

## HOW DO I PAINT AWARD SCROLLS?

*By Stella Silvana*

### WHAT TYPE OF BRUSH SHOULD I USE?

Everyone has a favorite type of brush. Some people like to use a relatively large brush and form the tip into a sharp point, and then they paint with only the tip. I prefer to use small brushes, 0 or 00. To paint very thin highlights, I take a 10/0 liner and cut out about half the bristles. You need to use scissors to cut the extra bristles near the ferrule. Do not pull the bristles out, as pulling some of them out will loosen up all the bristles and they will all fall out. This brush will hold enough paint for a long stroke. Use only the very tip to form very fine lines. This takes some practice.

I do not buy expensive brushes. I get the inexpensive sable brushes sold at craft stores. I have to replace them after a year of use, but they don't cost very much. Do not let your brushes stand in rinse water, as this will cause the wood to swell and loosen up the ferrule.

### HOW DO I USE GOUACHE?

The modern commercial paint that is closest to those used historically is gouache. This is an opaque water based paint. The paint can be dissolved again after it has dried by adding more water. A newly opened tube of gouache will have a clear layer of glycerin at the top. This is put into the tube to keep the paint from drying. The glycerin will also keep the gouache from drying on your artwork, so you must squeeze the glycerin out and soak it up with a paper towel. Then you can squeeze out the paint into a small cup. There are boxes sold by art supply stores with small compartments to hold paint, but a plastic palette or ice cube tray will also work. The paint must be diluted with distilled water. The use of tap water may add minerals that could affect the color of the paint. The paint should be thinned out with water a few drops at a time. Toothpicks are useful for stirring the paint. The paint should be mixed until it is a uniform consistency. If the paint is too thin it will not cover evenly, paint that is too thick will be harder to keep off the lines and will not spread evenly on the paper. The gouache should be the consistency of cream.

The best way to get gouache to cover evenly is to use the "puddle" method. This relies on using water tension to form a uniform puddle of paint that will dry evenly. Start by using a moderately dry brush to carefully paint around the outside edge of a section of the design close to the lines. Next fill the brush fully with paint, but not so much that it will drip out of the brush as you carry it over the scroll. Touch the brush to the damp edge. The damp part of the paper will draw the paint out of the brush. Spread the paint over the entire area. Continue this until you fill the design section with a uniform puddle of paint. Water tension will hold the paint in place. If you cross the line, the paint will follow over the line and not stay in its place. If you get the puddle too deep the paint can overflow the line. So experiment with how deep the puddle needs to be to keep the paint in its area. Allow the painted area to dry. Don't paint the area next to the wet area until the first area of color is dry.

## How do I paint Award Scrolls?

I usually paint metallic gold and yellow areas first. This allows me to remove excess paint that gets onto the lines with a clean damp brush. Swish the brush in clean water and wipe the excess water off on a towel. Use the damp brush to sweep the color off the lines. After a few sweeps you will need to get the pigment off the brush by rinsing. Repeating this will allow you to get the lines clean. Once you have added darker colors this method will not work.

Since gouache is an opaque paint you may paint over mistakes and cover them. The corrective layer of paint should be applied after the underlying paint has dried. Use one stroke of paint. If you try to go over the area twice, the paint underneath will have absorbed water and may mix into the corrective layer of paint.

When you are through painting for the day allow your paints to dry. If they are kept damp in airtight containers they will get moldy. You can rehydrate your paints over-and-over by adding water. If you haven't painted in a long time, it may take awhile for the paint to reabsorb the water.

### WHAT COLORS SHOULD I BUY?

This is a list of colors that I like to use when painting award scrolls. These colors resemble closely the colors used in pre-sixteenth century artwork. I prefer Winsor & Newton Gouache. This brand of paints uses many historical pigments, or safer versions that closely resemble their medieval counterparts. Many SCA groups that have scribal guilds have loaner paints for those who would like to learn to paint award scrolls. Local groups may use their funds to buy supplies to make award scrolls.

### SAFETY NOTE-

While the cadmium and cobalt colors are safer than the lead and mercury versions used historically, they are still dangerous if not used with caution. Don't eat while painting. Wash your hands after painting. Don't drink out of a glass that has previously been used for rinsing your brushes.

### List of Historical Pigments and their Winsor & Newton Counterparts.

Key: **Medieval color name** (what it was made from) **Color: Win. & New. Gouache name.**

**Orpiment** (Sulfide of arsenic) Yellow: **Cadmium Yellow Pale.**

**Vermillion** (Mercuric sulfide or natural cinnabar) Red: **Cadmium Red Deep.**

**Minium** (Roasted lead) Orange-red: **Cadmium Red Pale.**

**Realgar** (Naturally occurring mineral) Orange: **Cadmium Yellow Deep.**

**Rose Madder** (Lake of madder dye) Pink: **Zinc White** with small amount of **Cadmium Red Deep.** A different shade can be made with **Neutral Grey #2** and **Cadmium Red Deep.**

**Verdigris** (Copper acetate) **Viridian** (Malachite) Green: **Winsor Emerald.**

**Terra Verte** (Natural clay deposits) Dark green: **Oxide of Chromium.**

**Iris green, Sap green** (From plants) Bright green: **Permanent Green Middle or Sap Green.**

**Ultramarine** (Lapis lazuli mineral) Bright blue: **Ultramarine.**

**Azurite** (mineral) Less intense blue: **Cobalt. Cobalt Pale Hue** is less expensive than Cobalt and is the same color.

**Pale blue:** Cobalt and Zinc White mixed.

**Folium** (Crozophora tinctorium seeds) Lilac purple: **Light Purple** and **Neutral Grey #2** mixed.

**Black** (Oak galls with iron sulphate, or burned bone or ivory): **Ivory Black**.

**Earth colors** (Naturally occurring clays) Shades of brown: **Yellow Ochre**, **Raw Umber** and **Burnt Umber**.

**White** (Oxidized lead): **Permanent White** is used for highlights; **Zinc White** is used for mixing lighter colors.

**Metallic gold** (Mineral): The imitation gold that I like best is **Schmincke Goldperl**, but the Winsor & Newton version is OK.

#### WHAT ELSE DO I NEED?

A technical pen is useful for going over the lines after the painting is finished. Pens for scrapbooking are sold that are permanent, acid free ink and are less expensive than traditional technical pens. If you invest in technical pens be sure to clean them after each use. If the ink dries in the tip it will be difficult to get the pen working again. Let the scroll completely dry before you use the pen to go over the lines.

A craft knife with a flat blade is useful for carefully scraping paint off the copy lines and removing mistakes from the paper.

Round toothpicks with pointed ends are good for stirring paint and painting uniform dots.

Scrap paper for protecting the scroll from your hand while you are painting. Never rest your hand on the part of the scroll to be written on, as the oil from your hand will cause the ink to feather. Also, be sure that the area you are working on is clean and grease free before you set the blank scroll down on the surface. Dining room tables can harbor oil spots from salad dressing and such. Oil spots will ruin a scroll and can't be removed. I always wash my table with soap and dry it before I begin working on a scroll. I also wash and dry my hands to keep oil and dirt to a minimum.

Paper towels are useful for blotting up excess paint and water from brushes.

Distilled water. Water that does not contain minerals will keep your paint from changing color due to dissolved minerals. The best way to use the water is to put it into small squeeze bottles with a fine tip on the cap. This way you can add water a few drops at a time and the bottle can travel in your paint box and be ready whenever you need it. The alternative to a squeeze bottle is an eyedropper. You will also need a container for water to rinse brushes. Clean jam or pickle jars are good. If you use a glass do not use it to drink out of any more.

#### WHAT COLORS GO WITH EACH STYLE OF ILLUMINATION?

**Insular Celtic Designs-** (AD 500-900) for example *The Book of Kells* or *The Lindisfarne Gospel*. These early period artists used little or no metallic gold and vivid primary colors.

Yellow: Cadmium Yellow Pale

Red: Cadmium Red Deep. This is the color I use for the outlining dots.

Orange-red: Cadmium Red Pale  
Orange: Cadmium Yellow Deep  
Green: Winsor Emerald  
Dark green: Oxide of Chromium  
Blues: Cobalt or Ultramarine  
Pale blue: Cobalt or Ultramarine mixed with zinc white  
Lilac purple: Light Purple and Neutral Grey #2 mixed  
Black: Ivory Black  
Browns: Yellow Ochre, Raw Umber and Burnt Umber

*The Book of Durrow* (about 600 AD) uses only four colors-

Yellow: Cadmium Yellow Pale  
Orange-red: Cadmium Red Pale  
Green: Winsor Emerald  
Black: Ivory Black

**Carolingian** (Continental European 700-900 AD) For example *The Ebo Gospels*. Artists from Ireland brought their designs to the empire of Charlemagne, but this artwork, while having knotwork like the Insular Celtic styles, unlike them used a lot of metallic gold. Add to the list of colors above Metallic Gold.

*The Luttrell Psalter* (English 14<sup>th</sup> century) See Janet Backhouses's *The Luttrell Psalter* for ideas.

*The Luttrell Psalter* used a limited palette of colors:  
Greens, orange, earth tones and blues. Some metallic gold.

#### **Later Period Designs** (1200-1500 AD)

Wider palette of colors. Shaded colors. I usually paint the middle color over an area, then add lighter and darker shading with white highlights. Use Zinc White to mix pale shades and Permanent White for highlights.

Add to the lists of colors above:

Pink: Zinc White with small amount of Cadmium Red Deep. A different shade can be made with Neutral Grey and Cadmium Red Deep.

Dark green: Oxide of Chromium.

Bright green: Permanent Green Middle or Sap Green.

Light green: Add Cadmium Yellow Pale to Permanent Green Middle or Sap Green.

Light blue: Cobalt blue or Ultramarine and Zinc White mixed.

Dark Blue: Cobalt Blue or Ultramarine and Burnt Umber mixed.

White: Permanent white for highlights.

#### **English, French and Dutch Bar and Vine**

Metallic gold used for backgrounds, seeds and small leaves. Bars and vines alternate blue and red. The red bars will have blue leaves and the blue bars will have red leaves. Diapering within the large letters. White highlights.

Red: Cadmium Red Deep

Blues: Cobalt or Ultramarine

Metallic gold: The imitation gold that I like best is Schmincke Goldperl, but the Winsor & Newton version is OK.

## Permanent White

**Winchester Bible** and “Winchester School” styles (English 1160-1175)

These manuscripts used a wide variety of colors. Any of those listed above may be used. See Claire Donovan’s *The Winchester Bible* for ideas.

**The Visconti Hours** (Italian 1400)

Lots of colors, especially bright pink, light and dark blues, oranges, greens and metallic gold. White highlighting.

**White Vine Illumination.** Later period (1400-1500) Mostly Italian.

The vine is unpainted except for possible some pale brown shading. The background is divided into groups which are painted exclusively in:

Red: Cadmium Red Deep

Dark green: Oxide of Chromium or Bright green: Permanent Green Middle or Sap Green

Blue: Cobalt or Ultramarine

Permanent White for dots. Use the end of a toothpick to form even dots.

## HOW DO I DECIDE WHAT COLORS GO WHERE?

First read the directions on the margins of the charter. Check for directions on all sides, sometimes there are directions on the sides as well as at the bottom. If there is a heraldic badge it must be painted in particular heraldic colors.

The heraldic colors are- Metals: Or (yellow or metallic gold), Argent (white or metallic silver). Colors: Azure (blue), Vert (green), Gules (red), Purpure (purple), Sable (black). Metallic gold is heraldically the same as yellow. Metallic silver is heraldically the same as white. If the badge is fieldless it is best to leave the background unpainted. You may paint it white, but that is extra work that probably won’t be noticeable. Most charters have guides to show how to paint the heraldic badges. Using some of the same colors in the rest of the charter will integrate the badge into the artwork.

The directions for the charters usually list preferred colors. If there is a mention of where to find a color picture of the example that inspired the charter’s design you can find the picture and see what colors the original artist used. Remember that the printed pictures in books are not necessarily accurate. It can be interesting to compare the color pictures of the same piece in different books and see how much the colors can differ. Refer to the listing above of what colors go with each historical period and style and find out the period and style of the charter you are painting

Limit your colors to keep the design from looking cluttered. Make a test swatch on the margin of the charter, painting small patches of color next to each other to see how they look together. Sometimes colors that seem like they would combine well don’t look good next to each other. Also, the dry paint will be a slightly different color from the wet paint.

Areas with a black background need to be painted with a color that has a light tone, otherwise there will not be enough contrast to see the color against the black. Some

bright colors look too garish next to the black, so you may need to experiment to get enough contrast without the colors being too intense.

Monochromatic color schemes can be boring, so the use of some complimentary colors will give variety. If there are separated areas of painting, use the same color scheme in all the areas so that the different areas are linked visually. Reserve accent colors for smaller design elements such as flowers. Paint larger areas in less intense tones. Framed background areas behind large letters may be diapered, covered with a geometric or floral design.

For later period scrolls with shading, I paint the middle color over the area, then add the lighter and darker shading.

#### I DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT COLOR WHAT DO I DO?

Medieval artists loved brilliant color, but they had available to them a limited number of possible pigments. They seldom mixed colors except to use differing binders such as egg yolk instead of glair (egg white) for a warmer color, or a wash of saffron to brighten a color. Some colors which seem to be mixed are the result of changes due to oxidation or changes in pH. *The Book of Kells* has areas of folium that were originally lilac in color, but now parts are blue because of the shift in pH of the pigment. Azurite, a blue copper mineral, can oxidize to malachite that is green. Some pigments were never used together because chemical reactions would make them turn to another color, chiefly lead white and viridian. If you look closely at the Visconti illuminations, you will note that the highlighting of the green areas is done with yellow rather than white. If white lead were used on the green it would turn black.

To darken a color it works best to use Burnt Umber. Using Black will dull the color. To lighten a color add a little of the color to Zinc White. It takes very little pigment, so add the color to the white. Mix as much as you will need for the entire project, because it is difficult to get the same color again.

#### I MADE A MISTAKE WHAT DO I DO?

Lots of booboos can be fixed. If you don't know what to do, find a more experienced scribe who can show you how to fix things. Some of the basic fixes are:

**Paint splotted on the background-** Let the paint dry then lightly scrape the area with a sharp craft knife. Be very gentle, or you will scrape a hole in the paper. Once the paint is gone, burnish the area with an art eraser to smooth the surface.

**Paint on the lines-** Let the scroll dry. Use a technical pen to draw over the lines. Another alternative is to gently scrape the paint off with a craft knife.

**I got paint in the wrong place-** Since gouache is an opaque paint you may paint over mistakes and cover them. The corrective layer of paint should be applied after the underlying paint has dried. Use one stroke of paint. If you try to go over the area twice, the paint underneath will have absorbed water and may mix into the corrective layer of paint.

**Highlight lines are too thick-** Paint over the line, let it dry and try again. You may also try scraping part of the line with a knife to thin it down.

**My scroll got too wet and crinkled up-** Never use a clothes iron to flatten out a scroll. The ink is melted by heat, so you will melt and smear all the copying. Let the scroll dry and flatten it by placing it under some weights such as a stack of books.

#### WHERE DO I GET SCROLLS TO PAINT?

The regional scribes will have blank charters that need painting. Some scribal guild heads have permission to copy charters. Check the blank charter to be sure the copy quality is good before you spend time painting it. Sometimes people who do not have permission do their own copies that are not good quality. Look for blots in the background and make sure that any black areas are completely black. Some spots may be scraped off with a sharp craft knife and a pen may be used to fill in spotty areas that did not copy fully. However, if the lettering looks pale and blotchy, don't waste your time painting it. The copy may not have been done on a good quality machine.

Don't copy charters on your own. We want to be sure the copies are on the correct type of paper and are good quality copies.

Carry your charters in envelopes or boxes so they don't get dog-eared during transport.

#### WHAT DO I DO WITH THE PAINTED SCROLLS?

Give them to your scribal guild head, a regional scribe, Star Signet or Sable Scroll. Remember to sign the back lightly in pencil with your name, your group and the date. Be proud of your work for the Kingdom!

#### Bibliography-

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