

Scroll Layout from Start to Finish

By THL Matildis la Libraire, CE -- heather.bungardjanney@gmail.com

Layout

- Framing margins
- Text block margins - 1.5, 2, 3, 4, more or less (I'm using 1.5, 2, 2.5, 4)
- Using a lettering guide
 - Selecting the right spacing for your pen nib
- Finishing the text block - "window" around the text block or inner border for the illumination

Calligraphy

- Letter height as determined by the nib
 - Use this to determine the best spacing on the lettering guide
- Choosing an alphabet
 - Readability
 - Speed
 - Following your source exemplar
 - Sometimes you just write the alphabet you know!
- Left-handed calligraphy
 - There are many techniques, but this one is mine
- Writing the text!
 - To hyphen or not to hyphen depends on the source material and time period
 - Heck, some early time periods didn't use spaces
 - Where do you get the text from?
 - Mockups, mockups, mockups

Illumination

- Materials
 - Get the best you can afford, because cheap paints will make you look like you have no skill. I speak from experience.
 - Good quality gouache (opaque watercolor)
 - **Brushes that come to a sharp point are more valuable than brushes that are tiny and this is a hill I am willing to die on**
 - I'll be using a size 1; I have done several entire scrolls in a size 4.
 - There are scribes who prefer smaller brushes like a 10/0 or even smaller, but the price for a tip that small is a body that holds almost no paint and has to be reloaded constantly. It's a tradeoff.
 - Gilding materials - that's a whole other class, but we can list them here
 - Genuine gold leaf
 - Sticky stuff (gesso, size, glue, etc.)
 - Soft brush
 - Tweezers

- Burnisher

- There are hundreds of different styles of illumination, varying by time period and culture. We're going to pick just the one to focus on tonight (**late Flemish floral style ca. 1475 - 1490s**), but many different illumination styles follow the same basic steps
 - Pencil in the general shape of the elements
 - Work largest to smallest
 - Gilding, if you have any, always goes first. This is a period practice, and also, gold sticks to paint.
 - Paint solid colors one at a time; mid tone first
 - Shade with darker tones
 - Highlight/ white work
 - Finish with shell gold highlights
 - Outlining: it's tedious but the results are worth it

Capitals

- I'm using standard **Lombardic capitals** which were popular beginning at least the 1200s and possibly earlier (I couldn't find a definitive source for their earliest recorded use)
 - A sort of hybrid of Uncial and Roman lettering, characterized by frequently rounded shapes and exaggerated thick and thin strokes
 - Some letter shapes varied; there were at least two different ways to create a D, T, N, and E, and some examples - especially carved inscriptions - would use multiple forms in the same word
- Not all Lombardic capitals do this, but my favorites are the ones that really fill the space allotted to them and even extend slightly beyond those borders
 - Draw a square or, rarely, a narrow rectangle. Almost always a square though
 - Fill the space with the letter. FILL IT.
 - You don't want timid, floaty letters
 - Even if the period sources did it sometimes
 - Paint the letter
 - Possibly shade the letter in a darker tone
 - Highlight and decorate with white work - see Mistress Katarina Helena von Schonborn's white work handout
 - Outline. Again.

Sign it!

- Always sign your work, so the recipient and royals know whom to thank!
- Include your SCA name, mundane name, and optionally a contact email
- Include source references if you have them
- On translucent grounds like perg or vellum, be careful not to sign where it will show through to the other side. Ask me how I know.

Thank you all so much for coming to this class! Feel free to reach out with any questions.

Sources

Books

- Marc Drogin, *Medieval Calligraphy: Its History and Technique*
- Patricia Seligman and Timothy Noad, *The Illuminated Alphabet*
- David Harris, *The Art of Calligraphy*
- Sheila Waters, *Foundations of Calligraphy*

Vendors

- David Bianco, <http://etsy.com/shop/asofa>
- John Neal, Bookseller, <http://johnnealbooks.com>
- Pergamena fine vellum and parchment, <https://www.pergamena.net/>
- Merkaz Hasofrim parchment, <http://www.merkazhasofrim.com>

Materials

- Strathmore brand Bristol board
- Artist's Loft brush size 1
- Gouache:
 - Holbein, Schminke, or Winsor & Newton are all good brands
- Coliro/Finetec metallic gold
- Ames/Alvin lettering guide

Websites

- <https://manuscripts.thewalters.org/>
- <https://www.themorgan.org/manuscripts/list>
- <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog>
- <https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/>