

# The Compass Rose

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## Tales from the Fishers School

By Creador TwyneDragon

Disclaimer: This series of articles is meant as general information on a variety of topics. They are a compilation of both fact (laws, policies, traditions) and opinion. In many cases the facts are taken from various sources (Corpora, Kingdom Law, etc) and are paraphrased to simplify and lessen the length of the explanation. The opinions are my own and are in no way meant to offend, diminish or suppress anybody else's opinion, laws, policies or traditions and as with any opinion are subject to change especially when presented with a sound argument. It is my belief that everyone should form their own opinion based on what they learn and hope these articles help with that process.

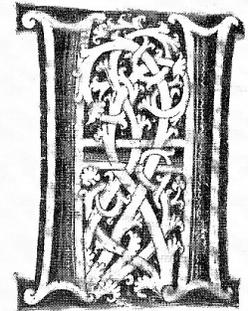
Creador TwyneDragon

# A Look at Italian White Vine

By Master Creador TwyneDragon

For Aethelmarc Heralds and Scribes Collegium A.S. 44

Italian White Vine or white stem known as *biancha gir* in Italy, is a pattern of interlacing vine stems on a colored background. This design which started in Florence in the early fifteenth century was mistakenly taken from twelfth century central Italian foliated initials (Fig. 1) which were thought to have been from the classic period. During the humanistic movement of the Renaissance artists of the time tried to revive styles from antiquity. White Vine often appeared with humanistic insular called '*lettera antica*' in the period or with humanistic rotunda script, which were developed about the same time as this decorative design. White Vine started initial



*Fig. 1 A twelfth century central Italian foliated initial mistaken for*

as historiated initials (Fig. 2) eventually developing into very ornate borders whose influence could be seen throughout Europe.



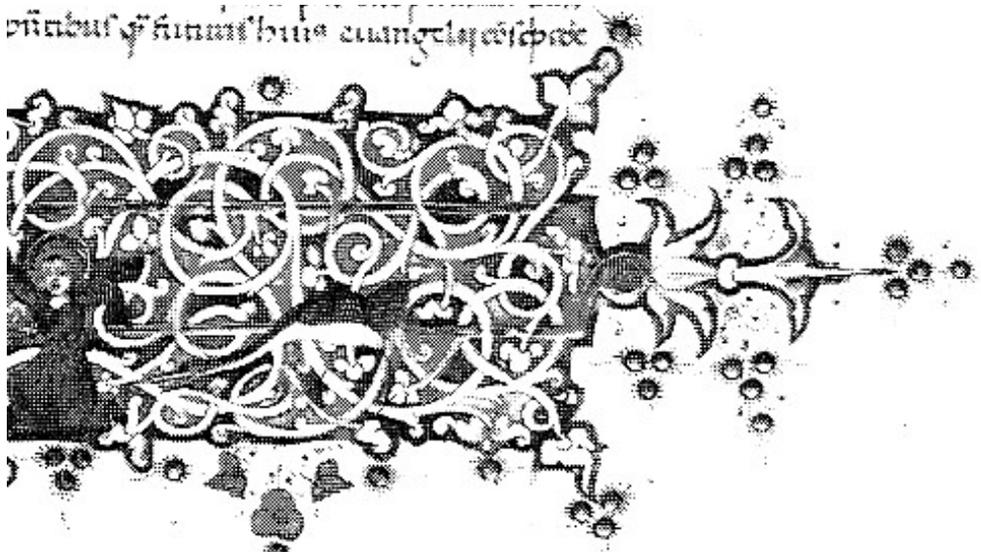
*Fig. 2 One of the earliest examples of an Italian white vine historiated initial, a manuscript by Giovanni Aretino completed soon after 1417 in*

### **The Basics of White Vine**

need to look at the elements that make up that style. Starting with the interlacing vines, drawn with a pen, these are made to appear as grape vines and mainly left as flat parchment or paper with occasional pen flourishes to make them appear more natural, rarely these vines were shaded with sepia or yellow ochre. The intertwining of

the vines follows the same rules as that of Celtic knot work, that is once a vine goes under another vine it goes over the next, though this may be interrupted by creature, bars or letters within the border. Though the vines may split a varying intervals and many have space filler along them they all end in differing style of fanciful leaves, the intricacy of these leaves and fillers became more extravagant (Fig 3) as the style developed and the skill of the artists creating it increased.

The next aspect of this style is the eventual characteristic colors used. In early works there were various colors used ranging from aquamarine to purple or lavender. As the design became more stylized, the traditional ultramarine with white dots, a primary bright red with white dots and an emerald or sap green with yellow dots were used. The ultramarine was typically used to edge the border of the vine and to separate important sections, while the red and green were used alternately to fill the



*Fig. 3 An enlarged example of White Vine showing more intricate leaves, fillers and pen flourishes. Note the addition of bars, putti, a*

spaces between the vines. Other colors were used for putti, creatures, flowers and miniatures that would be worked in amongst the vines and follow the standard pallet found throughout the Renaissance. Some portions such as bars, filler and letters would have been gilded with gold, increasingly as the style developed.

Having started as primarily foliated initials, the design changed to include a single sided border by the middle of the fifteenth century, to a three sided border and finally to a surrounding border, with very ornate and stylized repetitive vine work, while retaining the basic elements seen in earlier examples.

The last element of any White Vine piece is the script which was used. Some examples show a rotunda script more commonly known as littera bastarda; most used a script called humanistic insular, was begun to be developed in the late fourteenth century and was prevalent by 1418 and known as littera antica, because it was a reworking of the Carolingian script. Most works had a header done in majuscule in a red ink with the remainder of the minuscule script written in black following a foliated initial, with majuscule letters used only when needed. From all evidence the use of red ink in the body of the work only was seen in works using the rotunda script.

Combined, these elements make up a style which is both easily recognizable and enchanting.

## **Recreating White Vine Illumination**

When recreating an illumination style it is important to get as many examples of that style so you can better understand the elements of that style. When recreating white vine it will help if you get examples from the

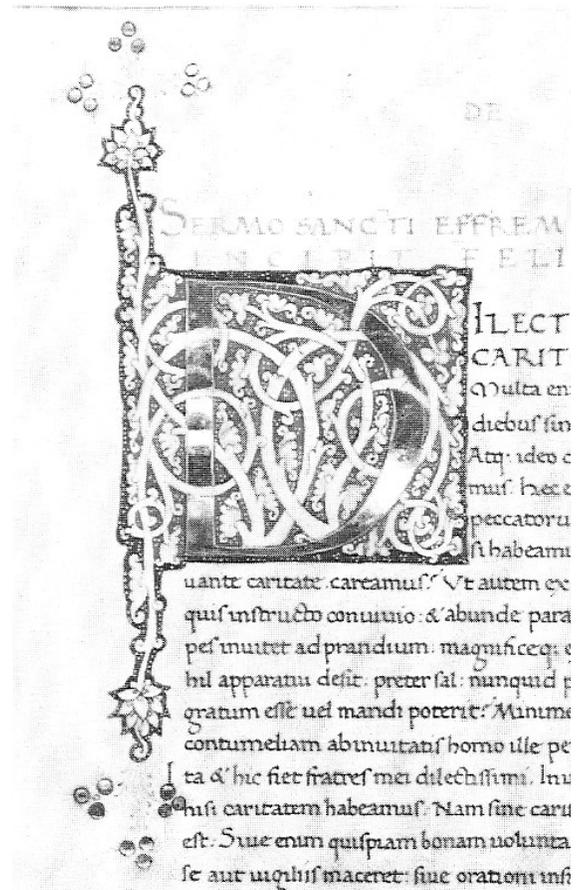
same work. A number of excellent examples can be found in some of the sources listed at the end of this handout. Once you have selected an example to work from, you should look for the rules for the design elements listed above.

The first element that should be considered for creating any scroll is the layout of the page (see Fig. 4). What is the basic layout of your example? Does it have a border, is it single sided, three sided or does it surround the text?

What are the proportions of your borders? Remember to follow this general proportion when laying out your scroll, but remember that they may need to be adjusted to appear balanced on the paper.

Does your example have any historiated initials and will they work with your text layout and design? Remember that most examples of white vine have a majuscule header, which appears inside any border but before any illuminated initials are found. You can eliminate this header if you choose, but remember to adjust your layout to appear correct as this will change the weight of your design.

Once you have determined the general layout of your scroll, i.e. the border(s), text block and illuminated initials, you will need to study the most recognizable design element of white vine illumination. The first thing that should be determined is that if the vines are laid out free style or do they follow a repetitive pattern. Remember when laying out the vines that they follow the over and under rule and you should check if this rule applies to the addition of bars, initials or other design elements. If the vines in your example are free style (such as in Fig. 4) check to see how frequently they split, how often are fillers and at what point do they



*Fig. 4 by Antonio Mario, Florence, Italy 1448. The layout elements of this example area a foliated and gilded initial with ascending and descending elements, a Humanistic Insular majuscule header in red ink, with the primary text in Humanistic Insular minuscule in black ink, Note the proportion of*

check to see how often the pattern repeats, how frequent are any loops in the pattern and is there a common shape to the pattern. Many of the repetitive patterns have one rule for one side of the border and another for the other sides. The important part about laying out the vine pattern is learning the design rules within your example. In both the free style and repetitive patterns you will need to look closely at the fillers, those little buds, and leaves, etc which branch off of the main vine to fill in large areas and to break up the colors. These fillers take many different forms from example to example; some are simply loops, while others become mushrooms or very ornate leaves. Only use those fillers found from your example, though many examples have more than one type of filler. This rule also applies to the ends of the vines. In some of the early examples (see Fig. 2) the vine will end in a simple leaf, while in latter designs (such as in Fig. 3) will have elaborate pen flourish leaves. It can be enjoyable to add your own designs once you learn the elements of these leaves. Another point of note when examining the vines of your example is to look for any design elements on the vines, some of the artisans tried to make them look more natural by adding details when the vine splits, showing vines tied together and occasionally having bumps or growths in them. Some examples also have vines that were shaded. Look carefully to be sure that this shading was painted on and not just the original ink fading.

Many examples incorporate roundels for adding in miniatures or arms. Many of these roundels are held up by putti also called cherubs or other angelic creatures. It is also common for later examples to include creatures amongst the vines from birds to monkeys, deer, rabbits and cats. If your example has the creatures, check to see if they affect the over and under rule when using them and you can switch them with any other creature which may be appropriate to the recipient. Another design element that maybe used are bars, sometimes gilded, within the vines or surrounding the border. Some other decorations that may be seen are flowers, the famous spider fillers (Fig 3) and even grotesqueries. Be sure to note how these design elements interact with all of the other elements.

The next portion of the design that needs to be considered is the color aspects of the example. Some of the early examples used only one color in their design and some can be found with different color combinations from aquamarine and lavender to purple and dark blue. As the style of white vine developed the colors became a designated set of ultramarine or lapis, a bright primary red and a brilliant emerald or sap green. Every example has a prescribed placement of these colors, many times the ultramarine surrounds the outer edge of the vine work and is used to separate sections of the

design, while the red and green are used to compliment each other in alternating sections of space between the inner vines. Each example of white vine illumination has its own rule for the placement of color. Examine your example closely to determine what it is. Using this rule correctly will allow you to alter the design while keeping the overall work appearing correct. You can change the colors for the scroll you are doing to make it more meaningful to the recipient, but be sure to choose three colors with similar contrast to those used in your example and use the same rules for their placement or otherwise the end work will not appear to have the balance and aesthetics as the original. Another aspect to the colors is the use of dots, white on the blue and red, yellow on the green. These dots became the standard on all examples of white vine by the middle of the fifteenth century. The placement of these dots varied from example to example, but mainly were done in sets of threes, three in a row along the edges and in a triangular pattern in the center areas. It should be noted that in a few examples these dots appear to be small circles, though this may be due to the paint and how it dried. When painting these dots you should use the same paint consistency as if you were painting white work.

The final element to be covered in this hand out is the text or script. Though some examples of white vine illumination use a rotunda script also known as a littera bastarda, the majority use a humanistic insular or humanistic roman script. How the text is laid out on the page also helps define a scroll as being white vine. As previously mentioned most have a majuscule header done in read ink followed by an illuminated initial which starts as the beginning of the primary text. Some of these text blocks are in a single block while others are seen with two columns. All of them show that the text block follows a straight edge slightly inset from the border on the left hand side of the page and attempts to do the same on the left hand even by stopping in the middle of a word and beginning on the next line. To make your scroll look more accurate you may want to try and produce your own exemplar script from your source, or you could use one found in various books on the subject. An exemplar script with notes is given at the end of this handout. As with any other design element you need to try to discover the rules pertaining to the art you are trying to recreate.

With practice, observation and attention to details you can eventually apply some of the ideas discussed here so that you may be able to adapt examples of white vine illumination to meet your needs and to make it more meaningful and appropriate to the recipient of your scroll.

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ISBN 0-8020-4346-1

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Creador TwyneDragon  
Modernly known as  
Doug Dillon

### **Officers of the Shire of Kings Crossing**

Seneschal—Sven Tyrvisson mka James Boyd

Herald—Willahalm Barenjager

Knight Marshal—Sven Tyrvisson mka James Boyd

Minister of Arts & Sciences—Master Creador Twynedragon mka  
Douglas Dillon

Chronicler—sionn, the lost mka John Kyle

Exchequeer—Lady Chi Anling

Chatelaine—Lady Nandi of Kings Crossing

Webminister—Yamamoto no Satataro Hikaru mka McPherson

Kings Crossing holds its monthly meetings at the Scenery Hill Community Center @ Hilltop School St, Scenery Hill, PA at 7pm on the first Friday of each month.

Fighter practices are on alternate Fridays at 7pm at the Community Center.

Fencing Practices are held at California University in California, PA beginning at 7pm each Thursday.

Arts & Sciences meetings are held on alternate Fridays at the Community Center, beginning at 7pm.

This is **The Compass Rose**, a publication of the Shire of Kings Crossing of the Society for Creative Anachronism. **The Compass Rose** is available from: John Kyle, 1913 Decatur Ave, Wheeling, WV 26003. It is not a corporate publication of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. and does not delineate SCA policies.

**The Compass Rose** is currently available on the Kings Crossing website at no charge.

Meeting notes of the Shire of Kings Crossing, July 2, 2010

Officers' Reports

Chatelaine

Thanked all who were instrumental in the success of her wedding. In particular, Master Creador for preparing the feast. His survival was an added bonus.

Nandi's device has been approved at the Society level.

Herald

Not present. Devices and names have been recently submitted.

#### Marshal

Not much fighting has happened lately. He has been unavailable for practices. There will be fighting July 2 & 23.

#### Exchequer

Not present. Only \$5 in donations were received in June. A check was sent to Bethlehem Twp for the July rent. Still awaiting amount to be received from War Practice breakfast.

The Shire has a positive balance in checking.

#### Chronicler

If anyone wants a hard copy of the newsletter, please contact him.

He will discuss arrangements to have the newsletter appear on the website rather than emailing it to the list with the Webminister.

#### A&S

The A&S meeting last month was a success.

The next meeting will be "Dancing with Scissors" on July 16 at the Community Center. There will be period Western European dancing as well as a Sewing Circle.

He stipulated "Shame on you" if you don't participate in some form of A&S at Pennsic

#### Webminister

The website is up and running. People are Googling the site already.

The Shire by-laws will be posted on the site so prior to their much needed major overhaul.

#### Land Agent

25 gentles are pre-registered in the Shire camp for Pennsic. A donation of \$6 per head by Monday of Land Grab week (first week) is needed to cover costs for firewood and propane for the Shire camp.

There will be a get together at the Shire camp at 7pm , Friday, August 6. That will include a celebration of Elizabeth's birthday.

#### Seneschal

Things are generally going smoothly.

When officers send reports to the Seneschal they should cc: the Chronicler

He does have minions. When his mundane contact ability is minimal or less he uses the Chatelaine to communicate to the Shire. He asks for her to be cc:'d so she can get communications to him.

#### Other Business

Gryffin's Keep is having an al-Hafla event on the 10<sup>th</sup>.  
Daria is joining the ranks of the Chirurgeons!

#### Upcoming Events

July

9-11 Pax Interruptus, Barony of Thescorre  
10 A Day out of Time, demo, Canton of Angel's Keep  
10 Prepare for Glory!, Barony of Blackstone Mountain  
10-11 A Midsummer al-Hafla, Shire of Gryffin's Keep  
16-18 St Swithin's Bog Investiture, Barony of St Swithin's  
Bog  
16-18 Viking Village X, Shire of Heronter

July 31—August 15 **Pennsic War!!!**

August

20-22 Youngsville Corn Festival demo, Shire of Heronter  
21 Scottish Festival demo, Barony of Rhydderich Hael  
28 Post-Pennsic Picnic, Barony-Marche of the Debatable

Lands

September

3-6 A Shoote in the Wyldewood, Barony of Delftwood  
10-12 Chilrens' Crusade II, Canton of Steltonwald

September, continued

11 Bards and Bows, Shire of Sterlynge Vayle  
11 Summer's End, Canton of Beau Fleuve  
18 Fall Coronation of Duncan and Ilish  
24-26 Metalsmith's Symposium, Kingdom of Atlantia  
24-26 Harvest Raid XVII, Shire of Heronter  
24-26 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Siege of Glengary, Shire of Sylvan Glen  
25 Battlements and Berserkers III, Shire of Wynterset  
25 Pirates Adventure, Shire of Courtlandslot

This listing of events is not official. Official event information may be found at the Kingdom of Aethelmearc website:

<http://www.aethelmearc.org/>

as well as in the *Aestel*.

There are sometimes events of interest in the neighboring Middle Kingdom.