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Silk Talismans

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Categories: Create, Things to make



Talisman is a word derived from Tilasm – an Arabic word meaning charm. All over the world, and right back to our earliest history, people have believed that talismans attracted good fortune – that these small and delicate offerings were imbued with magical powers. Talismans are sometimes called amulets and, though these often have a religious overtone, I think the idea of wishing someone well or good fortune is the most important idea behind making them. You might know someone who is having a difficult time, or starting a new adventure and this would be an incredibly thoughtful gift.

The idea behind this shape is from the Mexican tradition of making heart-shaped amulets or milagros, which are then wrapped and placed inside their own container as an individual gift. I wanted to use vintage silk scarves and silk velvet remnants as these are two of my favourite fabrics, both visually and because of how they feel. These scraps become precious when you give them your time and a little adornment.

Finished size

Approx. 8cm by 8cm

Materials

Scraps of silk and silk velvet a minimum of 10cm square for the talismans

Scraps of fabric or leather at least 12cm by 12cm and 12cm by 15cm for the containers

Silk embroidery thread in a colour or colours of your choice

Filling of your choice – you can use wool, fabric scraps, wheat grains, lavender or buckwheat hulls

Any beads, buttons or sequins for embellishments

Other Tools

Tailor's chalk or dressmaker's pencil

Cardboard
Fabric scissors
Ruler
Pins for fine fabric
Embroidery needle
Pinking shears

Prepare

Draw a heart shape approximately 11cm high and 11cm wide onto a firm piece of cardboard.

Cut

For the hearts, cut out as many hearts as you would like to make into talismans. You need two hearts per talisman.: For the containers, cut one square 12cm by 12cm and one rectangle 12cm by 15cm.

Sew

Pin each pair of hearts together. Hand sew a fine blanket stitch all around the outside, leaving an approx. 2cm gap on one long side. Leave the needle threaded. Fill the hearts with the filling of your choice, being careful not to overfill. Close the gap by completing the blanket stitch. Tie off, knot and trim the thread.

You can embellish one or both sides of the heart or leave plain.

Pin your two container pieces together with the square placed at the bottom of the rectangle. Sew around three sides with right sides out, with a 1cm seam allowance. You will have created an envelope. Trim the seams down to approx. 0.5cm using pinking shears.

Design Thoughts

You can use traditional boxes instead of a fabric container. These amulets often had a personal message or wish placed inside the heart. This would be lovely if the gift is for a specific reason. You can make these out of any fabric and use any type and colour of thread. They can, of course, be used for any occasion – something deeply personal for one person, or for a celebratory gathering of fifty.

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CASSANDRA ELLIS

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