

The Easel

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Lochac Guild of Painters and Limners



Study of a 15th century icon
Graphite on paper
Antonia di Lorenzo 2010

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From the editor

Greetings fellow artists.

There has been a bit of a gap since the last newsletter, but there is plenty of news to report in this issue.

Since November we have a guild administrator and a patron. We have also started guild meetings in Melbourne, which I hope will result in some new members both for the guild and the SCA.

Our web minister has updated the website, and we'll eventually have a contact person in each region of Lochac who can liaise with potential new members.

I look forward to an interesting AS45, and to seeing more of our members' work out there.

Lady Antonia di Lorenzo
Barony of Stormhold
Editor



Gessoed and painted tourney helmet crest of moulded leather, made according to instructions from Cennino Cennini's 15th century *Il Libro dell'Arte*.

About the Guild

The primary aim of The Painters' and Limners' Guild is to advance the study and practice of the medieval painter's art prior to 1600 AD. The Guild shall endeavour to encourage all who are interested in the painter's art.

The secondary aim of the Guild is to recreate a medieval or renaissance guild of painters, and the Guild encourages research and activities towards this end.

The Guild shall promote any form of painter's work which can be demonstrated to have been known and performed in Europe and the Middle East before 1600 AD, including drawing, painting, printmaking and other arts.

It should be noted that Illumination and Calligraphy remains under the aegis of the Lochac College of Scribes and Illuminators.



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Guild news and who's who

Suth Moot in April provided the first opportunity for the guild organisers past and present to meet face to face and make plans for the guild. Present at the meeting were Katerina da Brescia, the former newsletter editor who has been active in the guild since its inception; Antonia di Lorenzo, the current editor; Contessa Lucrezia Lorenz, our former patron; Gwir verch Madog, the Kingdom A&S Officer; and a number of other interested SCA members.

Lucrezia has been living overseas for some years and is now back in Australia, and was kind enough to offer an introduction to **Baron Alain Lorenz**. The Baron has accepted the invitation to become Patron of our guild. The Patron's role is to promote the guild, and to donate a prize for our annual competition (which will be resurrected this year).



Lady Kiara de Fae's painted wall hanging in progress at Suth Moot

Antonia di Lorenzo (antonia.sca@optusnet.com.au) has taken on the role of Guild Administrator as well as being the newsletter editor. For the time being we have decided to use the title of administrator rather than Guildmaster, as we don't currently have any guild rankings, and she is not technically a Master Painter. She is also the local contact for Suth Gild Heall (Stormhold, Krae Glas, Arrowsreach and the Colleges of St Monica's and St Bart's). At some point the guild will need to discuss arranging formal rankings for those who want to go through the apprentice-journeyman-master system.

Katerina da Brescia (katdb@bigpond.net.au) is the guild web minister, in charge of the website and email list, and is the contact person to whom the website-email links are directed. She is also the local contact for the Innildard area.

Madoc ap Gryffith (monastic@gmail.com) is the local contact for Ynys Fawr.

We currently need local contacts for Rowany, the northern and western baronies and the Crescent Isles. Please volunteer - there's virtually no work involved, just pointing people in the direction of the painters guild and sca websites and getting them involved in any local guild activities.

In other news the website has been updated with the new details, and a private Flickr group created for members to showcase works in progress and anything else they aren't ready to put on the guild website or Yahoo group. Contact Katerina for access to the Flickr group and get posting!

The **Suth Gild Heall** (Melbourne) chapter of the painters guild had its first meeting on 15 May. Unfortunately the patron and a number of other interested members were unable to attend, so next time we'll try a Sunday meeting instead of Saturday and see if that's any better. Mary Wijesinghe won the door prize, a book on silverpoint drawing. We all spent time looking through art books and discussing possible projects, and had a short introduction to documentation. The next meeting is planned for Sunday 20 June - for details see Stormhold's calendar or messages on the local mailing lists.

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Upcoming guild collegia and workshops

13 June	Great Northern War	A&S class: medieval pigments
20 June	Melbourne	painters guild monthly meeting and workshop
September	Southron Gaard	guild workshops (Antonia - TBA)
October	Great Southern Gathering	A&S class: preparing wood panels for painting A&S class: egg tempera painting

Colour of the quarter: Vermilion

On the Character of the Red Called Vermilion; And How it Should be Worked Up.

A colour known as vermilion is red; and this colour is made by alchemy, prepared in a retort. I am leaving out the system for this, because it would be too tedious to set forth in my discussion all the methods and receipts. Because, if you want to take the trouble, you will find plenty of receipts for it, and especially by asking of the friars. But I advise you rather to get some of that which you find at the druggists' for your money, so as not to lose time in the many variations of procedure. And I will teach you how to buy it, and to recognise the good vermilion. Always buy vermilion unbroken, and not pounded or ground. The reason? Because it is generally adulterated, either with red lead or with pounded brick. Examine the unbroken lump of vermilion; and at the top, where the structure is most spread out and delicate, that is the best. Then put this on the aforesaid slab, and grind it with clear water as much as ever you can; for if you were to grind it every day for twenty years it would still be better and more perfect. This colour calls for various temperas, according to the situations in which you have to use it, which we shall deal with later on; and I will teach you where it is most appropriate. But bear in mind that it is not its nature to be exposed to the air, but it stands up better on panel than on the wall; because, in the course of time, from exposure to the air, it turns black when it is used and laid on the wall.

From 'The Craftsman's Handbook' by Cennino Cennini, 15th century.

Vermilion, or mercuric sulphide, is produced by heating together elemental sulfur and mercury. It occurs naturally as the mineral cinnabar. Despite its toxicity, vermilion is still available for purchase, primarily for restoration work. It is very expensive. For those who would like to see it being made in the traditional manner, there is a short segment featuring English icon painter Aidan Hart making vermilion on the documentary *Cracking the Colour Code*, which is reviewed later in the newsletter.

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Short article: Making your own paintbrushes

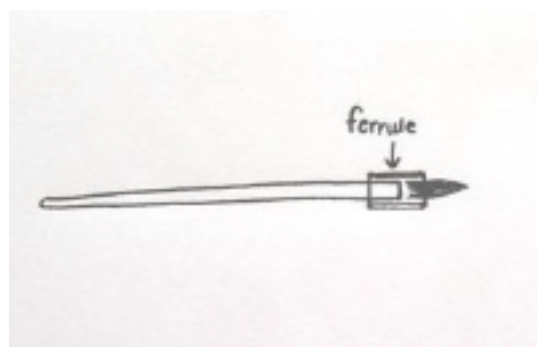
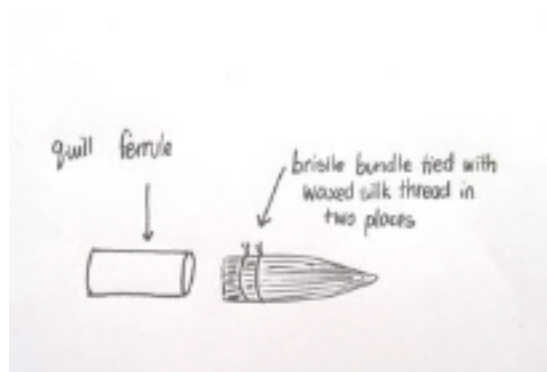
Paintbrushes have three parts: the handles, the ferrule and the bristles. The bristles hold the paint and deliver it to the surface. The best bristles are ones which hold a good quantity of paint without dripping, and maintain their point after use and washing.

Fine brushes for details work are traditionally made of the tail hairs of miniver or sable. These hairs are naturally shaped along their shaft, individual hairs swelling out in the middle and tapering to a point. They are very soft, but maintain their points well. Persian miniaturists used the hairs from specially bred white Persian cats for the same purpose. For the finest details, a single cat whisker can be mounted as a brush.

Goat and badger hair make brushes which are also fairly soft and hold paint well, and good for washes of colour and ink painting (such as Chinese and Japanese calligraphy). Hog bristle makes stiff brushes which are commonly used for more robust types of painting - oils and decorative painting including lime wash and fresco. Some brushes contain more than one type of hair. The highest quality Chinese calligraphy brushes, for example, have a core of stiffer weasel hair, and an outer layer of softer goat hair. Almost any type of hair can be used - horse hair, dog hair, human hair - the best thing is to try it and see what suits you best.

Bristles are mounted to the handle in several ways. The working end of the handle can be tapered and the bristles glued and/or tied to the outside of the handle like a tiny broom; the bristles can be inserted into a ferrule at one end, and the handle into the other end; or the handle can be drilled out and the bristles inserted directly into that. Ferrules are traditionally made of thin metal, quill or horn. The advantage of using a metal ferrule is that it can be crimped to alter the shape of the finished brush.

To make your own brush using medieval techniques, you will need sable or similar hair, quills of different sizes for the ferrules - goose for the largest; pigeon or gull for the smallest - and a thin dowel of wood for the handle. Cut a 2-3 cm length of quill and clean out the inside. Take some sable or similar hair, carefully align the tips of the hairs so that they are even, and bind them into a bundle using two separate knots of fine, waxed silk. The bundle should be just the right size to fit inside the quill ferrule. Trim the back end flat and stuff the bundle into the quill (to half the depth of the ferrule). Glue is optional. Smooth a thin stick for the handle and if necessary taper the end so that it will fit into the other end of the ferrule. Push it into the ferrule and your brush is finished.



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Member news and bios

Congratulations to Lisette la Mandeta (Jenny Rosenbaum Keneally) on the birth of her daughter in March.

Welcome to new member Madoc ap Gryffith from Ynys Fawr. Madoc previously hails from the Middle Kingdom. He has already volunteered to be the local rep for Ynys Fawr - thank you!

Please send in your news, pictures, short articles or anything of interest for the next newsletter to antonia.sca@optusnet.com.au

Join the email group and post photos and files to the Yahoo group

Join the Flickr group and post pictures of your work

Reviews

Website: Langridge Artist Colours

<http://www.langridgecolours.com/index.htm>

Langridge Artist Colours is an Australian company located in Victoria which manufactures art materials and equipment. The website has instruction sheets on how to make your own paints and pastels; how to stretch canvases and much, much more. There are downloadable MSDS's for all the products, and they have a mail order service for bulk orders.

An excellent resource for making your own period art materials such as egg tempera, hand mixed oil paints, drawing chalks and inks, gesso and gilding bole.

DVD: Cracking the Colour Code

An award-winning documentary on how we perceive, make and use colour. It contains a wealth of technical information on pigments and how they are sourced or made. Available from the online SBS shop for \$24.95. For more information see the link below.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/shop/product/category/DVDs/182/Cracking-the-Colour-Code>