

Techniques for Late Period Flemish Illumination

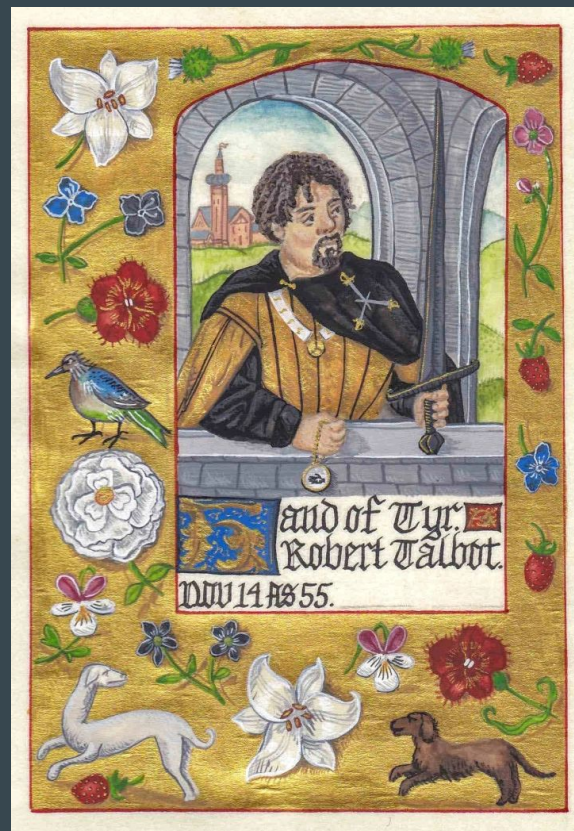


THL Cecily of York

Who am I?

- THL Cecily of York
- Northshield scribe since 2016
- I love Flemish manuscript illumination

- ladycecilyofyork@gmail.com
- Facebook: Cecily York
- Website: cecilyofyork.com



About the Class

- Lecture only, but feel free to doodle or paint along as I'm talking.
- This class will go very fast and cover a lot. We might have limited time for questions, so feel free to email me or message me on Facebook.
- Citations and links to all manuscripts pictured in the slides will be at the end
 - The on page citations will look like "Hastings Hours, f.47r". The link to the Hastings Hours will be at the end. The f.47r tells you the page number (the number is the page number, and the r and v are for recto/front and verso/back).
- Authenticity disclaimer: this class is my approach to making SCA scrolls inspired by Flemish manuscripts. I am inspired by period techniques, but use mostly modern materials, and everything is not 100% rigorously documented.

What is Flemish?

Flemish means from Flanders, an area of northern Europe encompassing parts of Belgium and northern France.

The area enjoyed increasing prosperity through the medieval period, and was home to various ruling houses, including Burgundy and Habsburg.

With many wealthy patrons desiring fancy books to flaunt their status, numerous artists and workshops emerged to fill the need.



What is Late Period Flemish Manuscript Illumination?

- “Those pretty gold border scrolls with the flowers and stuff”
- Trompe-l'œil: French for “deceive the eye”. Term is from the 1800s and refers to art that uses realistic imagery to create the optical illusion that the objects exist in three dimensions (Wikipedia).
- For this class: manuscripts made in Flanders from 1480ish-1550ish



Hastings Hours, f.47r, 1480



London Rothschild Hours, f.49v, 1500

Not just Flemish

- Similar styles happening in France (both examples on this page)
- For this class, all examples will be Flemish
- Many Flemish manuscripts were purchased by royalty across Europe, hence books with names like “Hours of Joanna of Castile” were actually made by Flemish artists.



Heures de Frédéric d'Aragon, f.120



Grand Hours of Anne of Brittany, f.22r

Layouts for Scrolls

Notes about choosing an exemplar

- Check the original size. Many are smaller than they look online.
- They come in varying levels of complexity. Start with a simpler one. Not every manuscript is a masterpiece.
- Feel free to mix and match elements. Take a letter from one, a portrait from another, and a border from another.
- Design your own border using different elements. I recommend doing this after doing a number of copies, just so your eye can learn the style.



Border and text



Hastings Hours, f.19r

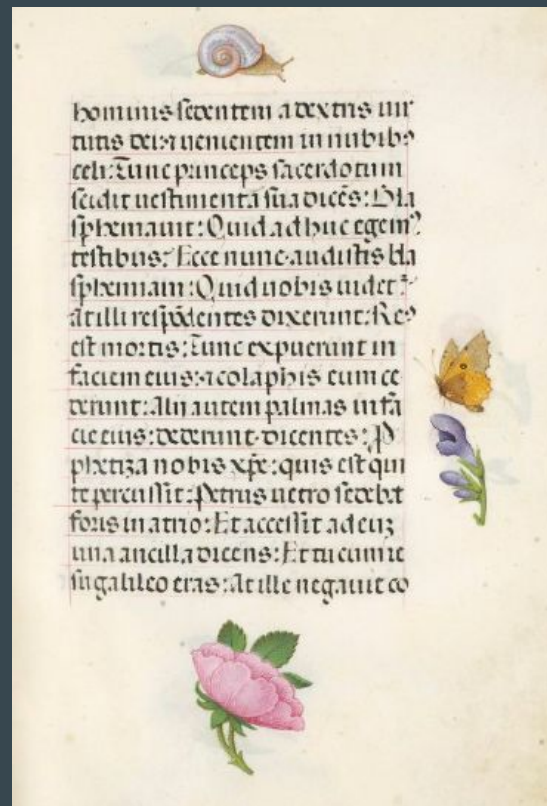


London Rothschild Hours, f.77r

Smaller options



London Rothschild Hours, f.80v



BNF Leber 142, f.20r

Calendar Pages



MS M.6 fol. 9v



The Golf Book, f.30r

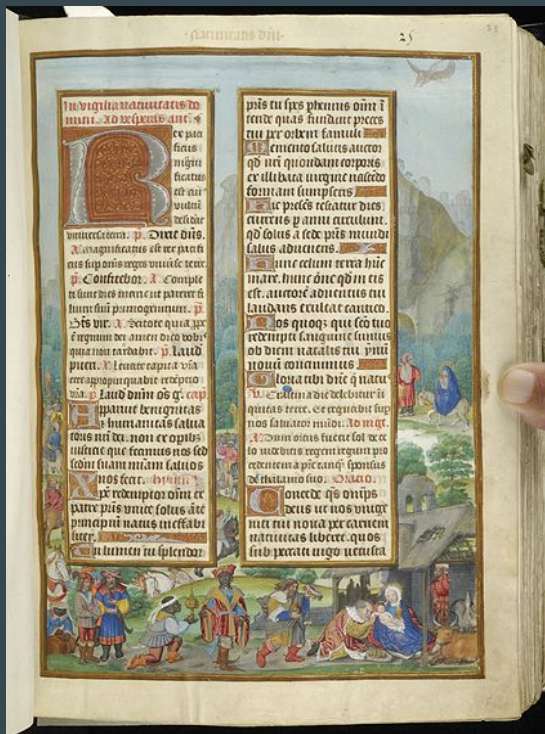


Anne Boleyn's Book of Hours, f.7v

Double page



Larger formats



Breviary of Eleanor of Portugal, f.33r, (9.5" x 6.7")

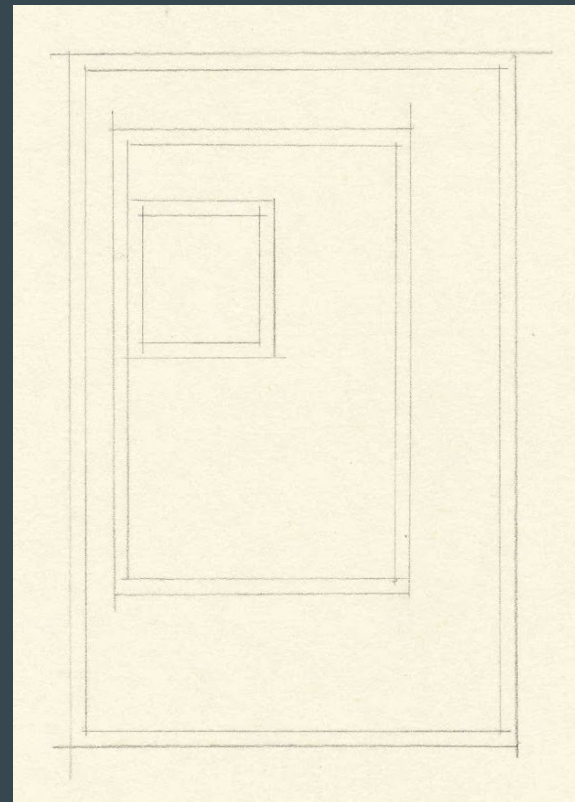


Breviary of Isabella of Castile, f.29r, (9" x 6.3")

Borders

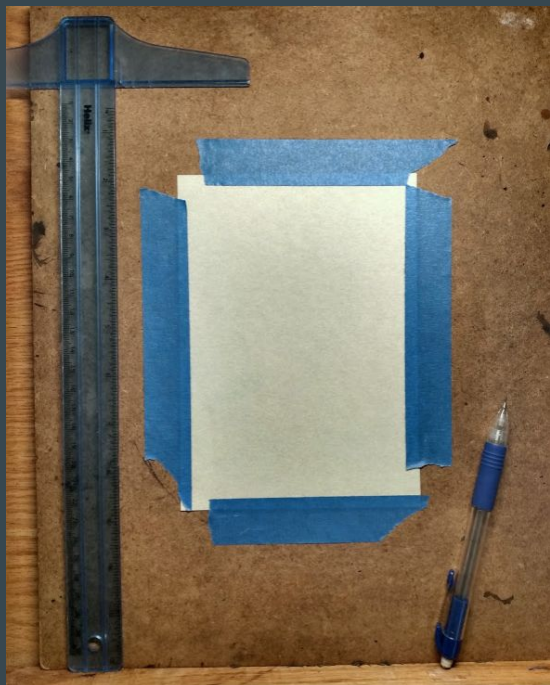
First step - border lines

- Use a straight edge and pencil.
- If you want to be precise, measure the exemplar, and proportion it out to your scroll size. Be aware that we often use standard frame sizes, which may differ from your exemplar. Adjust your margins appropriately.
- My fast eyeballing approach: note the order of increasing width (left < top < right < bottom)
- Give borders a thickness - make sure it's even, don't eyeball these.
- Next: demo of my approach



Outer border lines

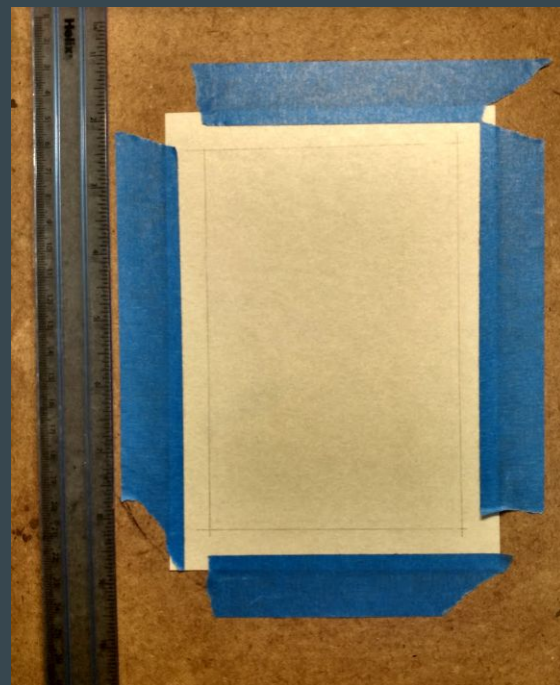
Edge of paper lined up along middle of T-square



Set up: Transparent T-square on an art board. Scroll taped down parallel to edges.



Draw first outlines evenly in from the edge. I pick a spot on the T-square and line it up the same on all sides.

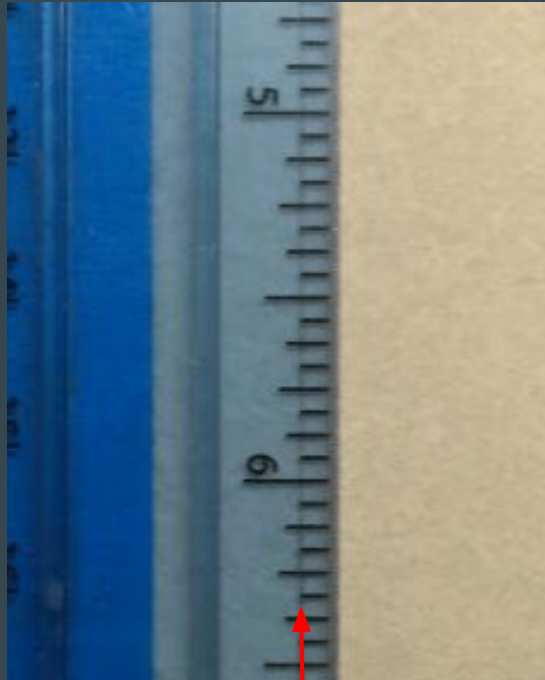


Even outer lines done.

Giving the borders a thickness



Line up with the $1/8$ " marks on the T-square. Be sure to be on the same side consistently (this time the inside).



Zoomed in: lined up with $1/8$ " marks. Alternate: use a wooden ruler's edge

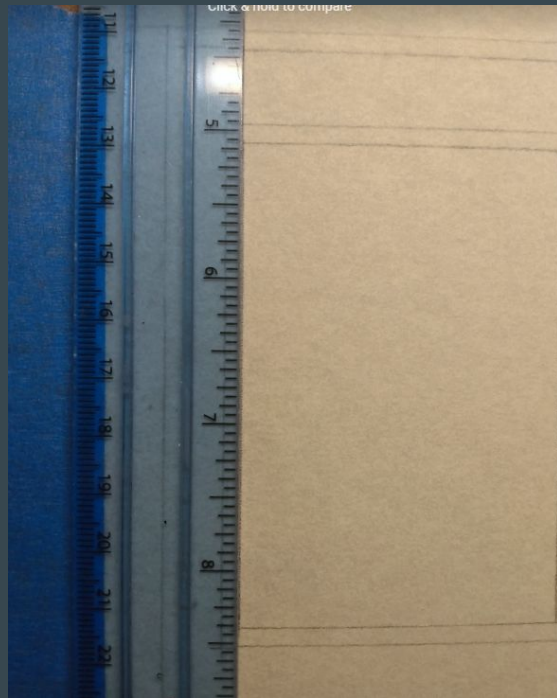


Turn board and T-square to get all sides. Be sure to be on the same side for all lines to maintain symmetry.

Repeat for inner boxes



Eyeballing inner box lines (noting that left < top < right < bottom)



Lining up along 1/8" marks for inner lines.

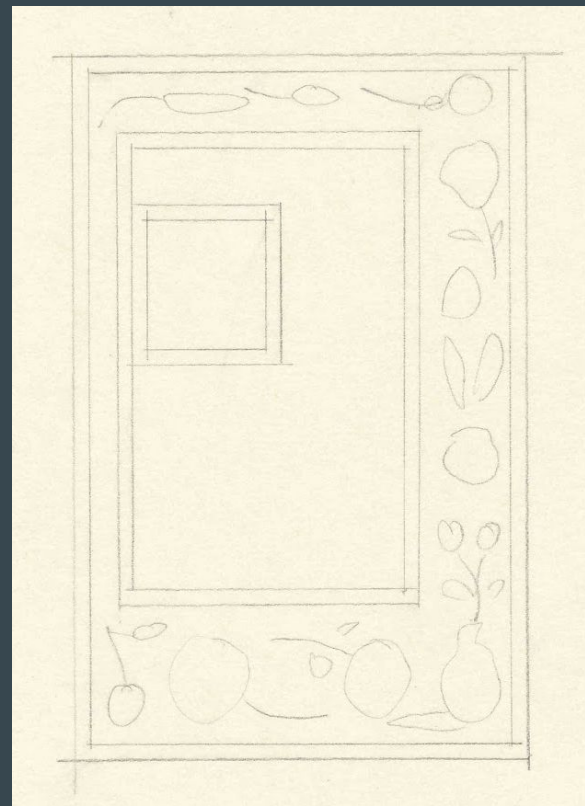


All done! Box for starting letter comes after calligraphy lines are down.

Drawing

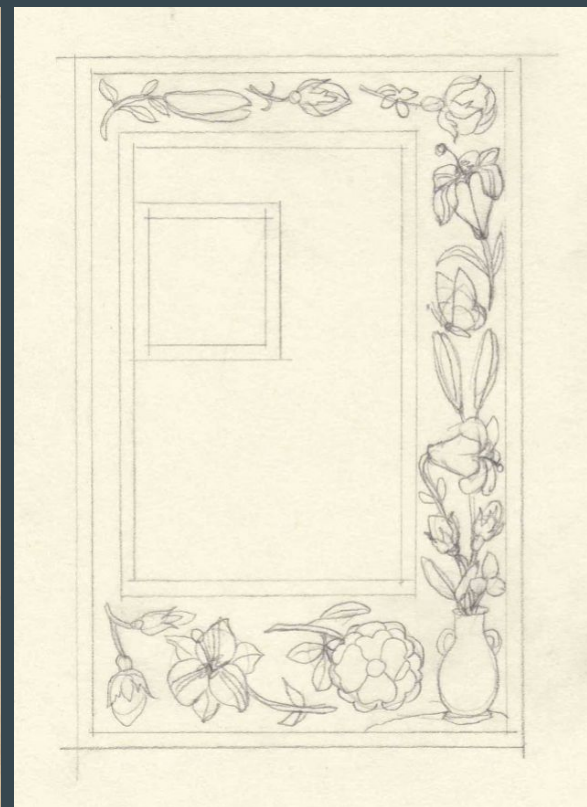
Block objects in with simple shapes

- Use in very simple shapes
- Draw very lightly in pencil
- Focus on positioning and size
- Easy to move things around before any details are drawn



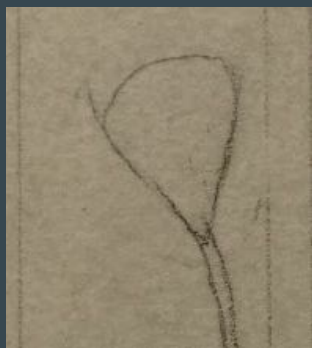
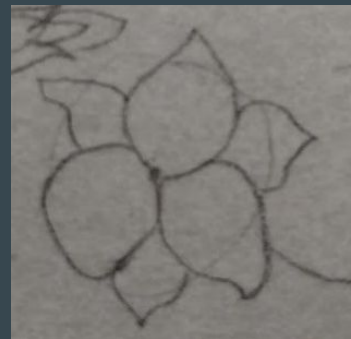
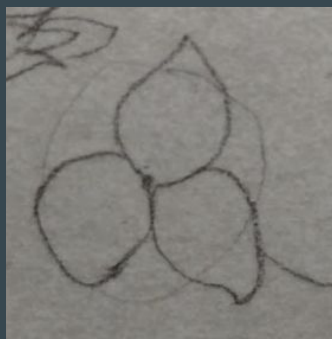
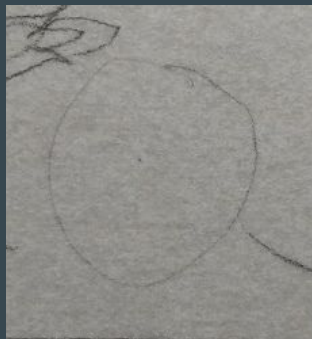
Detailed sketch

- Work top left to bottom right (reverse for lefties) to avoid too much smudging, or use clean paper under drawing hand.
- Build each element out of simple shapes (demo on next slide)
- Continue to sketch lightly, as these lines may be erased



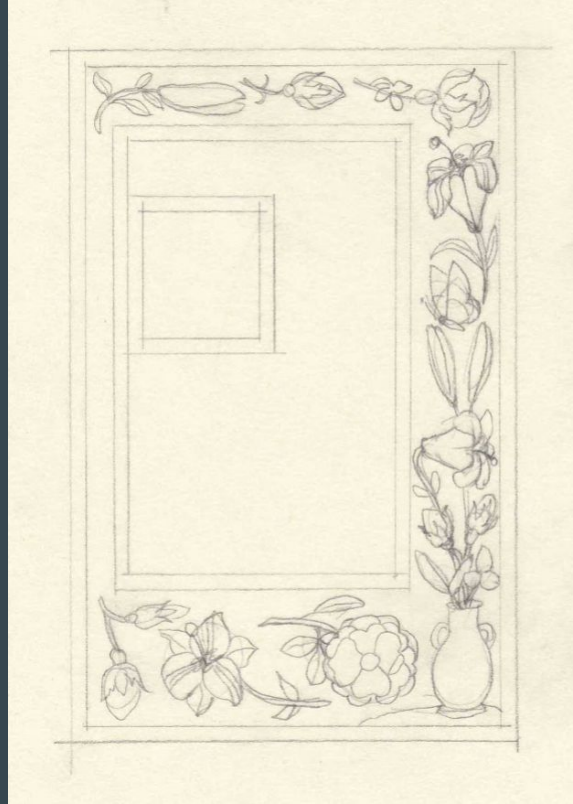
Build objects out of simple shapes

- Lightly in pencil
- All curved lines. No straight lines in organic things like plants and people
- Every leaf and petal has slight variation.
- Details come last



Ink

- Use waterproof or water resistant ink, like oak gall ink
- Dilute the ink in a smaller container to allow for more variations in shading. Amount depends on ink and paper. Test on sample paper. Remember oak gall ink darkens over time.
- Use something (knife tip, end of paintbrush, etc) in your off-hand to hold down paper as perg/parchment will buckle.
- Add some shadows and shading (will cover in next section).
- Can use technical pen (e.g. Micron), but will have less variation and will be very dark.



Pencil



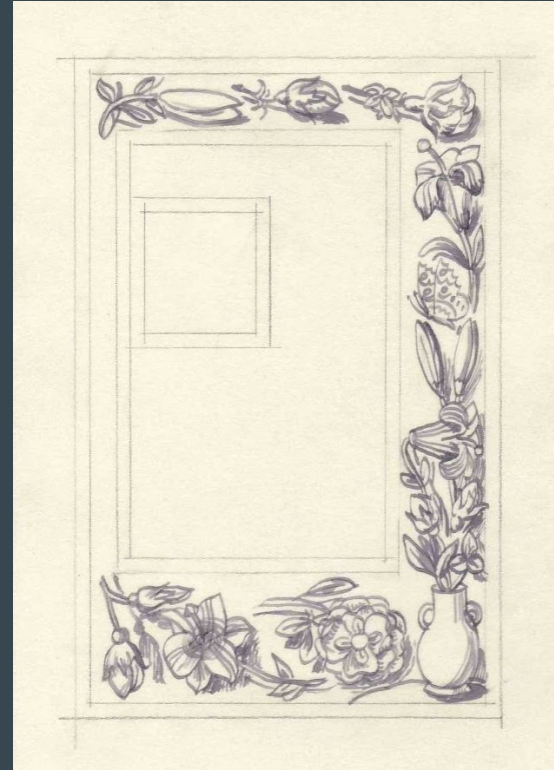
Ink

Erase pencil lines and finalize details

- After confirming ink is fully dry, gently erase pencil lines
- Fill in any missed lines with ink
- Add details and more shading (will cover shading next)
- I don't ink the border lines, because using a ruling pen is a pain, and you'll outline them later in gouache anyway.



First pass ink



Pencil lines erased, details/shading added

Side note: Drawing acanthus

- Very frequent motif
- Most important to get the curves right
- Built out of basic shapes
- Fractal patterning
- Will cover briefly here. For more details, see my class slides for Tips and Tricks for Drawing Acanthus.



How I think about acanthus

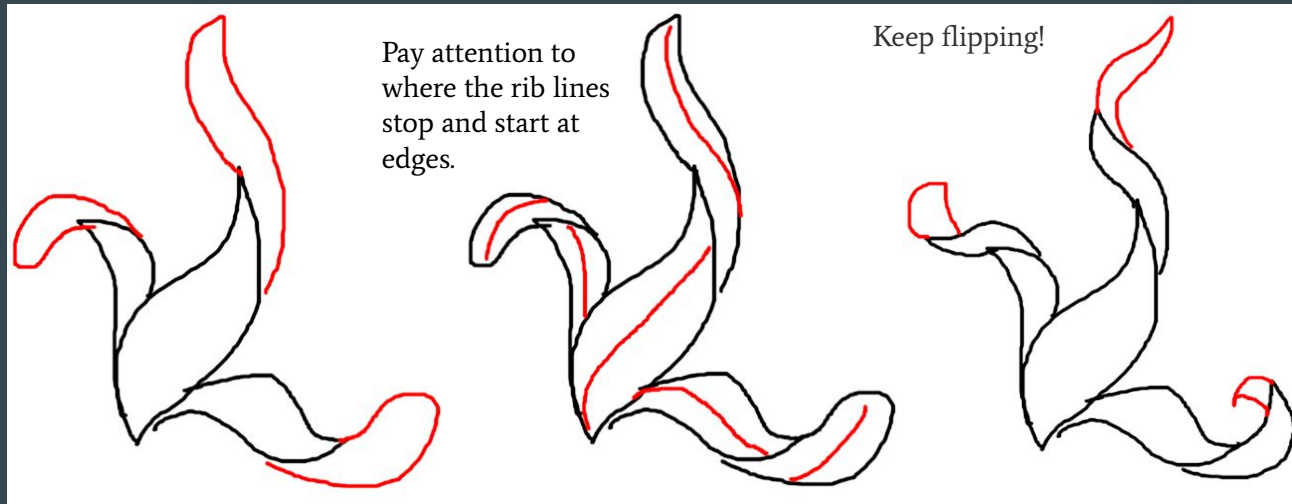
Basic acanthus shape



Flip under



Flip over



Pay attention to where the rib lines stop and start at edges.

Keep flipping!

Fractal patterning - smaller leaves follow same pattern



Complex acanthus can be broken down into flips

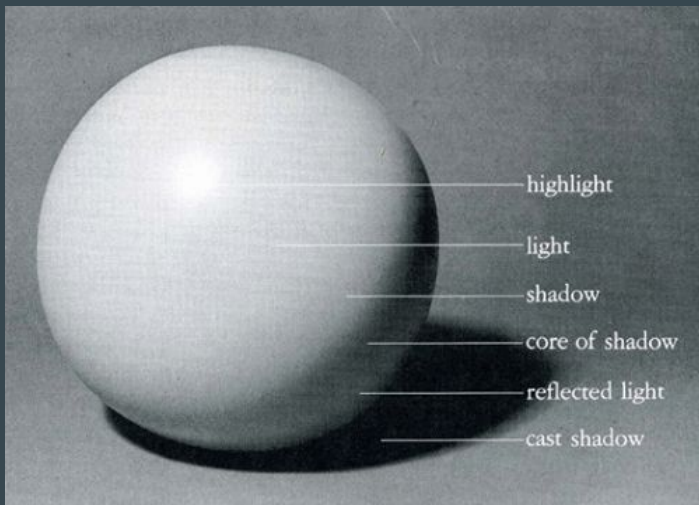


Complex acanthus can be broken down into flips



Shading

Shading terminology



London Rothschild Hours, f.231r



Shading: using lights and darks to convey 3D form.

Shadow

Cast shadow

Light Source

The direction from which light is coming.

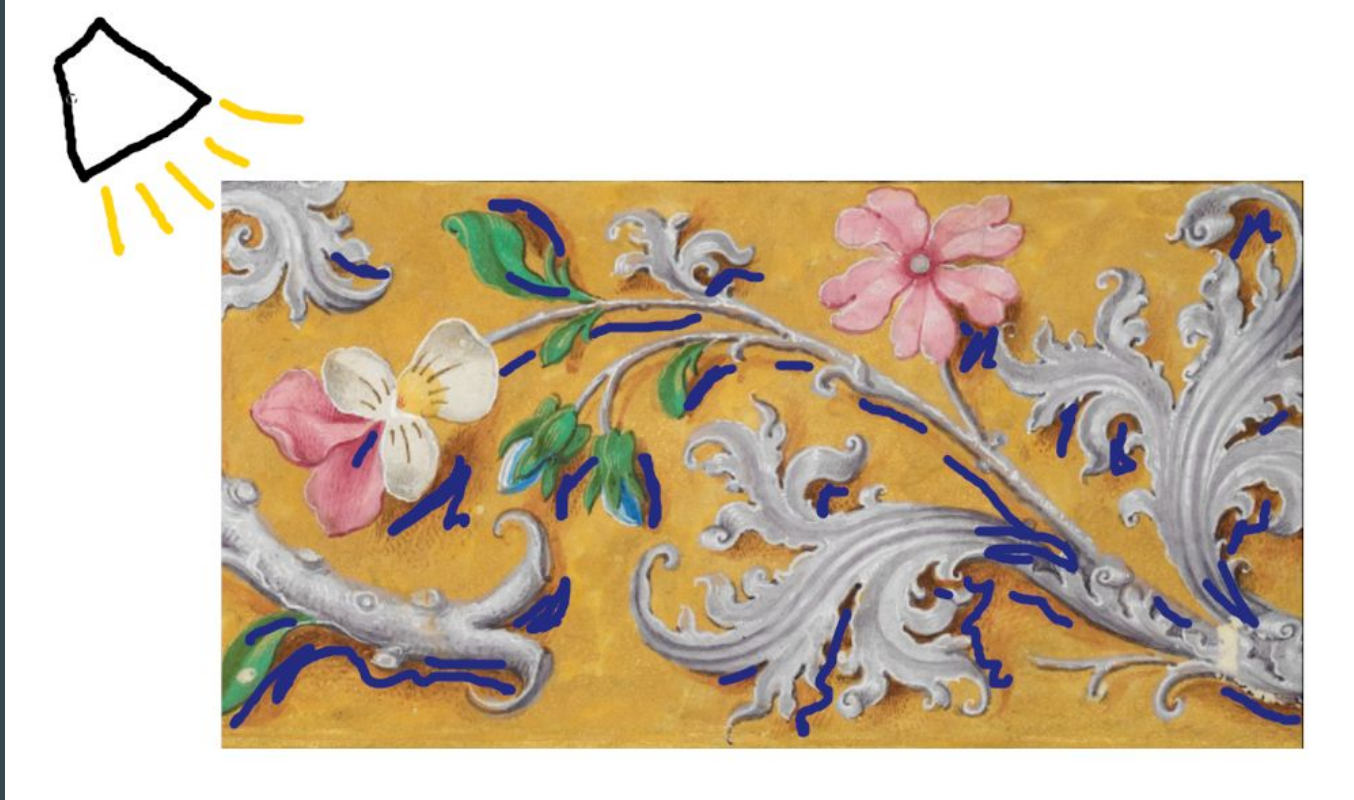
Usually the top left in this period, but look at your exemplar to confirm.



Highlights - mostly on the upper left



Shadows - mostly on the lower right



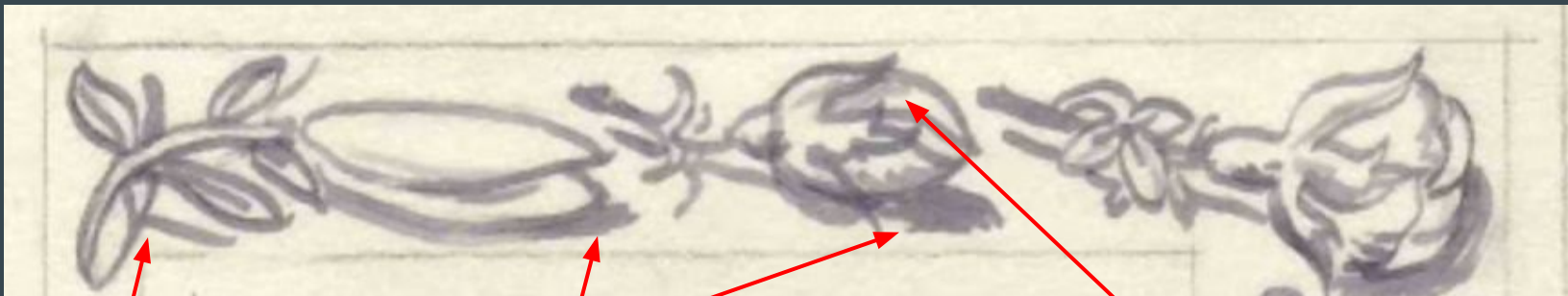
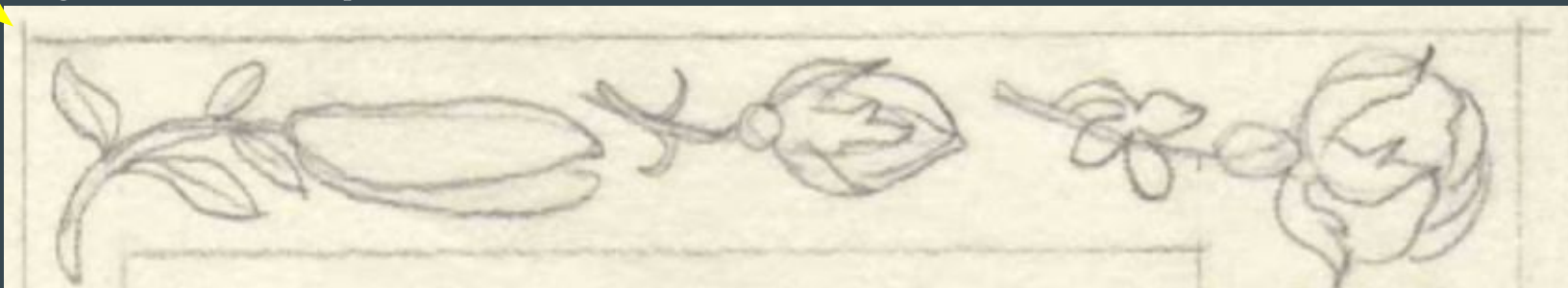
Light Source Tips

- Envision water spraying from a hose - where would get wet?
- Not always strictly obeyed, but gives you a general guide
- Consistent shadow placement key in making it look 3D



Shading objects with ink

Light source from the top left



Cast shadows of stems give illusion of floating

Cast shadows usually the darkest value

Overlapping objects cast shadows onto each other

Shading options: inked underdrawing

- Inked underdrawing will show through gouache (like a color layer in Photoshop with 50% opacity).
- Faster to shade with a pen.
- Most shading already done before you paint. All you have to do is exaggerate the darkest areas with dark paint.



Inked underdrawing

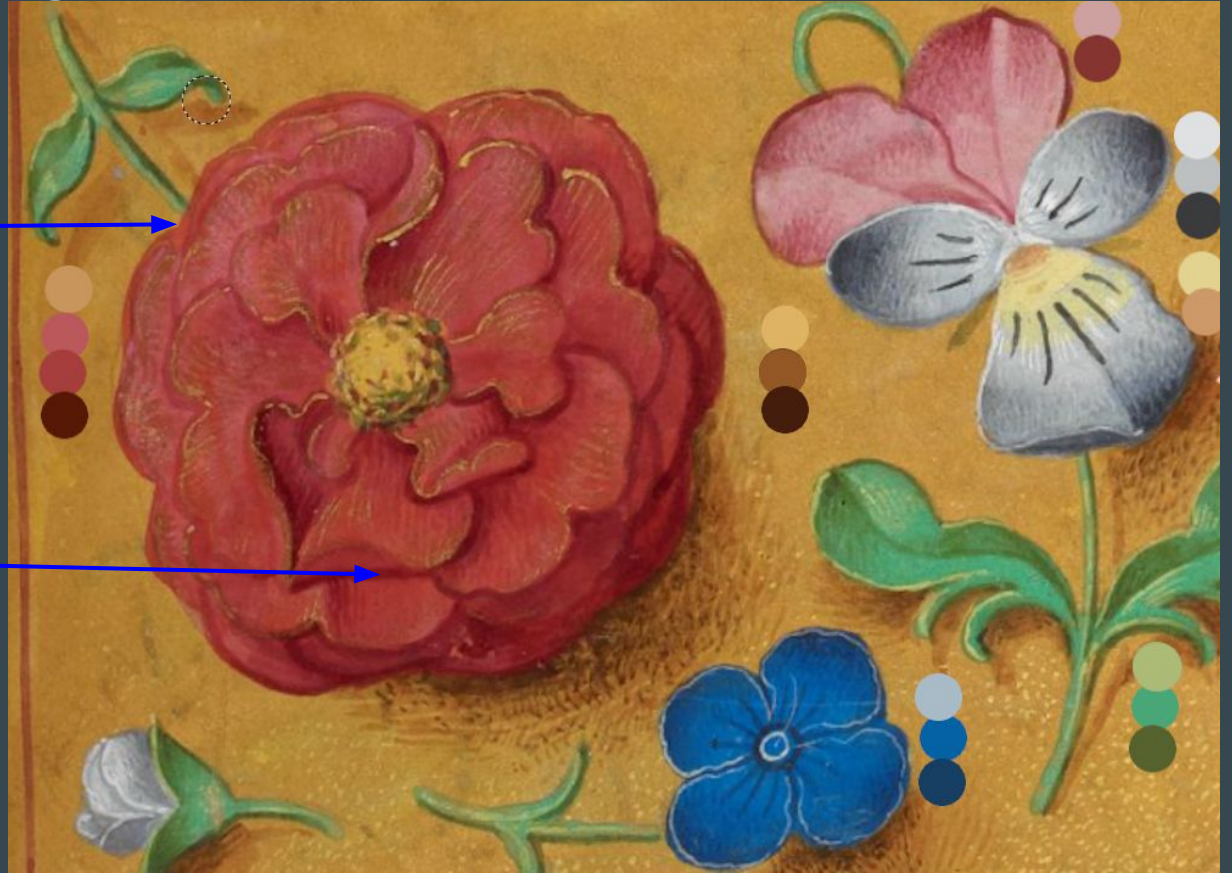


Single layer of gouache color on top

Inked underdrawing

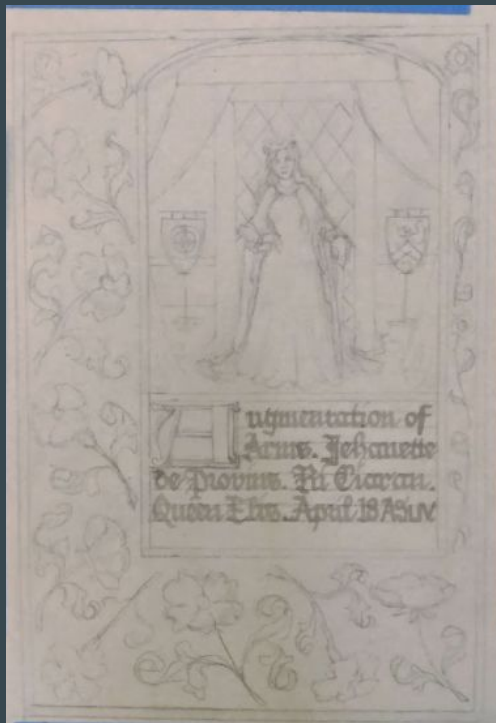
Inked underdrawing showing through. Note the color is completely covering the inked underdrawing. No uncovered ink is showing through.

Lines might be slightly darkened on shaded side.



Shading options: shading with paint

- Alternately, if you hate/are scared of inking (I was), paint directly on pencil lines, then add shading lines with paint.
- Pencil lines will not show through gouache as much, so all shading must be done with paint.
- This will involve more color mixing to get appropriate shade colors.



Pencil underdrawing



Painting directly on pencil lines

Shading with paint

- Colors shade into more saturated versions of themselves or brown
- No black. Even the darkest areas on the grey flower are a dark grey.

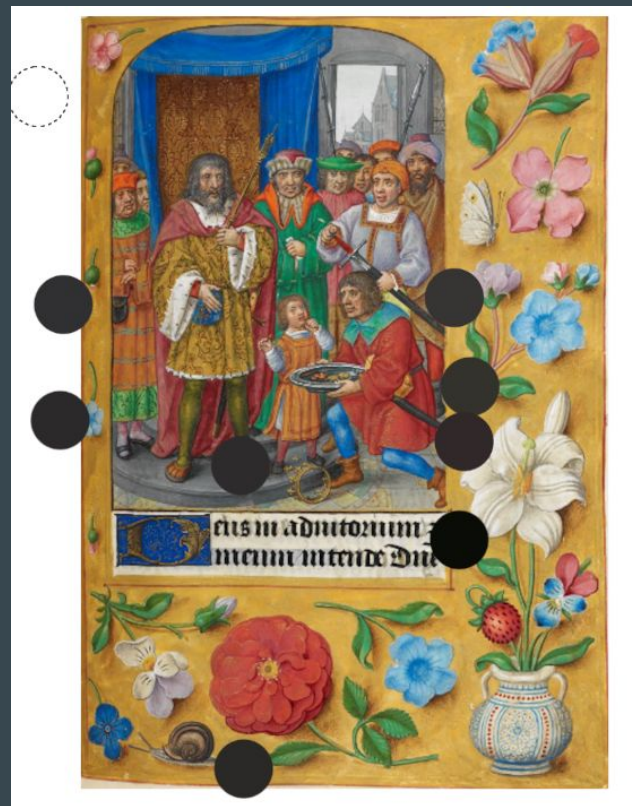


A word on black

- Straight black is too black most of the time, and black outlines everywhere will make it read as modern.
- The text is generally the blackest thing on the page.
- Adding just a bit of white to black gouache will keep it from being too overpowering.



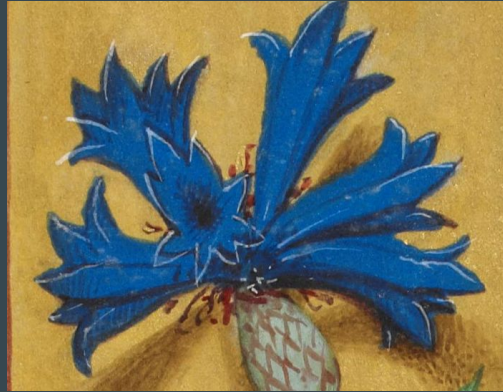
The Golf Book, f.21v



London Rothschild Hours, f.112r

Highlights - done the same for both options

- Depends on the base color.
- Based both on style and chemistry, e.g. green and white (copper and lead) do not play nicely together.
- Will be white, gold, yellow, or a light version of the color (or none at all!)
- Use slightly thicker paint, with barely any on brush, and a very fine point.



White



Pink



Gold



None!

Colors

Very Quick Color Theory

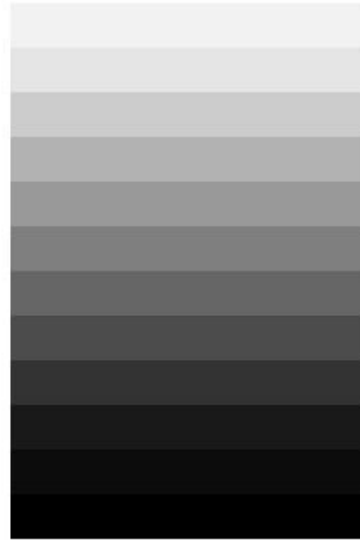
HUE



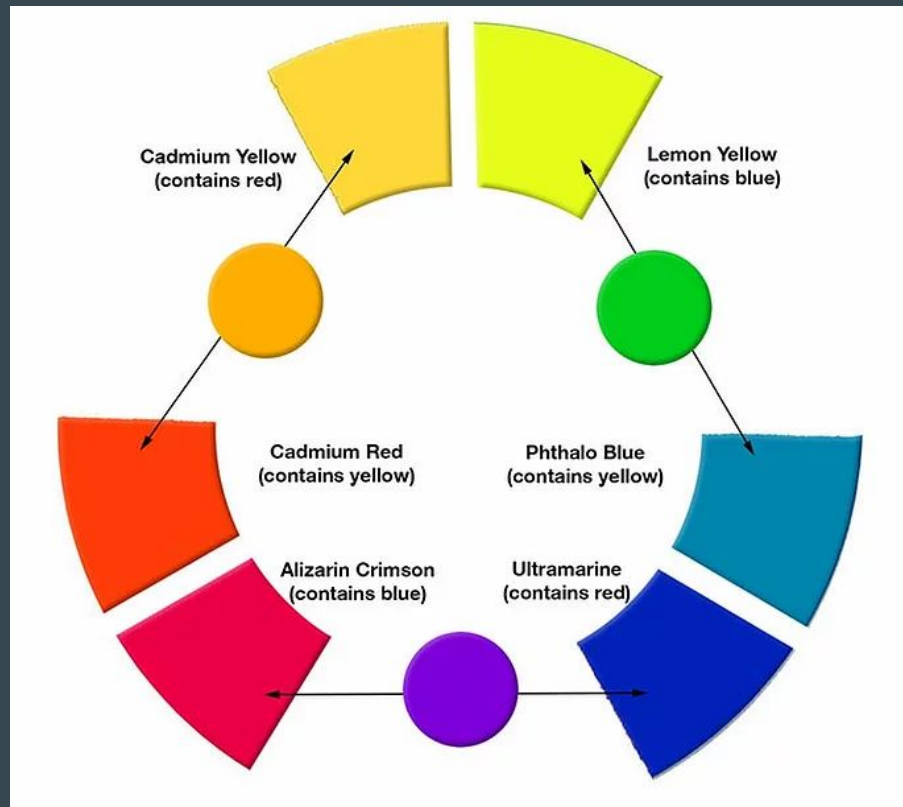
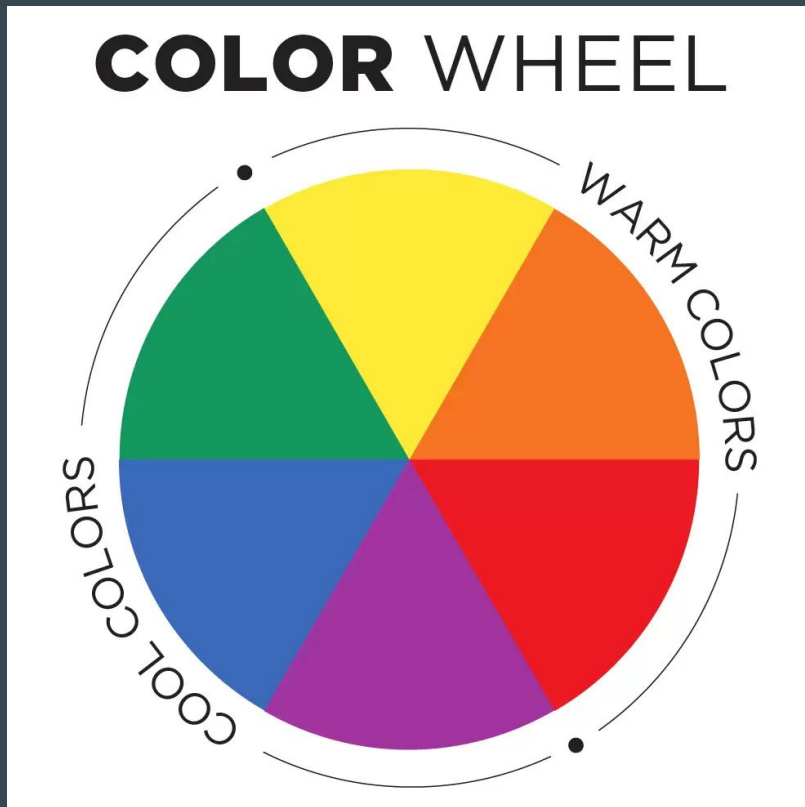
SATURATION



VALUE



Very Quick Color Theory



Colors on your palette

Having a cool and a warm of each color is helpful. I use:

- Blue: Ultramarine and Cobalt
- Red: Alizarin Crimson and Cad Red
- Yellow: Cad Yellow and Lemon Yellow

Plus neutrals:

- Yellow ochre, burnt umber, permanent white, ivory black

Greens: Usually too strong by themselves. I'll mix in a bit of other colors to tone them down.

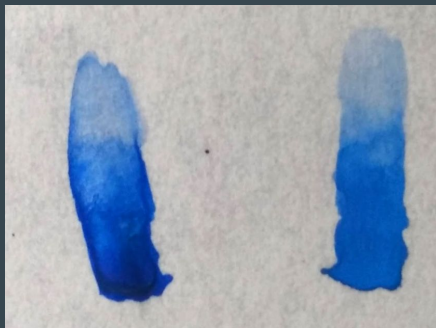
- Sap green
- Viridan



Matching Colors with Gouache

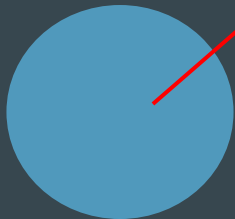
Questions to ask:

- Is it a yellowy blue or a purpley blue?
- How dark is the value?
- How saturated is it?



Ultramarine

Cobalt



Period Pigments

- The guaranteed way to get a color match.
- A fun new skill to learn. Kind of like a science project.
- Out of the scope of this class.

Some articles to get you started:

[Technical examination of the Emerson-White Book of Hours: observations on pigment preferences and media application in a Flemish manuscript](#) (source for images on right)

[Pigments & dyes in a collection of medieval illuminations \(14th–16th century\)](#)



Border, artist unidentified			
Green leaf in border	Malachite ^a		3
Blue flower in border	Ultramarine ^b	Ultramarine suspected based on small peaks for Al and Si and lack of other elements such as Cu in XRF	15
Red flower in border	Organic red ^b	Organic red suspected based on lack of other elements in XRF; Al, P, K, Ca detected, likely components of substrate for organic red; different than location 12; similar to most organic reds analyzed on other folios	14
Yellow flower in border	Lead tin yellow ^b		13
Parchment	Calcium-based white ^b	Parchment prepared with Ca-based white pigment	6

Gold

Shell Gold

- Gold paint is used extensively in this style
- In period, real gold ground up and mixed with a binder was used (called shell gold)
- Available to buy online at specialty stores (e.g. John Neal Booksellers)
- Also possible to make yourself
- Price based on the gold market

Substitutes:

- Gold gouache - I like Pearl Gold from Holbein
- Mica-based paints, named Colira (formerly Finetec) - I like Arabic Gold



Real shell gold

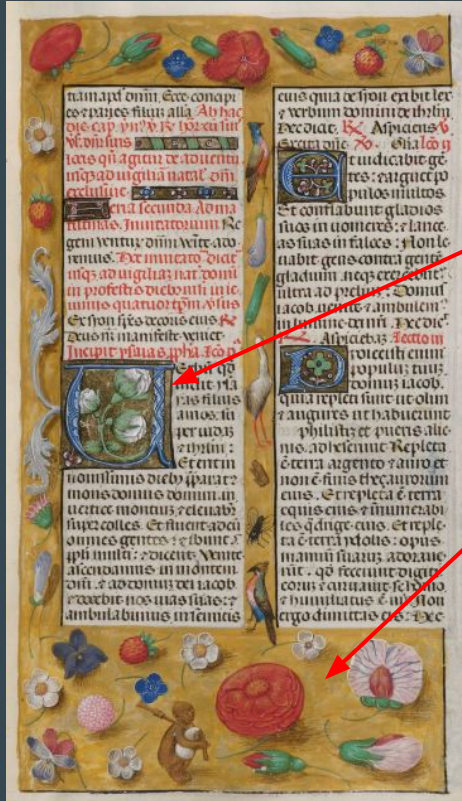


Gold gouache



Colira (formerly Finetec) mica-based imitation gold

Not much gilding with gold leaf - usually only around letters



Breviary of Isabella of Castile, f.13r



Hastings Hours, f.251r

Lots of shell gold highlights on objects



Hastings Hours, f.46r



Hastings Hours, f.47r

Lots of shell gold highlights on clothes



Anne Boleyn's Book of Hours, f.15v



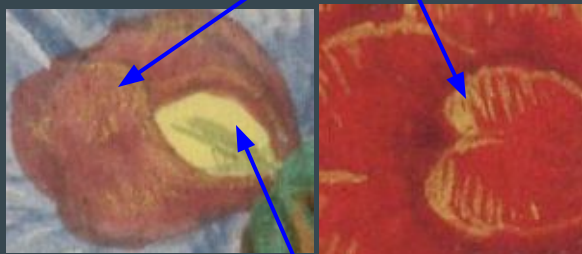
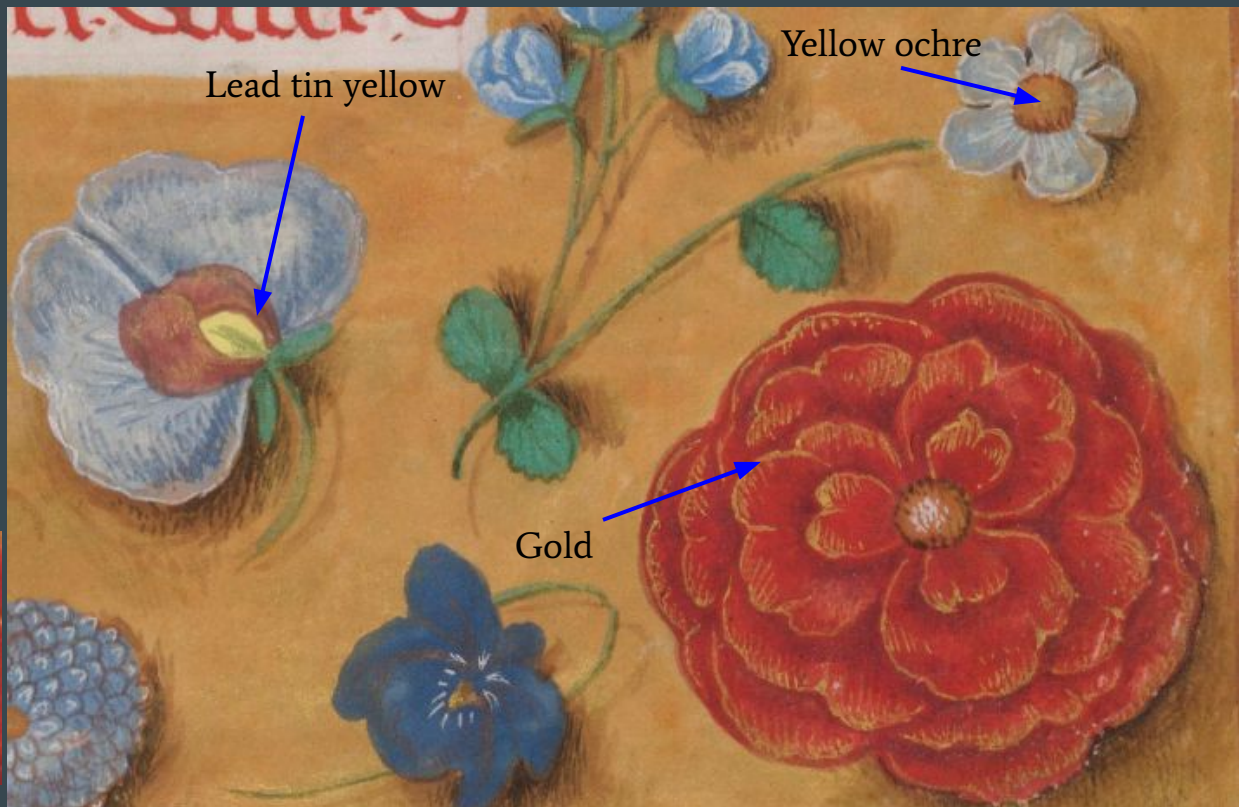
Breviary of Isabella of Castile, f.111v



London Rothschild Hours, f.33v

Can scan looking just yellow

- Compare it to actual yellow objects to see the difference
- Zoom in very closely to see the particle difference



Yellow

Paint Application

Pointy brush

- Brush needs to come to a very fine point
- The size doesn't matter, just the fineness of the point.
- Avoid getting paint up in the ferrule.
- Clean your brushes thoroughly after painting and reform into a point to dry.
- Never store your brushes bent.
- You can cut off stray hairs at the base.



This is the opening of the ferrule. Don't get paint in there. Keep it down at the tip.

Paint consistency

- Paint on the thin side
- Very little on brush. Small strokes should dry almost instantly.
- First stroke will have the most pigment, then will taper off. Use that to your advantage! Do dark lines first, then shading around them.

One brush load



Too wet



Blot it on a towel



Better.
Load less on
brush next
time.

Small strokes

- Shading and highlighting done entirely with small strokes.
- No wet watercolor washes. These will cause your paper to buckle.
- Imagine you are sculpting the form using the highlights and shadows.
- If using an inked underdrawing, use more opaque highlights to cover the lines where the light hits the object.
- Keep scrap paper next to scroll to test paint on until you learn how to judge the consistency.



Breviary of Isabella of Castile, f.191v

Backgrounds

Backgrounds often gold

- Yellow ochre base layer
- Shaded with brown for cast shadows
- Highlighted with shell gold



Breviary of Isabella of Castile, f.112r



Hours of Anne Boleyn, f.44r

Dots of gold



Hastings Hours, f.47r



London Rothschild Hours, f.17r

No discernable dots

- I've tried mixing yellow ochre and gold gouache.
- Better results with under layer of yellow ochre and top layer of gold Finetec or gouache.
- Mix Finetec frequently, and apply very dry.



Hours of Anne Boleyn, f.43v

Not always gold!



Breviary of Eleanor of Portugal, f.171r



Hastings Hours, f.26r



London Rothschild Hours, f.233v

Tips

- Go slowly
- Use very little water
- Do sections at a time. Move around to avoid buckling.
- Leave boundary lines in strategically small place
- Pay attention to what is an object (don't paint over) and what is a cast shadow (paint over) in your inked lines. This is easy to confuse.



Boundary lines in strategically small gaps.



Don't be afraid to turn work often to more easily access all areas.

Applying gold

- Same as for the yellow ochre
- Go slowly
- Use very little water
- Work in patches
- Mix gold gouache/Finetec gold frequently. Gold will settle to the bottom.



Buckling

- Pergamena and parchment want to buckle if too much water is applied at once.
- Not easily fixable once it's happened.
- If too much water is accidentally applied, immediately soak it up with a dried brush. Repeat until it's gone, and do not go back to the area until it is very dry.
- Do not do wet watercolor washes.



Buckling on one of my scrolls

Patchiness

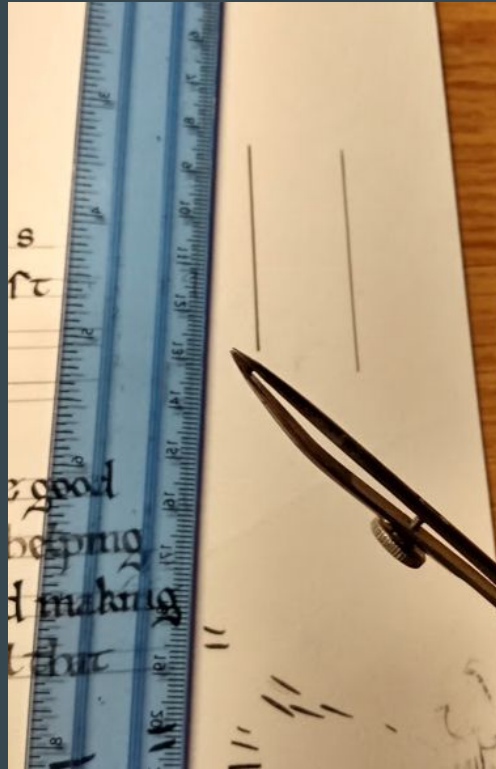
- Step back, and look at it from 3 feet away.
- Zoom in close to the exemplar, and it generally isn't as even as it looks from far away.
- To get as even as possible, use very little water, and focus on keeping your paint consistency consistent (it will get thicker as water evaporates). Add very little water when re-wetting.



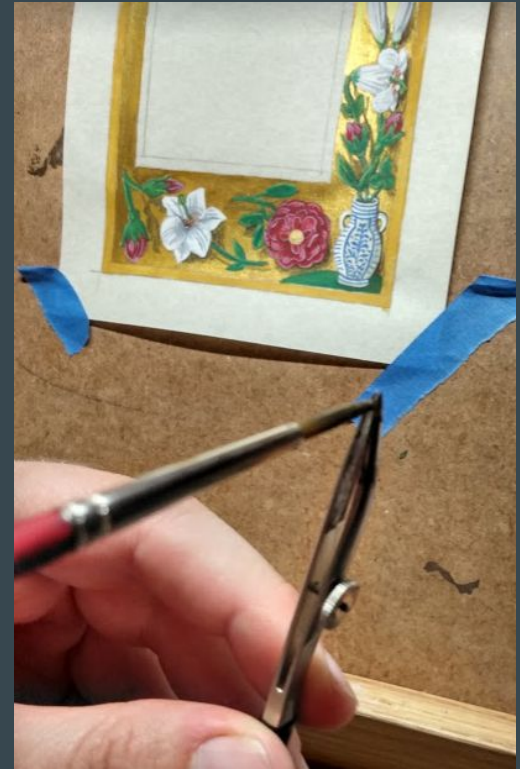
Hastings Hours, f.64v

Borders with a Ruling Pen

- Load ruling pen with gouache using brush
- Try on scrap paper first to figure out width
- Can come out thicker on gouache than plain paper, so go on the thin side.
- Can be hard to get started on gouache - get it flowing on scrap paper
- Watch out for gouache getting on the bottom of your straight edge



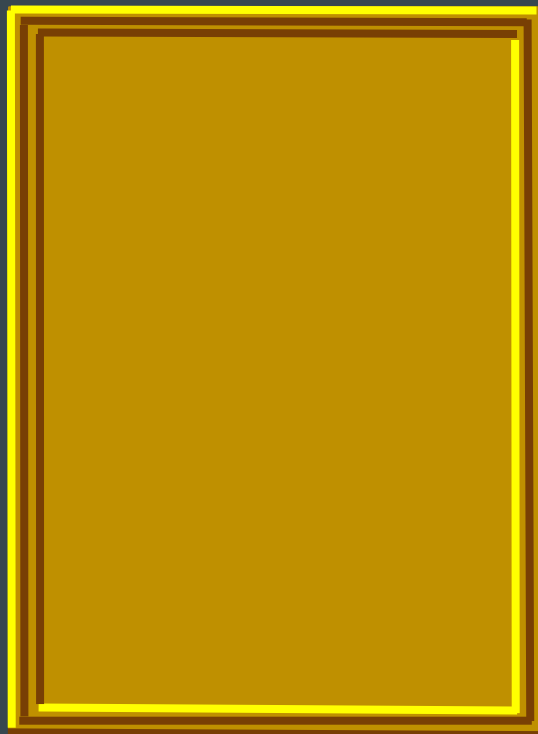
Adjust knob to set width



Load the ruling pen with a brush

Shading Borders

- Gold highlights and brown shadows on the border convey sense of 3-dimensionality
- Light source on the top left.
- Note which lines connect to which.
- Ruling pen with gold gouache and burnt umber



Tips for Landscapes

Atmospheric Perspective

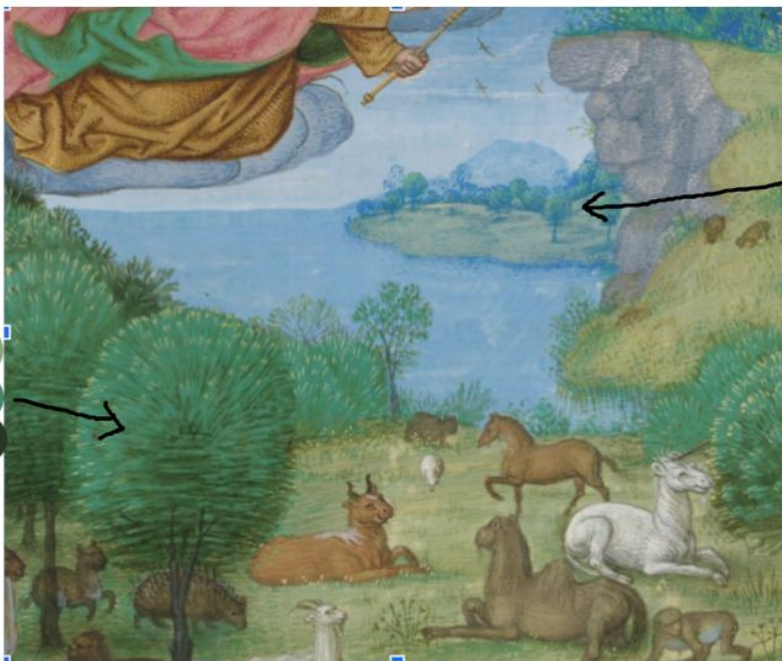
As things recede into the distance, they get:

- Smaller
- Bluer
- Colors are less saturated (closer to grey)
- Value ranges are compressed (lights aren't as light, and darks aren't as dark)



London Rothschild Hours, f.10v

Examples of Atmospheric Perspective



Breviary of Isabella of Castile, f.63r



The Golf Book, f.25v

Transparency and Back to Front

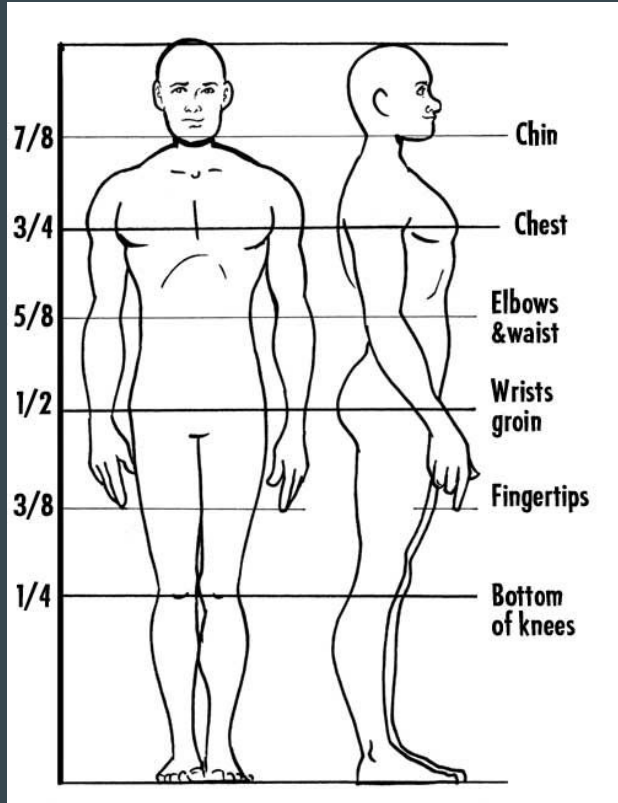
- Generally work back to front
- Note the blue showing through the horsemen and tree
- Note the green showing through the horses and sheep
- For water-based paint, the key is not to use too much water, so you don't re-activate the previous layer, and small strokes



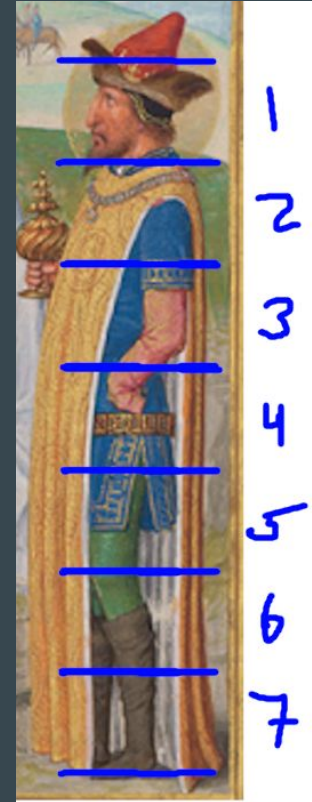
Breviary of Isabella of Castile, f.191v

Tips for People

Body Proportions - usually 7 or 8 heads tall



Da Costa Hours, f.140v



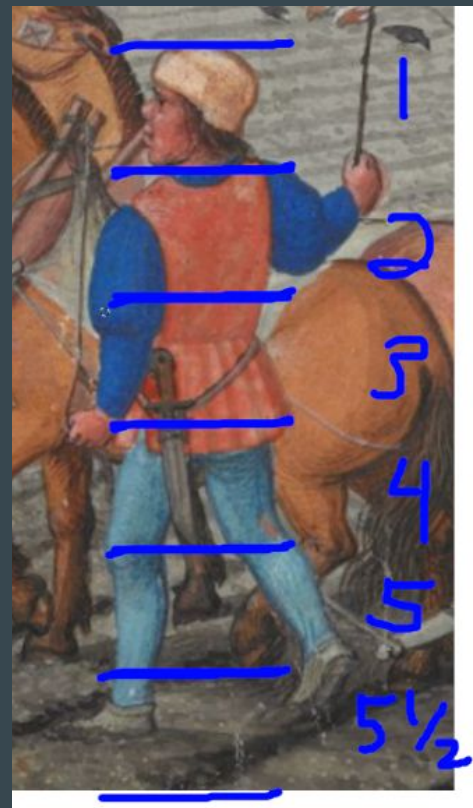
Da Costa Hours, f.320v

Not always

- Fewer heads reads as child-like
- Can be stylistic choice of certain artists (e.g. Simon Bening)
- Generally in smaller scale manuscripts - The Golf Book is 4.3" x 3.1"
- More heads (8 or 9) is uncommon in this era - it reads as heroic or gaunt (e.g. Jesus on the cross)



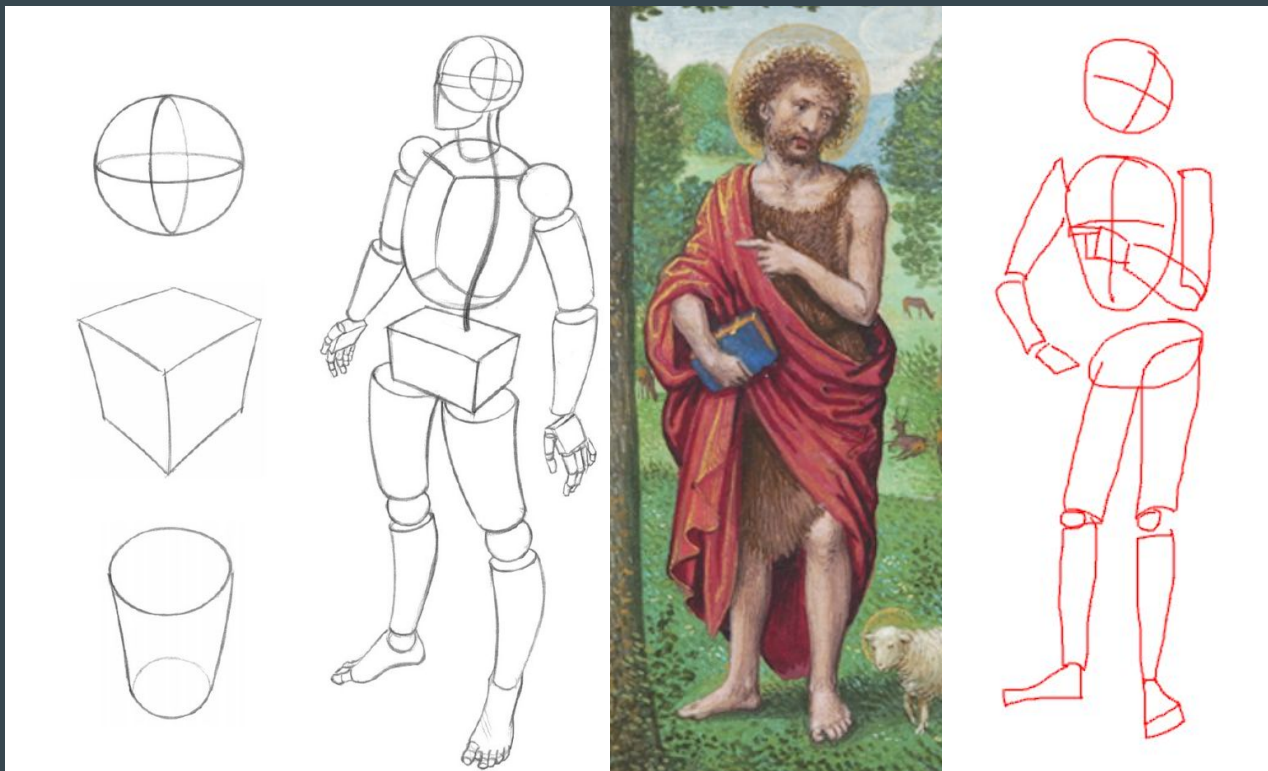
The Golf Book, f.26v



The Golf Book, f.27r

Simplify the body into basic shapes

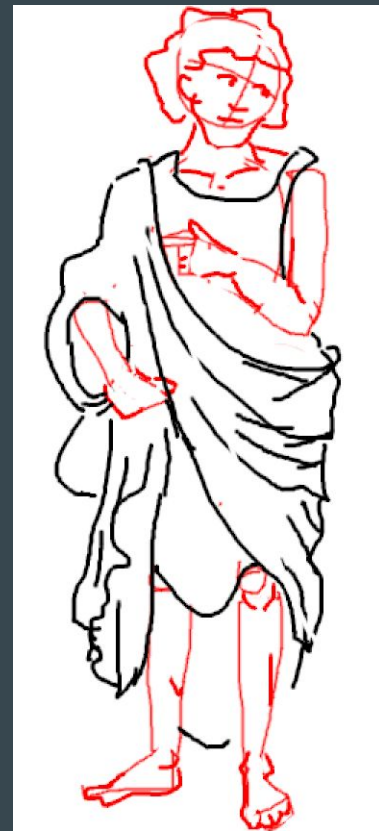
- Basic shapes are easier to draw
- Add axis lines to indicate direction
- Check proportions by measuring heads
- Do not add details or clothes until this looks correct
- This step goes faster the more you do it



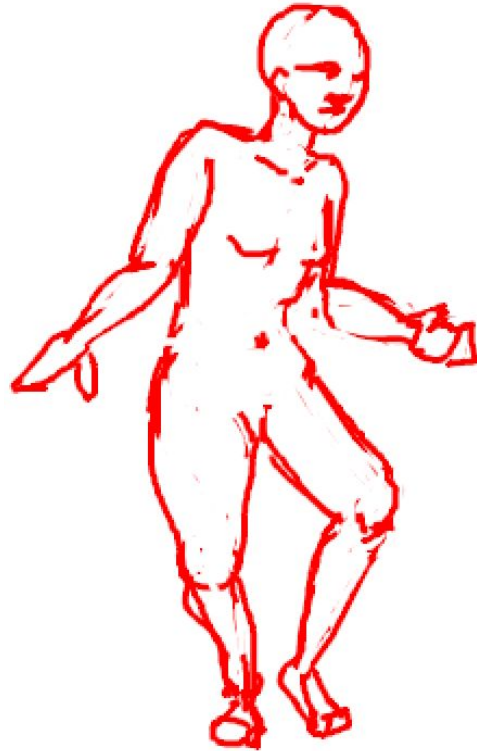
Then add the details and clothes

Clothes:

- Make sure the body is right first
- Think about gravity and how clothing hangs off the body
- Remember it has 3D form - it's not flat like paper
- Folds overlap each other
- Do lots of copies to get an intuitive sense of how folds operate

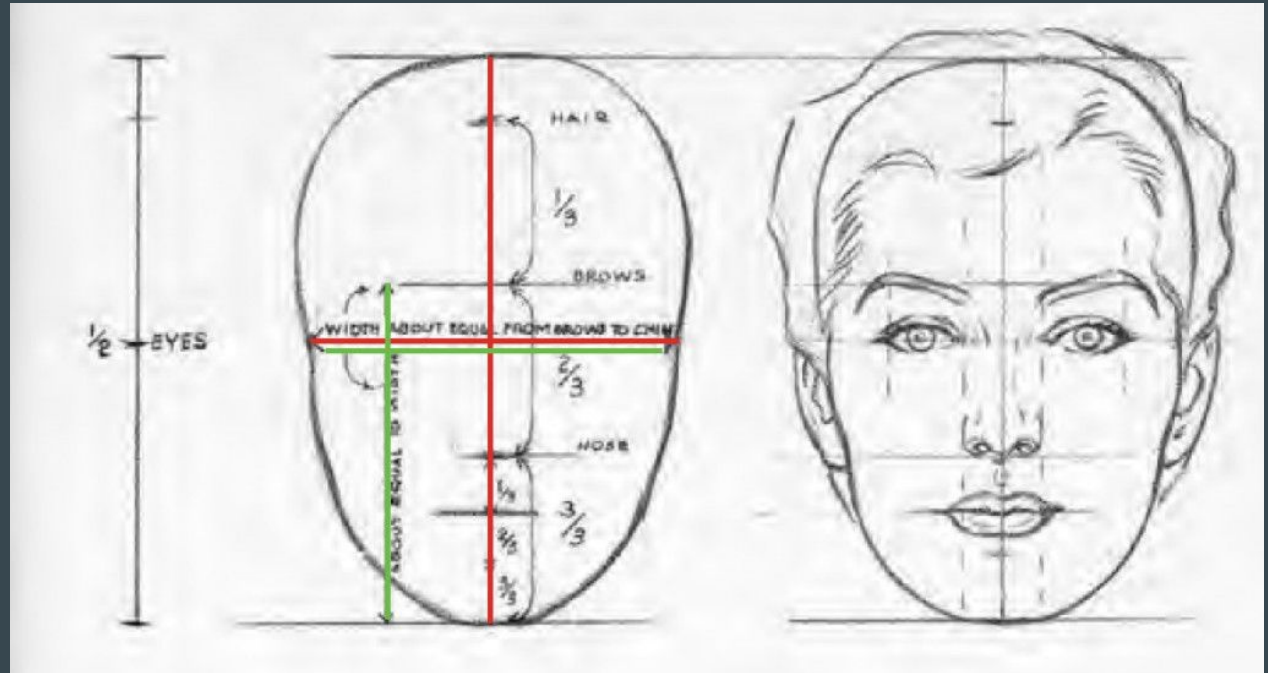


Another example - the form is revealed by the clothing



Face Proportions

- Eyes $\frac{1}{2}$ way down face
- Nose $\frac{1}{2}$ way between eyes and chin
- Mouth slightly higher than $\frac{1}{2}$ way between nose and chin
- Ears between eyes and mouth



Examples



Da Costa Hours, f.326v



London Rothschild Hours, f.232v

Three Quarter View

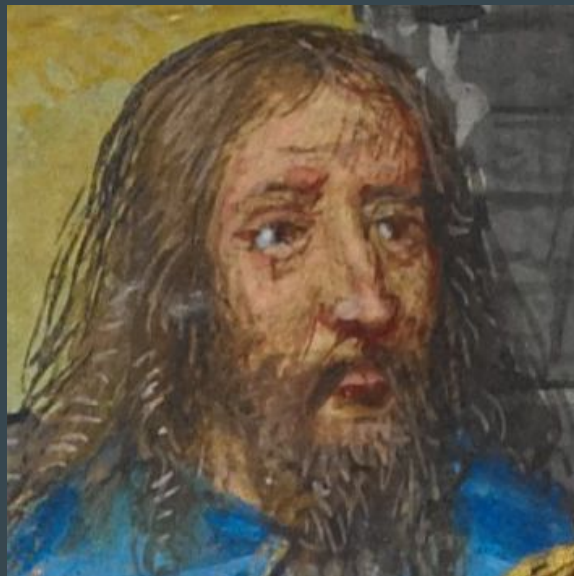


- Add spherical volume for back of skull
- Facial feature guidelines become curves

Colors for People



Hastings Hours, f.68v



London Rothschild Hours, f.101v



- No straight black or white
- Pink cheeks and lips
- Grey and brown for shading

Scroll Personalization

Heraldry - not common in period, but can be incorporated



Hastings Hours, f.74r



Award of the
Black Flame
badge

One of my scrolls

Animals, Flowers, Objects, Jewelry, Words



Da Costa Hours, f.203r



Da Costa Hours, f.337r



Da Costa Hours, f.337r

Portraits

- Focus on key features that make the person recognizable:
 - Clothing
 - Hair and facial hair
 - Heraldry
 - Favorite objects
 - Pets
- Be aware of religious symbolism in exemplar (halos for saints, etc) and use cultural sensitivity.



Hastings Hours, f.68v

Links to Cited Manuscripts

- Hastings Hours
 - [The British Library, Add MS 54782](#)
- London Rothschild Hours
 - [The British Library, Add MS 35313](#)
- Da Costa Hours
 - [Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.399](#)
- The Golf Book
 - [The British Library, Add MS 24098](#)
- Breviary of Isabella of Castile
 - [The British Library, Add MS 18851](#)
- Breviary of Eleanor of Portugal
 - [Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.52](#)
- Anne Boleyn's Book of Hours
 - [The British Library, Kings MS 9](#)
- La Flora Hours
 - [National Library of Naples, Ms. I. B. 51](#)
- MS M.6
 - [Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.6](#)
- MS M.307
 - [Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.307](#)
- MS M.451
 - [Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.451](#)
- MS M.234
 - [Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.234](#)
- BNF Leber 142
 - [Bibliothèque nationale de France, Leber 142](#)
- Heures de Frédéric d'Aragon
 - [Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 10532](#)
- Grand Hours of Anne of Brittany
 - [Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 9474](#)

Resources

Free books available online from the Getty

- [illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe](#)
- [Flemish Manuscript Painting in Context: Recent Research](#)

All my class slides and handouts (including this one):

<http://cecilyofyork.com/teaching> - click Class Handouts link to go to my Google Drive folder

Thank you!

Any questions?