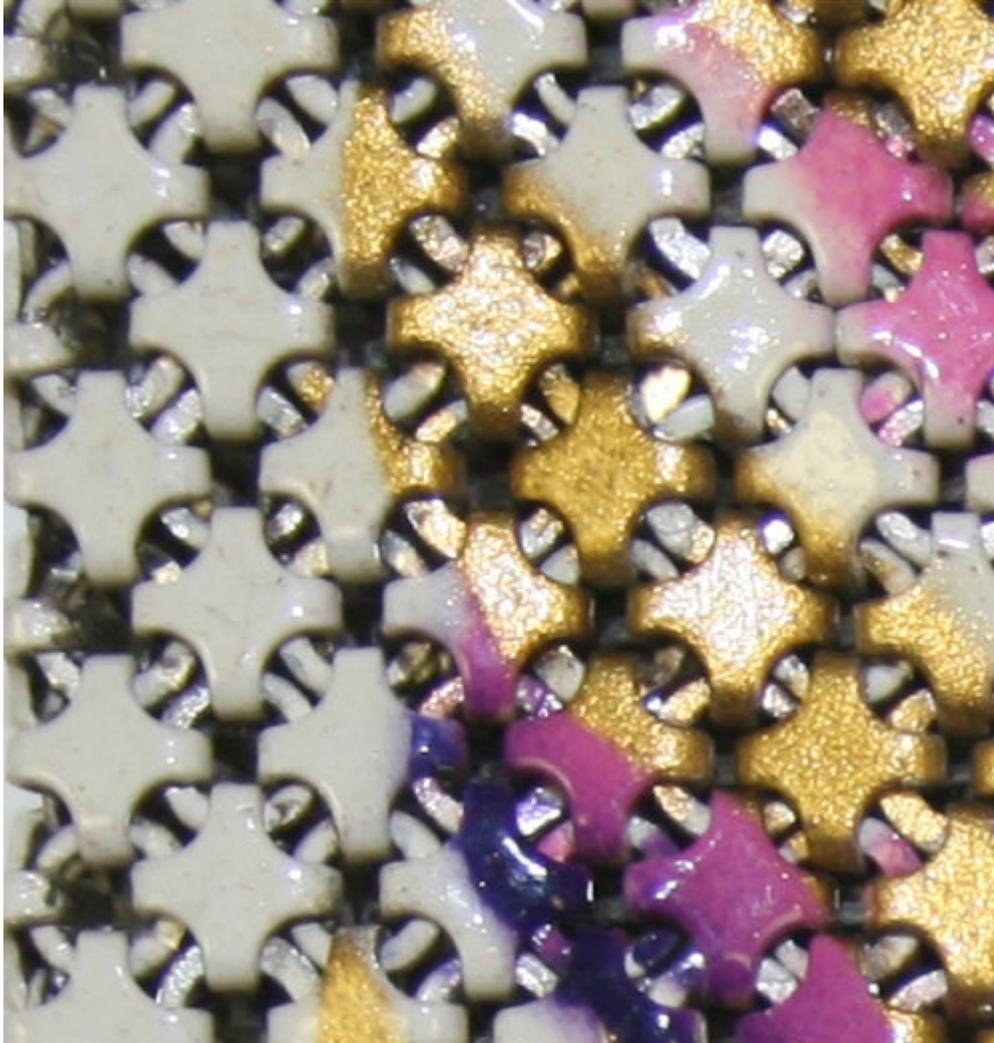


# Donation of the Month

## Mesh Hand Bags



Detail of 1995.37.1 metal spiders and rings



1976.481.2.1, Metal ring mesh bag,  
donated by A. Oberreuter, early 1900s



1995.37.1, Metal flat mesh bag,  
Mandalian Manufacturing Co.,  
donated by Susan Mason, 1920s



1975.306.5.1, Metal flat mesh bag,  
Mandalian Manufacturing Co.,  
donated by Ruby Wilson, 1920s



**1975.80.3, German Silver metal mesh bag,  
donated by Ray Evans, early 1900s**

Metal mesh hand bags were not a new concept in the early twentieth century but they reached a peak of production and popularity in the 1920s and 30s with a variety of painted designs and bright colors. Different kinds of mesh were used to create different looks on this fashionable accessory. Earlier mesh bags around the turn of the century were made of individual metal rings that were linked together by hand. Around 1900 flat mesh, or fish scale mesh, was used; flat mesh consisted of links, with a flat surface (called spiders), that were joined together with metal rings.

In 1909 a ring mesh making machine was invented by A.C. Pratt, followed by one that made flat mesh and mesh bags could be made much faster than by hand. This also allowed for more and more creative design ideas which lead to some of the very popular styles of the 1920s. One of the mesh bags shown here from the museum's collection is made from metal rings joined together; interestingly, the wrist strap is also made of finely woven metal. The other unpainted metal bag is made with flat mesh and has a German Silver signed frame as well as four small pendant accents.

Because of the wide popularity of this unique material, several companies made and sold mesh bags including the Whiting & Davis Company and the Mandalian Manufacturing Company. Designers at Whiting & Davis and other companies were constantly trying new designs in shapes, frames, and ornamentations to compete with each other. Colors came in the form of different colored metal mesh until Whiting & Davis began selling bags with painted flat mesh around 1924. Painted ring mesh bags followed but did not take the color as well and instead took on a cloudy appearance. The colored bags from the museum collection are flat mesh painted in stylish Art Deco designs with metal ring fringe. In the detailed photo, the flat metal spiders and joining rings are visible.

New types of mesh were produced and given names like "Beadlite" which consisted of flat mesh spiders with raised round centers. "Ivorytone" was made from flat metal spiders that were squared and linked closer together, creating a more uniform mesh look. By the late 1930s, like many fashion trends, metal mesh bags became less fashionable; however, metal mesh is still a popular material used for fashion and industry. A century later, the Whiting & Davis Company still creates accessories with flat metal mesh and ring mesh alongside its newer styles.

Whiting & Davis Company, featured on  
[http://www.whitinganddavis.com/Products\\_4.htm](http://www.whitinganddavis.com/Products_4.htm)

"Mesh and Metal Purses," from Antiques Off Broadway featured on:  
[http://www.antiquepeek.com/facts\\_mesh\\_purses.htm](http://www.antiquepeek.com/facts_mesh_purses.htm)

Rogers Historical Museum Donation Files