

HOW TO MAKE A GOA SCROLL

by H.L. Conna ingen Úi Chearbhaill

If you ask a dozen scribes to describe the process of making an original scroll, you'd receive a dozen answers. I encourage you to ask around to discover other methods. There are lots of good ideas and tricks of the trade running around out there. In the meantime, the following is my process.

1. Receive the assignment. (Talk to the current Royal Scribe, Falcon Signet, other scribes. Bug the text writer until you receive the text.)
2. Do your homework. What period and style are the text and the current reign? Dig through books for ideas (see the book list for reference suggestions). Talk to the text writer about the research that went into the text. Look the recipient up in the Calontir Armorial, if you want to include the device.
3. Block out your paper. Use a heavy, acid-free paper (unless you can afford vellum). I use Strathmore Bristol (available in two different finishes: vellum and plate; for the smoothest finish, use plate) because it comes in standard sizes and is often on sale. I also like Pergamenta heavy paper; it feels a lot like vellum.
 - a. If possible, I try to supply a mat to go with the scroll, to give a little protection (and out of fear that the recipient won't think to get a mat, which holds the painted surface away from the glass). Be considerate: I try to stick to standard frame sizes, so that it won't cost a fortune to have it framed. Sturdy, nice frames can be found inexpensively in these sizes: 8 x 10, 11 x 14, 16 x 20, 18 x 24.
 - b. Block out the general areas for calligraphy and illumination. You might want to practice the lettering on scrap paper to determine your spacing; this will help you determine how many lines you need. Be sure to remember to leave a minimum of a 1-inch border, for framing.
 - c. Find out if Their Majesties are using some sort of seal and be sure to leave enough space for it and Their signatures.
4. Line the calligraphy area lightly in pencil. I use an Ames Lettering Guide and a drafting table or T-square.
5. Do the calligraphy. (I'm still shaky with a dip pen, so I use a Rotring cartridge pen with nib size 1.1. I think it's the best pen on the market.) When I do this part, it helps me to create a mood. I usually listen to period music, but only instrumentals. Anything with words will usually lead me down the path of repeated letters or skipped words. If the cat jumps on your working desk, repeat steps 3–5 as needed.

6. Sketch in your illumination design lightly in pencil.
7. Outline the design in black ink, as necessary. I use Micron 0.05 or Zig Millennium 05 pens. They're waterproof, lightfast, and acid-free. They come in different thicknesses, too. I prefer the tiny tips, but sometimes a thicker line gives a more pleasing look. Look for these pens in the scrapbooking section of craft stores.
8. Erase all the pencil. Be very gentle. And wait at least overnight before erasing the lines from your calligraphy area; depending on the type of ink used, it will smear. I use Staedtler Mars, but any white artist eraser should work just fine. If you're prone to accidents, you might want to tape (with magic tape—the type that lifts off without ripping the paper) a piece of plastic or heavy paper over your calligraphy. This will help protect it from the smears your hand on the paper will produce.
9. Now's the time to apply gold leaf, if you're using it.
10. Paint. Yay!
11. Re-outline any areas that need refreshing (see Step 7). This will help give it a crisp, clean look, and will help to cover any rough edges to the painted areas.
12. Sign your masterpiece and deliver it to Their Majesties's chamberlain or other trusted retinue.
 - a. Be sure to deliver it in a timely fashion; it will still need to be sealed and signed.
 - b. Be sure to transport it safely protected in cardboard or some other method; don't rely on the Crown to safeguard it. They've got a lot on Their minds. Make sure the cardboard carrier finds its way to the recipient, so the scroll can make it safely home.
 - c. Provide a typed version of the text taped to the back of the scroll, so the herald can read the text easily in court.
 - d. Provide a short report of your research for the recipient.

Suggested Basic Books for Research

GENERAL ART

A History of Illuminated Manuscripts by Christopher de Hamel (Phaidon Press, 1997). Great overview of our time period. Covers just about everything you'll need. Terrific photos and interesting text.

Codices Illustres: The World's Most Famous Illuminated Manuscripts 400 to 1600 by Ingo F. Walther and Norbert Wolf (Taschen, 2001). Absolutely gorgeous. Another really great overview book, but larger and more expensive than de Hamel.

SPECIFIC ART

Painted Prayers: The Book of Hours in Medieval and Renaissance Art by Roger S. Wieck (Pierpont Morgan Library, 1997). Goes into great detail about the form of Books of Hours. Also by this author, *Time Sanctified*.

The Lindisfarne Gospels by Janet Backhouse (Phaidon Press, 1999). This is an author you can trust. She's written a lot on the subject of illumination.

CALLIGRAPHY

Medieval Calligraphy: Its History and Technique by Marc Drogin (Dover). This book has everything you need to get started, and the price is right.

The Art of Calligraphy: A Practical Guide to the Skills and Techniques by David Harris (DK Publishing, 1995). This is my personal favorite. The color illustrations make each stroke clear. But it's pricy, compared with Drogin.

SCA PUBLICATIONS

Compleat Anachronist # 47: Primer in Calligraphy and Illumination.

Compleat Anachronist # 43: Palette of Period Pigments.

Compleat Anachronist #61: Education of a Scribe. (Note: This is particularly good for layout information.)

Crossed Quills, published by Folump Enterprise. Available at Pennsic. Great examples of SCA scrolls.

SUPPLIERS

Art Supply Warehouse (www.aswexpress.com). Cheapest prices, but they don't carry everything needed.

John Neal, Bookseller (www.johnnealbooks.com). Order a catalog. Great for calligraphy supplies.

Paper & Ink Arts (www.paperinkarts.com). Order a catalog. Amazing stuff!

Dick Blick (www.dickblick.com).