



Purse

Not on display

Title/Description: Purse

Object Type: Bag, Purse

Materials: Braided cords, Glass beads, Linen, Silk, Silk netting, Wood

Technique: Sable

Measurements: h. 84 x w. 110 x d. 80 mm

Accession Number: 1338

Historic Period: 18th century

Production Place: Europe, France

This drawstring *sablé* purse is embellished with miniscule beads. The word *sablé* is given to both the beads and the technique, which involves securing Bohemian and Venetian glass beads with looping stitches. *Sablé* is French for “covered with sand”, fitting the beads’ tiny size [1]. *Sablé* was used to decorate drawstring purses, pocketbooks, perfume bottles, pin cushions, and even chatelaines, with up to 1,000 beads per square inch. The technique may have been mastered by only two workshops in Paris [2]. This purse, which is surely the work of a professional, was likely worked at one of those workshops. Given the popularity of *sablé* drawstring bags throughout the eighteenth century, it is difficult to determine when this piece was produced.

Given the symbols on the purse, it was likely a wedding gift, perhaps used to hold coins. A pair of hearts, poised beneath a crown, blossom from what may be a monogram, perhaps belonging to the newly married couple. The floral imagery decorating the purse may symbolise the hope for a fruitful marriage.

The purse is made up of four panels with two pairs of two identical panels. Accompanying the crown and monogram panels are panels featuring sinuous vines and flowers in line with Rococo aesthetics. Above the four panels is a knotted or crocheted border, through which blue and white drawstrings are strung. Four wooden, bead-covered tassels secure the ends of the drawstrings. Each side of the bag has one pear-shaped tassel with a teal zigzag and one round tassel with green polka dots. The bag’s interior is lined with gold-coloured silk secured by delicate silk netting.

Isabella Rosner, March 2022

[1] ‘Purse,’ *Victoria and Albert Museum*,

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1467744/purse/>.

[2] *Ibid.*
