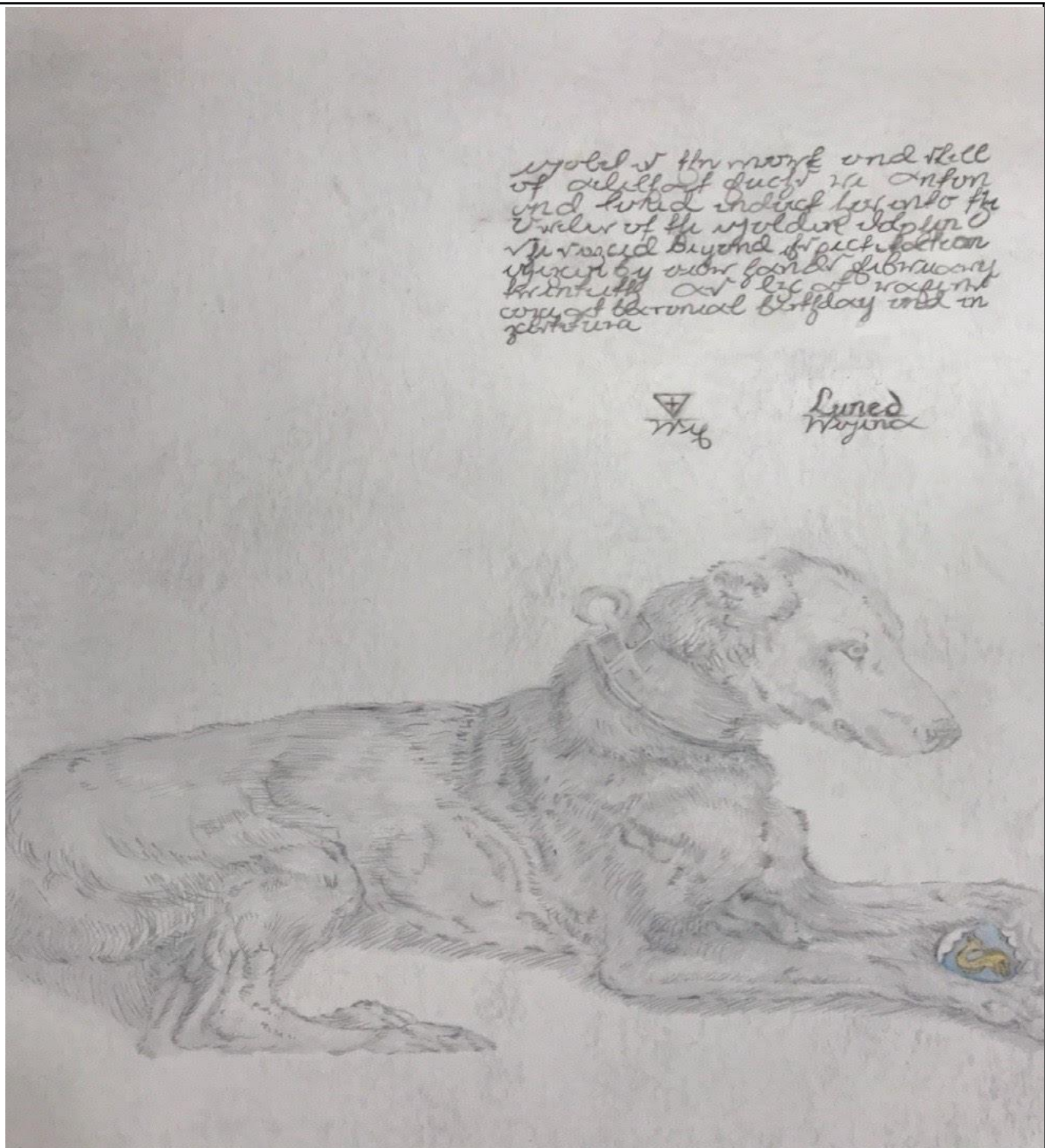


“Dog Resting”, Silverpoint Scroll With Charcoal Text

The Barony of Marinus, Kingdom Arts and Sciences Festival 2021

Mestra Esperanza Susanna Flecha (mka Suzanne Olson)

The Canton of Sudentorre

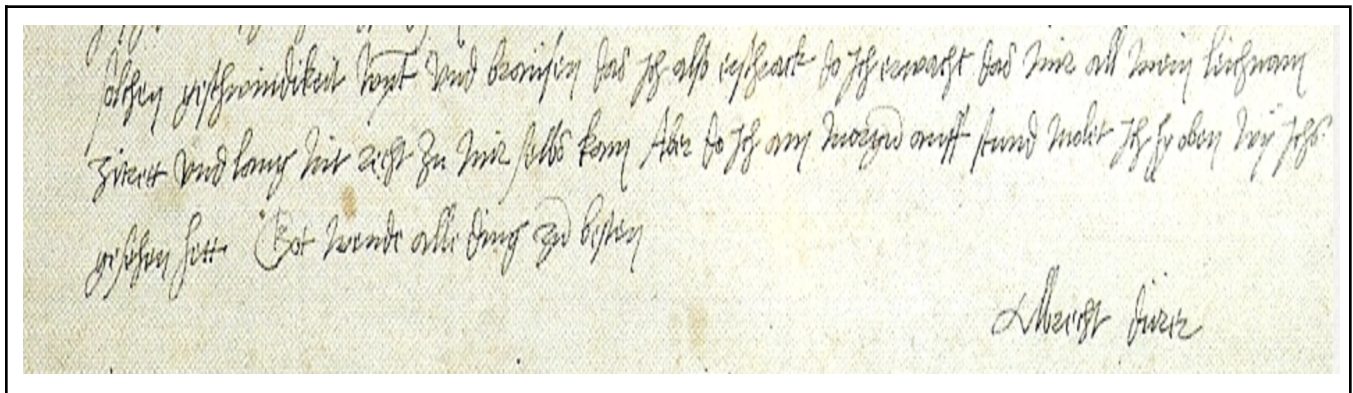


Silver Point using Silver Stylus rod done by Mestra Esperanza Susanna Flecha, February 2021

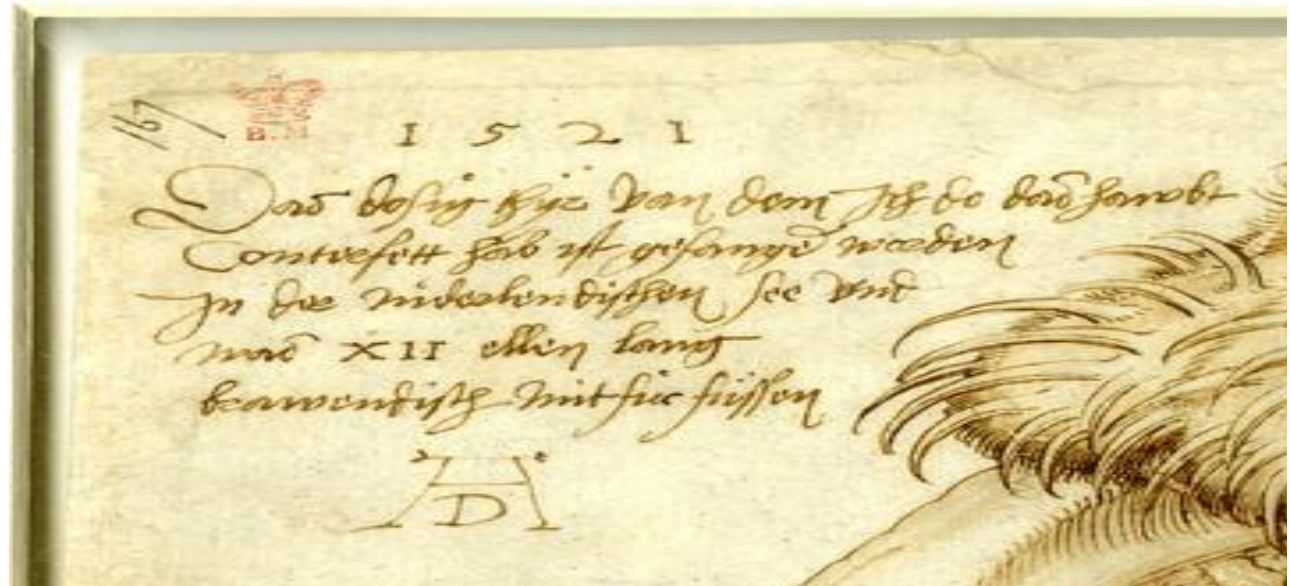
Introduction

This documentation describes the scroll that is my Kingdom Arts and Sciences Festival display entry. It is a Silverpoint drawing with a background in silverpoint, with a very little amount of charcoal for shading in a few areas. I used charcoal for the text of the scroll. I used both a Secretary hand and Kurrent/Currante hand text, which was used in Germany at the time.

I modeled the text after Durer's signature which uses a Secretary hand letter "A", as shown in Figure 1 below, and an example of his writing in Figure 2. I choose to put the text in the scroll in an area to one side of the image as I had seen in other Durer drawings, also demonstrated in Figure 2. The medallion on the scroll is colored chalk. The scroll fits a 11x14 frame, matted to an 8x10 area.



(Figure 1) Part of the text written beneath "Dream Vision (Apocalyptic Dream): Albrecht Durer, 1525"¹



(Figure 2) Close up of handwriting from Head of a Walrus, Albrecht Durer, 1521²

¹ Dream Vision, (Apocalyptic Dream): Albrecht Durer, 1525 Watercolour on paper, 30x43cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

² Head of a Walrus, Albrecht Durer, 1521, Pen and brown ink, with watercolour, The British Museum, London

The exemplar I used for this scroll is the Silverpoint drawing of “Dog resting; lying in profile to right, wearing a collar with ring,” from 1520-1521, by Albrecht Durer. He created this piece in Aachen, Germany. It is part of one of several animal studies from his trip.³

The original piece is shown in Figure 3 below. The Albrecht Durer Silverpoint is a Silverpoint drawing over traces of an under drawing of carbon black, which the British Museum believes to be charcoal.⁴ The Silverpoint is on a pale pink prepared paper. The original piece is 12.3 cm x 17.5 cm or 4.48 inches x 6.88 inches.



(Figure 3.) Dog resting, lying in profile to right, wearing a collar with ring, Silver Point⁵

³ WUSTL Digital Gateway Image Collections and Exhibitions,
<http://omeka.wustl.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/durnatureworks/animals/dogresting>

⁴ https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1848-1125-3

⁵ https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1848-1125-3

About Silverpoint

Silverpoint, more broadly termed “metalpoint”, is a writing and artistic medium which was used throughout Europe in the 1400s and reached its height of popularity in the Renaissance period. Artists who used silverpoint include Jan van Eyck, Leonardo da Vinci, Albrecht Durer, Filippino Lippi and Raphael.

This medium makes use of a soft metal in stylus to mark on prepared surfaces. It had been used during the 11th through the 14th century to make marks on vellum (animal skin). This medium can be used for detailed works as it is incredibly sensitive and delicate. Drawing with the lightest of touches will make a mark on the prepared silverpoint substrate. The Silverpoint medium has the benefits of not smudging, unlike charcoal, that was another drawing medium of that time.

The prepared substrate used for Silverpoint is called “grounds”. “Il Libro dell’Arte,” written by Cennino Cennini circa 1400 describes how “grounds were made from nine coats of pulverized, burned bones, combined with animal skin glue, white lead and saliva or oils, makes a suitable surface for marking with a silver stylus.”⁶

A variety of substrates were used for Silverpoint grounds such as wood, paper and parchment. Grounds were usually off-white, but other colored pigments were sometimes added.⁷

Apprenticeships in 15th Century Florence included learning Silverpoint for a couple of different reasons. It gave them the skills they would need to produce preparatory drawings for larger works.⁸ Second, using Silverpoint was economical. Apprentice drawings could be scrapped off, the grounds could be recoated again for a new work. In addition, a metal in the stylus is less time consuming than chalk or a quill.⁹

Each type of metal point has its own chemical reaction over time so the artist's work will change color and have a tarnished look on the drawing material.

- Silver produces a brownish/black oxidation.
- Copper produces a greenish tone.
- Brass produces a light black oxidation.

⁶ Cennino Cennini's *Il Libro dell'Arte*, a new English translation and commentary with Italian transcript, Laura Broecke 2015

⁷ Cennino Cennini's *Il Libro dell'Arte*, a new English translation and commentary with Italian transcript, Laura Broecke 2015

⁸ Dreyer, Peter “A Forgotten Drawing by Perugino” *The Burlington Magazine* 139, no.1132

⁹ *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Renaissance*, edited by Michael Wyatt, Cambridge University Press

This oxidation varies by length of time and given the right local conditions, copper usually starts to oxidize within one to two months. Silver oxidizes at a slower rate of four to six months. Gold and platinum can be used but they are considered hard metals and are without oxidation.

Silver Point's decline came about after graphite was discovered in England around 1560.¹⁰ The first graphite pencil is documented to 1565. Given the ability to erase graphite without having to create a new ground, artists moved away from Silver Point techniques.

Two original Silverpoint drawings are shown below in Figures 4 and 5:



Figure 4: Studies of Christ at the Column, Lilippino Lippi, 1482, Metalpoint, heightened with white gouache, J Paul Getty Museum¹¹



Figure 5: Drawing of the Codex Vallardi (*Étude d'un buste de jeune garçon à tête rasée*), 15th Century, currently in The Louvre, Paris¹²

Tools and Materials Used for My Silverpoint Scroll

- A silverpoint sterling silver stylus rod, .09mm and 2mm size

¹⁰ <https://pencils.com/pages/the-history-of-the-pencil>

¹¹ <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/335/filippino-lippi-standing-saint-recto-studies-of-christ-at-the-column-a-nude-from-behind-and-various-figures-verso-italian-about-1482/>

¹² <http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/fo/images-fo/d0003099-000.jpg>

- Pretreated Silver Point paper size 11x14
- Lightbox
- Charcoal pencil

Method Used to Make Image

1. The exemplar image was modified to be the right size for the scroll.
2. I had to print the image using mainly red ink to have it show through enough on the lightbox.
3. I used my silverpoint stylus to trace the larger image outline.
4. I added details of the image after the image was drawn on the Silver Point paper. I was able to achieve details of shadowing by adding in larger sections of silverpoint with a less sharpened silver point edge, combined with very small detailed silverpoint lines, such as in the dog's face, and collar and fur. A very small amount of charcoal was used for shading on the dogs back and the fur under the collar.
5. To create the background the silver point was rolled using the length of the pencil and not the sharp edge to add color. This will mimic the original look over time adding oxidation in the background.
6. A very sharp medium charcoal pencil was used for the text of the scroll and colored chalk pencils used for the medallion.
7. Since this is a scroll, I sprayed Krylon Fixatif on the text to ensure that the text would not smudge or smear if touched.

Silver used for Silverpoint will turn brown over time. My work has not been around long enough to see the changes though. It is also possible that because it is a pre-coated modern paper it either will not change or will take longer to change colors.

Recommendations

The recommendations that I have for anybody who wants to learn to use Silverpoint are:

- Sharpen your rods periodically. The sharper they stay the crisper the lines. Make sure you get fine grit sandpaper to use to sharpen the stylus rods so you can get a crisp line. Fine grit sandpaper also helps not eat way too much material from the rods in your stylus.
- I recommend starting on the precoated paper as I did so you can start project work earlier than making your own grounds or applying commercial grounds to paper and working through the application process.
- Some Silverpoint materials are only sent from England. If you would like your supplies sooner rather than later, make sure the supplier is in the US.

Bibliography

1. The Web Gallery of Art, wga.hu, https://www.wga.hu/html_m/d/durer/2/16/2/12dream.html
2. The British Museum, TheBritishmuseum.org,
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_SL-5261-167
3. WUSTL Digital Gateway Image Collections and Exhibitions, omeka.wustl.edu
<http://omeka.wustl.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/durernatureworks/animals/dogresting>
4. The British Museum, TheBritishmuseum.org,
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1848-1125-3
5. Cennino Cennini's Il Libro Dell'Arte, A new English Translation and commentary with Italian transcript, Lara Broecke
6. Dreyer, Peter "A Forgotten Drawing by Perugino" The Burlington Magazine 139, no.1132
7. The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Renaissance, edited by Michael Wyatt, Cambridge University Press
8. The History of the pencil, www.pencil.com, <https://pencils.com/pages/the-history-of-the-pencil>
9. The J Paul Getty Museum, www.getty.edu,
<http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/335/filippino-lippi-standing-saint-recto-studies-of-christ-at-the-column-a-nude-from-behind-and-various-figures-verso-italian-about-1482/>
10. Collection of the graphic arts from The Louvre, <https://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr>,
<http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/fo/images-fo/d0003099-000.jpg>