurel for input on an individual but the decision on who will be made a Laurel rests with the Crown.

STUDENTS AND APPRENTICES

You can establish a relationship with a Laurel either as a student or apprentice for the purpose of training and guidance. There is no rank associated with this relationship and it does not guarantee that you will eventually be made a Laurel. Being a student or apprentice is also not required to become a Laurel. While some Laurels may approach an individual first it is generally expected that you approach the Laurel and express your interest. Are you interested in learning that person's particular Art or do you see them as a mentor in navigating the world of A&S in the SCA? Establishing a relationship with a Laurel is a very individual thing and you should make sure that the Laurel and you are very clear on each other's expectations. Typically, a Laurel takes a *student* in a temporary arrangement to see if things work out. If both are happy with the relationship, many times a student will then become an *apprentice*. Apprentices wear a green belt or other token from the Laurel to indicate the relationship. The item is not an award insignia.

A&S COMPETITIONS

Do not feel like you have to enter a competition with your first project or even at all. Events with competitions can provide inspiration even if you aren't competing. It is worth looking at displays and entries to see what other people are doing. Entering competitions may help motivate you to complete your unfinished projects and writing documentation may make you more systematic about doing research. Do you need to win competitions in order to move up in the arts in the SCA? As there is generally one, or a small handful of winners, winning is not really a criterion to receive A&S awards. However, entering will give you exposure as an artisan and bring your work to the attention of others, letting them see your process and progress over time.

Some A&S competitions are held annually (such as baronial championships and Kingdom A&S) giving you plenty of time to prepare. Some competitions will have a beginner/novice category for those who want to give it a try without having to compete against more experienced artisans. You do not have to prepare for a competition alone. It is okay to let others know you are interested in entering and to get help and advice beforehand.

Rules for competitions are posted in event announcements. The information will generally include

- set-up and registration time
- whether or not documentation is required
- whether there is a particular theme to the A&S (i.e. a Viking tourney with a Viking A&S competition)
- if there will be different categories of entry (championship, novice, children's, etc.)
- how the items will be judged (Kingdom judging form, populace vote, etc.)
- tear-down time

Types of Competitions:

Populace Vote - The entries are displayed for competition and patrons of the event get the opportunity to vote for their favorite(s) by leaving beans or other tokens in a cup next to the item. The tokens are tallied and the entry with the most is declared the winner.

Judging/Commentary: May or may not require documentation

Venue: Frequently held in conjunction with a local event or event that is not a championship.

What to expect: Expect informal feedback, to make connections with others interested in same thing and to experience a low-key competitive environment.

Single Static Item – This type of competition can range from a local competition with minimal documentation to Kingdom Arts and Sciences where research and documentation are extremely important and you are in the company of the top artisans in the kingdom. When preparing a static item for entry into a competition, it is recommended that you do your research first and then make the object. By first doing the research you will gain an understanding of how the item would have been made in period and can make informed choices when you choose to deviate from that process.

Judging/Commentary: Generally a judging form is used or, for local competitions, the winner may be chosen by the Baron/Baroness or other dignitaries.

What to expect: Expect a mixture of positive feedback and constructive criticism, to make connections with others interested in same thing and to become more visible in your arts to the greater population.

Body of Work – Entering multiple items as a single entry.

One form is based on *Depth* – A single art display showing improvement over time

Another is based on *Breadth* – A display of all of the various types of arts that a person has researched and attempted

Judging/Commentary: May be judged (Steppes Artisan) or commentary only (Laurel's Prize Tourney)

What to Expect: Expect to spend most of the event with your exhibit. Expect a mixture of positive feedback and constructive criticism, to make connections with others interested in same thing, and to become more visible in your arts to the greater population.

Performance or Dance Competition – Read the rules for the competition carefully to determine the format and if documentation is required. This type of competition can range from a local competition with minimal or no documentation to Kingdom Arts and Sciences where research and documentation is extremely important and emphasis is on period performance and style.

Judging/Commentary: Documentation may or may not be required. Judging forms may or may not be used.

What to expect: May be required to perform before a small group of judges, in a large hall before the general population or in front of other competitors. Expect a mixture of positive feedback and constructive criticism, to make connections with others interested in same thing and to become more visible in your arts to the greater population.

Research Papers - Read the rules for the competition carefully to ensure research papers will be accepted. Research papers often have an earlier due date so that there is time for the judges to read them. Follow standard style-guides for citations. The purpose of the research paper may be

- How to/Instructional
- Historical/Expository
- Persuasive/Argumentative
- Scientific/Experimental
- Artifact with supported research

Judging/Commentary: Generally a research paper judging form is used.

What to expect: Expect a mixture of positive feedback and constructive criticism.

Unorthodox Competitions - This can be anything under the sun. Some examples include: Iron Chef competition, Siege Cooking competition, new arts pentathlon (learn 5 new arts at an event and compete with your results), unfinished project competition, on-site embroidery competition, cheapest clothes competition (created the best medieval clothes for the least amount of money), beverage tasting competition, etc.

Judging/Commentary: May or may not require documentation. Generally judged by local B&B or populace vote.

What to Expect: May be required to construct the entry on-site. Fun and fellowship with others.

KINGDOM-LEVEL A&S COMPETITIONS AND EVENTS (See <http://moas.ansteorra.org> for further information)

King's College - This is a classroom event where you can learn just about anything. Typically there are “tracks” of classes that run throughout the day, such as costuming classes, calligraphy and illumination, metalwork, etc. Typically held indoors in a classroom setting, but occasionally includes an outdoor component for the “messy arts” (felting, dyeing, etc.) The teachers are artisans of Ansteorra who have volunteered their time. Most classes are free but some include a fee for copies and/or supplies.

Laurel's Prize Tourney – Laurel's Prize Tourney is a body of work display of the various types of arts that a person has researched and attempted, or a display of a single art showing improvements and variations over time. You can bring works in progress and ask questions. The event is designed for the benefit of the artists who want good, in-depth commentary from the Laurels without competing for a score. Most commonly held indoors. Supporting documentation is recommended but not required.

Kingdom Arts & Sciences Competition – This is a competition for static entries, research papers, and all types of performances. The Kingdom Artisan is chosen by the Crown from among the top scorers of the day. Those scoring a 40 or better receive a pilgrim medallion specific to that year's A&S event. Ten entries are chosen as “Gulf War Champions” to represent the Kingdom at Gulf Wars (with two alternates). This is an indoor event. Artisans wait in a separate room while items are being judged. Each item is judged by at least two Laurels who may be accompanied by others who are learning to judge. Full documentation is required for this event. A summary page on top is nice for the guests, however the judges will be spending their time reading all of the documentation. The rules for the competition will be published ahead of time.

Eisteddfod (Kingdom Bardic Competition) – The Kingdom Bardic Competition, Eisteddfod, is generally held in conjunction with another event. Rules will be posted ahead of time in the event announcement. The format is generally a series of “rounds”, each with a different theme or requirement. Some pieces may require documentation. The winner becomes the new Premier Bard of Ansteorra.

Kingdom Middle Eastern Dance Championship - The Kingdom Middle Eastern Dance Championship is generally held in conjunction with another event. Rules will be posted ahead of time in the event announcement.. Dancers have typically been required to dance to live music which is provided by volunteer musicians at the event. Documentation may or may not be required. The winner becomes the new Middle Eastern Dance Champion of Ansteorra.

ENTERING AN A&S COMPETITION

See the Laurels' "State of the Arts" web page at <http://laurel.ansteorra.org/index.html> for additional information on writing documentation and for examples of the kingdom judging forms.

Signing Up - Read the competition information in the event announcement to determine if you need to pre-register. Some competitions request pre-registration so that the appropriate number of tables can be set-up as well as helping to determine what the judges will be judging. The event schedule will show the time for A&S set-up.

Displaying Your Work – After you sign-in, you will be provided space on a table to display your entry. You generally need to provide your own tablecloth or cover for your portion of the table. If outdoors, make sure your entry is wind and sun proof. Anything added to the display should be in keeping with your entry. For example, you may want to include the materials you used or examples of the project in progress. Special needs, such as being in the proximity of an electrical outlet, should be communicated to the A&S organizer beforehand.

Documentation - Check the A&S announcement to see if documentation is required. Unless otherwise specified, "documentation required" generally means a typed document with citations and bibliography. The documentation should address how your item would have been made in period compared with your process and the reasons for any differences. Ask several friends and/or experienced artisans to read your documentation prior to the event. You may want to review the Kingdom judging form to ensure you have covered all the points that judges typically look for (forms are located on the State of the Arts website listed above).

Being Judged using Kingdom Judging Forms - When the Kingdom judging forms are used, you will complete the top of the form including your level (Beginner, Intermediate, Expert) and what you want judged. For example, is it the beadwork on the gown or the entire gown? The judge(s) will score your item based on the categories on the form, using your documentation as a reference. The scores will be tallied by the individual running the competition to determine a winner. The score sheets with the judge's commentary will be returned to you at the end of the competition. If you have any questions about the commentary or would like more feedback on your entry, the judge's contact information is included at the bottom of the form. Feel free to talk with the judge(s) after the event.

"Shadow" Judging – Some A&S competitions allow individuals to "shadow" or accompany the judges as a way to learn about the judging process. Check with the A&S organizer to see if it is allowed if this interests you.

CONCLUSION:

The pursuit of the Arts and Sciences in the SCA can be a very rewarding journey. With each item we make or fact we share we come closer to an understanding of the life and times of the Middle Ages.

We hope this guide has answered some of your basic questions about getting involved in the arts and sciences in the SCA. If you have any comments or feedback about this guide, please contact the Kingdom A&S Minister at moas@ansteorra.org