

Silver Crescent for Erzsabet Csesetvei



I took a short break from scribing to work on some things around our house. Specifically, I wanted to redo my art room. I painted my room, rearranged the furniture a bit, and made it a place of peace and inspiration.

Once I had my room where I could work again, I asked for new scribal assignments. Never to disappoint, our wonderful Tyger Signet gave me an option of three different types of scrolls. I chose Hungarian because it is an area I have not explored yet.

Having never been exposed to Hungarian art before, I dove in and began researching for an exemplar. This turned into a deeper dive than I had expected.

King Matthias Hunyadi of Hungary (Corvina) ruled between 1458 and 1490. In addition to his renowned military career and reform of the kingdom's political and economic structures, King

Matthias patronized art and science. He promoted individuals for their abilities instead of their social status.

King Matthias had connections with Italy on many fronts. Matthias was aligned politically with the papacy and the Italian states concerning the Turkish wars. There was a history of Hungarian kings being granted the right to distribute ecclesiastical dignitaries. Matthias' second marriage to Beatrice of Aragon, princess of Naples, further cemented his connections with the Italian state. All these connections strongly influenced Matthias' interest in Italian art and the humanistic movement.

During Matthias' reign, Hungary became the first land outside Italy to promote and embrace the Renaissance. (Waldman)(Kubinyi). According to Joseph Connors in his forward to acts of a conference held at Villa i Tatti, the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, in Florence, on 6–8 June 2007:

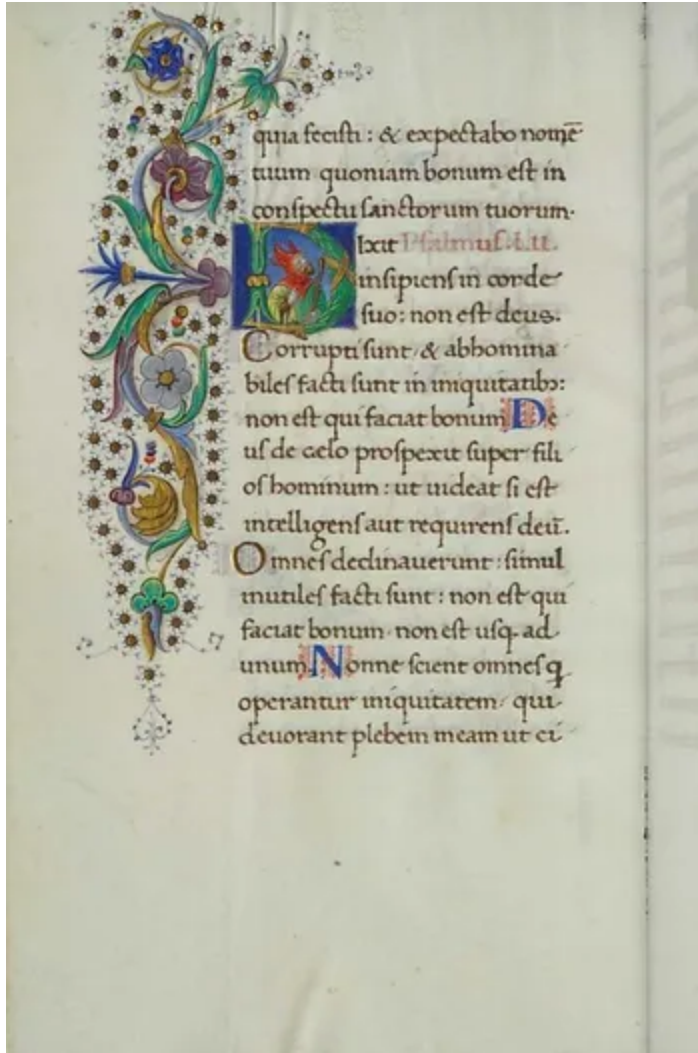
Latinate humanism of the sort that had been developing in the papal court at Rome and in the Florentine chancery was transplanted to Hungary, the first country outside the Italian peninsula (and the Venetian possessions of Dalmatia) to receive and nurture the Italian Renaissance. (Farbaky)

At the time of his death, it is estimated that there were between 2000 and 2500 codices in Matthias' library. According to Katalin Barlai and Agnes Boronkai "with regards to size and topical wealth, it was surpassed only by the Vatican Library." (Barlai & Boronkai) The library consisted of about three thousand codices (books) which housed four to five thousand works. Following the Turkish conquest of Hungary that occurred after Matthias' death, the codices were moved to Istanbul. Today, there are about 220 corvinas that are housed in libraries across Europe and the United States. Corvina. "The Project." (*Corvina*)

For over a century and a half, the goal of the Corvina Project has been to collect the corvinas from around the world. The National Széchenyi Library has uploaded 93 of the codices on the Corvina website which is located at: <https://corvina.hu/en/front/> I found this the best place to continue my research as all of the codices are located in one place. This website also has one of the most fascinating and educational, interactive 3-D walkthroughs of an exhibition: <https://exhibitioncorvina2018.oszk.hu/>.

So, why is all of this history important, and why did it make my research to find an exemplar more challenging? Because Matthias was devoted to the humanistic movement and, in particular, Italian art, it took time to review the codices in the virtual Bibliotheca to find a piece that had been created in Hungary.

This was important to me because the recipient's persona is Hungarian, and I wanted to recreate an authentic Hungarian piece. I finally settled on a page from Psalterium Davidis which was made between 1479 and 1481:



<https://corvina.hu/kepnezegeto/index.php?corvina=codguelf39aug4o&lang=en&img=162#162>

While the illumination was done by the Florentine Master, Francesco Rosselli, the volume was made in Buda. Previous research claimed the manuscript was made in Italy. In the Corvina Library workshop in Buda exhibition guide, curator Edina Zsupán opined that the volume was created in Buda:

That is supported by the quality of the parchment, Francesco Rosselli's presence in Buda between 1478 and 1481, and certain features of the binding (painted and gilded Buda-style fore-edge). It is especially relevant that the Lombardian illuminator who painted the inner initials of the manuscript is identical to the master of the Italian initial of the Matthias Gradual. But there also elements of content that point towards Buda: the calendar of the Psalter follows in its entirety the rite order of the Zagreb diocese, although with some modifications that may be Paulite characteristics. The Hungarian saints are highlighted with red ink. In this manuscript it is especially well noticeable that originally there was a crown on the lion's head that a later intervention tried to erase. (Zsupán)

One of the next choices I needed to make was what types of gold I wanted to use. From looking at the exemplar, it appeared to have gold leaf as well as gold shell. Luckily, the Corvina website had a video of Istvan Molnar, the book binder-master gilder of the Hungarian national library recreating a Corvina page https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BB0lj_qEoo&t=6s. Although the piece painted by Mr. Molnar was not from the corvina which was the origin of the exemplar I was using, it was made around the same time (the 1480s) and was also made in Hungary. Further, the styles were very similar. Therefore, I decided that my initial impressions of gold leaf and shell gold were most likely correct.

The original manuscript was made on parchment. Due to the cost and difficulty of obtaining a large piece of animal parchment, I used Pergamenata instead. Pergamenata is a machine-made paper that looks like parchment, but at a fraction of the cost and it is readily available.

Egg tempera was most likely the paint used on the original manuscript. The illuminator, Rosselli, was known to use tempera and oil in his painting, an example of which is his The View of Florence from the South West, which he completed in 1495. (Rosselli). Egg Tempera was also used on <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437509>

To make tempera paint, egg yolk is mixed with powdered pigment. This method has been used since Ancient Egypt. (Saar-Agustsson). Although I have ground pigment myself once, I am very happy to use commercial paints. Gouache is also an opaque paint like the tempera, but the binder is gum arabic instead of egg yolk. I also prefer gouache because it can be reconstituted with water. For this project, I used gouache from Windsor & Newton, Holbein, and Greenleaf & Blueberry.

I usually prefer to do the calligraphy first when a piece has gold leaf. However, the words were with a translator, and I did not have time to wait for the words and do the artwork. Since most of the artwork was on the left of the page, I knew I could begin the art and still protect it when I needed to do the calligraphy.

I started by making the gilded gold dots and started on the illumination. One of my past posts about gilding can be found [here](#). I also had shell gold that I made in a class at Pennsic last year that I used for the flat gold. Progress piece:



I continued working on the illumination until I received the translation for the words. I could not put the initial letter in until the calligraphy was laid out.



I did learn a new illumination skill when making this scroll. I have shied away from crowquill nibs in the past as I found them to drip or spray ink, or just not flow the way I wanted. I also really

detest using micron pens as I don't feel they give the effect I am looking for. I ordered Tachikawa Manga Pen Nib Maru Pen T77 Soft and they made a huge difference! I was able to outline and place the lines around the gold dots. I also added the flourishes in between the dots and at the bottom. Although it may not be visible in the below picture, the flourishes are actually in a dark purple, which is consistent with the exemplar.



My lord, Montgomery Josh, wrote the words, and translation was by Kolosvari Arpadne Julia

Ahogy a hadsereg a katonák tele gyomrán menetel, a királyi udvar a köznép munkáján fut. Uralkodóként azért fénylünk, mert láthatatlan segédeink fáradoznak, hogy jó időben jó helyen legyünk, helyesen felöltözve. Csesztvei Erzsébet, ma ezen munkáért idézünk elébünk.

Példásan adtad az idődet atyáinknak, királyi udvaruk részeként. De nem csak itt, hanem Kelet-Országon kívüli udvarban is szolgáltál, ahol a király látta, hogy a vidám és nyugodt jelenlétedet mindenki örömet fogadja.

Kelet népe dicsér. Idegen királyok dicsérnek. Ezért tehát mi, Matthew és Fiamuin, Kelet-Ország uralkodói, dicséretül az Ezüst Sarló Rend tagjává teszünk, a Vízkereszt-napi ünnepen Anglespur nevű tartományunkban, Januáriusz tizennyolcadik napján, az ötven-kilencedik évben. Erről adjuk levelünket mint kezünk írását emlékezetül mindeneknek.

Just as the army marches on the full stomachs of its soldiers, the royal court runs on the work of the populace. As rulers, we shine because our invisible assistants make sure that we arrive in the right place at the right time, properly dressed. Erzsébet Csesztvei, today we summon you before us for this work. You have given your time in an exemplary manner to our forefathers, as part of their royal court. You have served not only here, but also in courts outside the Eastrealm, where the king saw that your cheerful and calm presence was welcomed by all.

The people of the East praise you. Foreign kings praise you. Therefore we, Matthew and Fiamuin, rulers of the Eastrealm, praise you by making you a member of the Order of the Silver Crescent, on the Twelfth Night celebration in our holding called Anglespur, on the eighteenth day of January in the fifty-ninth year. As a reminder to all, we give this our letter as the writing of our hands.

Next, it was time to do the calligraphy. As this was a different hand than I am used to, I studied the exemplar and noticed predominant letters for the hand, such as the "g" and the long "s".

I researched the calligrapher, Gundisalvus Hispanus. Before becoming the Bishop of Barcelona, he was a scribe for clients including Lorenzo de' Medici and Matthias Corvinus. (Gundisalvus Hispanus). This website provided more samples of Hispanus' work:
<https://spotlight.vatlib.it/humanist-library/feature/gundisalvus-hispanus>.

I then turned to my calligraphy books as I could not identify the exact hand. I finally located the hand, identified as the Humanistic Minuscule, in Calligraphy & Illumination by Patricia Lovett.

The Humanists wanted a hand that was close to ancient Rome and Greek. They chose a style used during the reign of Charlemagne that was a clear and easily readable print. In her blog, Patricia Lovett writes:

The Humanists adapted it – they made the script more upright, they added feet to the minims (sometimes emphasised too much!) and used classical Roman Capitals to complete the impressive look. The appearance on the page is almost of printed text when it is written as clearly and precisely as this.



<https://www.patricialovett.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Screenshot-2023-12-13-at-17.00.31-e1702486966179.png>

(Lovett, P. (2023))

Armed with multiple versions of the hand, I was able to practice the calligraphy and then place it on the scroll. The final steps including adding the initial letter, the Silver Crescent badge, and the other capital letters in the text, along with the accompanying decorations.



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élénk. Példálan adiad

az idődet átváinknak királyi udvaruk rész
eként. De nem csak itt hanem Kelet-Országban
Kivüli udvarban is szolgálunk ahol a király
látta hogy a vidám és nyugodt jelenlétet
mindenki örömet fogadja. Kelet-népe
dicser. Idegen királyok dicsernek.
Ezért tehát mi **M**atthew és **S**amuél

Kelet-Ország uralkodói dicéretul az
Ezüst Sárló Rend tagjává tesszunk a
Vízkereszt-napi ünnepen Angle
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tízannyolcadik napján az ötven-kilencedik
évben. Erről adjuk levelünket mint kezünk
írását emlékezetül mindeneknek.

Looking at the final piece, I do wish I had curved the initial C more instead of trying to replicate the initial D from the exemplar. Overall, though, I was very happy with the outcome. I was also pleased to have had the opportunity to learn about Hungarian history and art, and to make a new connection with Kolosvari Arpadne Julia, the translator for this piece.

I had a lot of fun doing the research and creating this scroll. I would definitely be willing to do another Hungarian scroll.

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