

GOING BACK IN LINE FROM MODERN TO MEDIEVAL

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LINE TRAVEL

If you are an artist, experienced or otherwise, your perspective is modern. Your experience, environment, and training are modern in influence. You and I see with modern eyes.

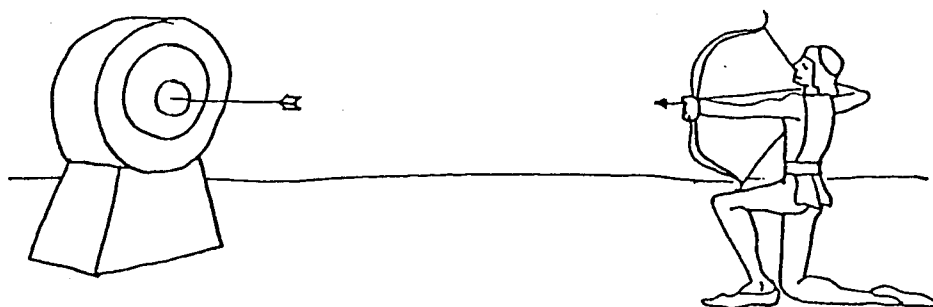
When I first attempted to illuminate a scroll, I found it difficult to translate my modern style into a style that looked medieval. I tried putting my figures into obvious period garb; however, they still looked like modern drawings of people in medieval garb.

Having recognized the problem, I set off to go back in line. I began a process of really looking at medieval drawings and illuminations. The more time I spent, the more obvious it became that period drawings have several common denominators regardless of period or country. Using those common elements and following a few guidelines will enable you to achieve a period style.

THEME

If you volunteer to complete an award scroll for a person who has excelled in archery, the obvious drawing would be of a figure engaged in some act of archery. A person standing at the bottom of some text with empty hands will not do anything to illustrate the story. It tells no one anything about what the words relay. Which brings us rather neatly to the observation that:

The illumination tells the story of the text.

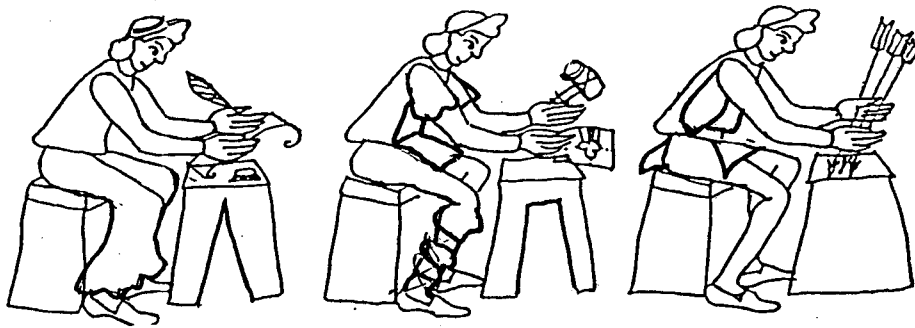


SETTING THE STAGE

Think of your illumination as a small stage set, peopled with tiny actors who must act out the story in mime.

Draw your figures in the “act” of performing their occupation and using the tools of their trade. You can even use the same figure over again by changing his garb and tools and setting. Each one becomes a different person, or the same person doing many different things.

Generic garb will work to portray most individuals as long as the other elements are used.



However, some figures beg for more specific definition.



Pauper or prince?

Remember that you cannot draw a merchant type in serf's garb and have him recognized as a merchant, or:

Clothing and objects should match the class and occupation of the person portrayed.

FEATURES

Most of the faces of people are portrayed by a few simple lines. If you are a good cartoonist, you will be able to achieve a likeness of the person portrayed. Remember that most line drawings of that sort rely on the exaggeration of some feature to achieve that likeness and most people are not terribly flattered by having their noses drawn out to heroic proportions.



12th Century French

It is infinitely safer to identify them by the methods described previously.

A lot of detail will be impossible because most of the time your figures will be very small, however:

The small details in line drawings carry a lot of information.

Drawings for male and female features are very similar. Beards and moustaches are obvious gender flags; however, hairstyle and length can be confusing.

On the other hand, women's eyes appear to be drawn larger with a slant or a triangular appearance. Men's eyes are generally drawn smaller and rounder.



EXPRESSION

As features are made up of simple lines, it would appear at first glance that benignly pleasant expression is the one most commonly portrayed. With such tiny faces, tiny smiles and a bland expression would appear to be the rule.

There are of course exceptions.



11th C. German



Early 10th C. Anglo-Frankish



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Early 10th C. Anglo-Frankish



Early 10th C. Anglo-Frankish

FACES

Faces seem to almost always appear in profile or 3/4 view.



scribe



old soldier



monk

