

**Interior Tent Walls in the Medieval Pavilion:
Researching the Use of Decorative Textiles
to Create Immersive Hospitality Spaces**

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Part of the Immersive Hospitality Series

Introduction

The unadorned canvas wall of a modern pavilion is functional, but it is not historically representative of the interiors depicted in medieval visual sources. Illuminated manuscripts consistently show tent and pavilion interiors lined with patterned textiles, suggesting that interior decoration was an expected feature of high-status encampments rather than an optional luxury.

This document examines the visual evidence for decorated pavilion interiors as found in illuminated manuscripts, with particular attention to the depiction of patterned wall fabrics. It then describes the process of identifying a modern fabric that plausibly reflects the materials depicted in those sources, and situates this work within the broader practice of Immersive Hospitality.

Historical Plausibility as a Guiding Principle

This project operates on the principle of historical plausibility rather than absolute accuracy. When working with a period that offers relatively few extant textile examples, and when those examples are often fragments, later copies, or highly contextual survivals, claims of true accuracy become difficult to sustain.

The goal was therefore a reasonable one: to identify colors and patterns that belong within the medieval visual world, supported by period artwork, without pretending certainty where none exists. This meant beginning with illuminated manuscripts as the primary visual source.

What the Illuminations Show

The research for this phase was intentionally limited to illuminated manuscripts as primary visual sources. The focus was on identifying what decorated tent interiors looked like in period artwork: the colors, patterns, and textile treatments depicted by contemporary artists.

What appeared consistently across the sources consulted was the use of patterned interior fabrics. Rather than plain canvas or bare walls, the illuminations depict decorative textiles used to line pavilion interiors, signaling status and creating an atmosphere of comfort and deliberate design. While specific colors vary across examples, the visual language is consistent: repeating patterns, rich textiles, and interiors that appear carefully composed rather than improvised.

Among the sources consulted, one stood out as particularly relevant.

The Alexander Romance

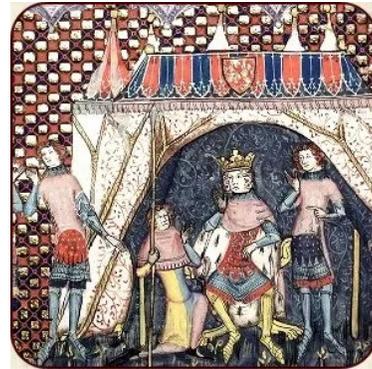
The Alexander Romance is a collection of epic tales surrounding Alexander the Great that circulated widely throughout the medieval period. The Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford holds a richly illuminated copy (MS. Bodl. 264) that includes numerous depictions of tent interiors.

In these illuminations, the interior tent walls are clearly lined with patterned fabric. Several images depict a blue brocade pattern that proved remarkably close to a fabric available in the modern market. The specific folios consulted include:

- MS. Bodl. 264, fol. 138v
- MS. Bodl. 264, fol. 83v



The Alexander Romance (collected epic tales about Alexander the Great). The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (England) MS. Bodl. 264 fol. 83v



The Alexander Romance (collected epic tales about Alexander the Great). The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (England) MS. Bodl. 264 fol. 138v

An additional illumination from a related manuscript was also consulted:

- *Book of Hours*, Use of Rome, "The Coronation of the Virgin," The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Canon. Liturg. 183, fol. 073r



Book of Hours - Use of Rome "The Coronation of the Virgin." The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (England) MS. Canon. Liturg. 183 (fol. 073r)

These sources consistently depict interiors dressed with patterned textiles, reinforcing the idea that a decorated interior wall was not merely decorative indulgence but a recognizable feature of high-status pavilions.

The Fabric Choice

The fabric selected for this project is a blue brocade with a repeating pattern that reads well at scale and sits comfortably within a medieval visual context. The pattern bears a strong resemblance to the blue brocade depicted in the Alexander Romance illuminations, providing a meaningful connection between the historical source material and the practical application.

A significant practical consideration in this selection was the fabric width. At 115 inches, the material is considerably wider than standard upholstery fabrics, making it far more suitable for large interior applications where minimizing seams is desirable. The price point of approximately twenty dollars per yard, combined with the exceptional width, represents strong overall value for a project of this scale.

The Finished Project

The blue brocade fabric identified during the research phase was sewn into interior wall panels for the pavilion. The construction was straightforward, requiring no unusual techniques or significant modifications to the material. The 115-inch width of the fabric proved as practical as anticipated, allowing for large, continuous panels with minimal seaming.

The finished panels were designed to cover the back wall of the pavilion and wrap partially around each side wall, creating a continuous visual effect that frames the interior hospitality space without requiring full coverage of every surface. The panels were attached to the pavilion structure using clips and hooks, a method that allows for easy installation and removal.

The walls were first used at Ymir: Tyr's Redemption in February 2026. The effect was immediately apparent. The blue brocade transformed the interior of the pavilion from a functional canvas enclosure into a space that read as deliberate and historically grounded. The patterned fabric provided warmth, visual depth, and a sense of enclosure that plain canvas walls cannot achieve, reinforcing the atmosphere of intentional hospitality that the broader project seeks to create.



The completed pavilion interior at Ymir: Tyr's Redemption, February 2026. The blue brocade interior walls, researched and sewn for this project, line the back wall and wrap around each side, framing the hospitality space. In the foreground, the Norse-themed Oaths Table; behind it, the fieldside dayboard. A tapestry and layered rugs complete the atmosphere of deliberate, immersive design.

Primary Sources

The Alexander Romance. The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (England). MS. Bodl. 264, fol. 138v and fol. 83v.

Book of Hours, Use of Rome. "The Coronation of the Virgin." The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (England). MS. Canon. Liturg. 183, fol. 073r.

Conclusion

Interior tent walls represent one of the earliest steps in what would become a broader practice of Immersive Hospitality. Before the question of what to serve or how to dress a table, there was the question of the space itself: the walls that frame the experience and shape the atmosphere of the pavilion as a whole.

The illuminated manuscripts consulted for this project confirm that decorated interiors were not a modern convenience projected backward onto the medieval period but a documented feature of high-status tents and pavilions. Patterned textiles, rich colors, and intentional interior design appear consistently in period artwork, reinforcing the idea that a well-dressed interior was part of the visual language of hospitality and status.

This research laid the groundwork for everything that followed. By establishing the visual plausibility of a decorated pavilion interior, it opened the door to additional documented work on fieldside hospitality, themed displays, and the broader practice of creating spaces that do not merely reference the medieval world but invite guests to feel, however briefly, that they have stepped into it.