

HERALDIC ART USING A DIGITAL BRUSH

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By Steve Cowan

As an Associate Member of reading the quarterly more about heraldry and the addition to heraldic art there research, for instance, and interesting personal topics exploring the various heraldic interests and background of its members.



the Society of Heraldic Arts I enjoy journal, The Heraldic Craftsman, to learn various media of its depiction. In

are associated aspects, like framing or



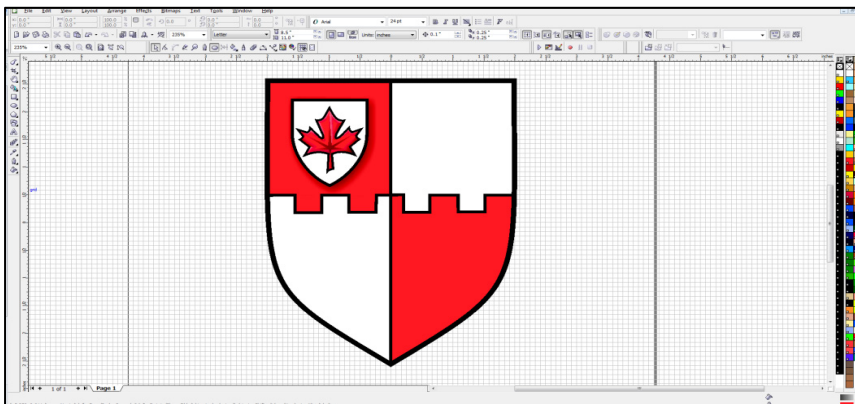
One recent article, from Issue number 86 of September 2014, covered a medium that I specialize in, and how it applies to heraldry. The article, by prominent heraldic artist Kevin Arkinstall, H.S.D.A.D., F.S.H.A., is titled “Heraldic Design and the Digital Age”. As Mr. Arkinstall writes:

“In short, for the craftsman who sees heraldry as an applied art, the computer should be embraced as another powerful and versatile tool, speeding up some tasks and enabling a wider range of applications for our favoured subject.”

I have fellow RHSC member Laurie Patten, F.R.H.S.C., S.H.A., to blame for having me put aside my paint brush to take up the computer mouse and the challenge of learning heraldic digital art. What a lot of fun! Before I met Laurie I had been using Microsoft Paint Brush to fix or recolour images. It was Laurie who convinced me (I say “forced”) to put aside my brushes and tubes of paint and to stare at a computer screen and not at an easel.

I have been using digital art with immense pleasure and its use has enabled me to expand my heraldic art to encompass a wide range of projects and artistic applications. I use version 13 of CorelDRAW for all my heraldic artwork. While this program has now evolved up to version 18, the edition I am using has more than enough features for my needs. I have arranged my own pallet of colours to include heraldic tinctures and metals. The program allows me to apply all aspects of colour theory to create hues, tints and shade and their combination of tones. I can add shadow and various transparencies for a similar effect.

With the universal availability of the internet, everyone now has the ability to search online for every imaginable subject. Images can be selected for just about everything, and that includes all aspects of heraldry and its artistic media. And a multitude of images can be downloaded and manipulated. A shield, for instance, can be retrieved and merged with charges from other downloaded images. The results vary depending on the original quality of the images and the skill of the person manipulating the images. I do not consider this digital art; it is image chicanery.



Screen capture of CorelDRAW X3 and completed artwork

To me true digital art is using a computer art program and the skills of an artist to create works of art. And these original artworks can then be displayed in a wide range of uses. Rather than simply “copy-paste” a downloaded image, the computer lets me complete creative tasks quickly with a greater field of options. The digital program uses vector graphics that offers amazing clarity of line and image colour regardless of its final size. Typical downloaded images are based on raster graphics; while the original image may

look fine as is, it will pixilate or scatter and blur as it is enlarged.

I have been involved in two Society projects featuring digital art. In the Sea Cadet Badge project I was taking the image of the various badges and recreating them as a digital image. (Refer to the article SEA CADET BADGE PROJECT in the Spring 2014, volume 25, number 1 issue of the RHSC Gonfanon.) The purpose is to make clear precise images available for the sea cadet units to promote their activities and unit identity.



Original image from a scanned document



Original artwork of a new image by Steve Cowan

As an example I have shown here the before and after images of a ship's badge for TERRA NOVA. All the elements in the new image are drawn as separate components. The Emperor penguin (named Percy, by the way) now has proper colouring including the golden neck feathers. The strands in the rope coil border are individual pieces, all 36 of them, and they make a complete coil around the badge. And each strand is made of individual yarn with its own lighting effect and specular highlight to indicate the lighting is from the dexter chief, the lighting direction for heraldic art. The red maple leaves (signifying sea cadet units) and the name box are overlaid on the rope coil. To date I have done 157

new images of some 235 sea cadet badges.

The other project I worked on was the Society's Guide to Blazonry. For this joint work with Kevin Greaves and Gordon Macpherson I did the series of 69 shield illustrations that were blazoned in the various chapters of the booklet. Using digit art I could maintain a constant shape and outline of the shields. The digital program allowed me to zoom in on a charge to complete its detail and align the charges and field design elements. The program also allows for text for writing illustration labels or inserting mottos in a variety of fonts and shapes.



Figure 62



Figure 63



Figure 64

Original digital art illustrations for the RHSC publication *The Guide to Blazonry*, by Steve Cowan



Original image from the internet

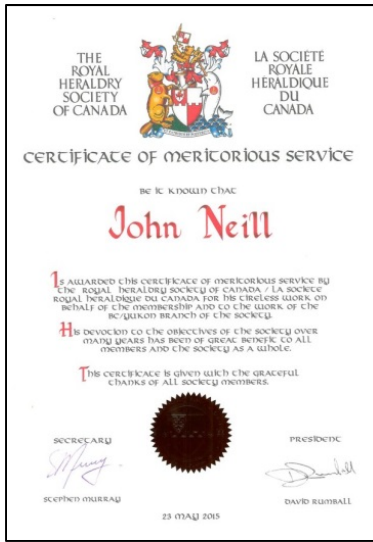


Image of digital artwork

Arms of Richard d'Apice, A.M., A.A.I.H.
President of the Australian Heraldry Society
Used with permission of the armiger.

Over to past six years I have redrawn the heraldic artwork of several armigerous members as well as designed and drawn original artwork for several individuals wanting arms. In the case of armigerous individuals this has been a matter of taking images of existing arms and recreating it in a digital program. From the digital reconstruction of their arms the armigers are provided with high quality images in JPEG format. Uses for the images range from letterhead and business cards to wall and table shields and bookplates. The digital art program has also been used to design additional heraldic items of badges, flags and standards. I used this program, for instance, to design the new badge of office for the President of the RHSC.

Besides digital arms for a variety of applications, the computer art programs can also generate high quality and very individual designs of calligraphy. Each letter can be its own piece of heraldic artwork that can be assembled to produce amazing documents. Within the Society digital calligraphy is used by the Education Program for the



Digital calligraphy by
Lesley Patten

certificates for the three levels of proficiency. Custom certificates can be generated for use on special occasions. While the result may be computer generated, the finished product can be printed in high quality of a variety of surfaces; for certificates archival hand-made papers are used.



A trio of table shields for
one armiger.
Used with permission of
Sir John Cave-Browne-Cave Bt.

Digital art in heraldry is meant to complement other heraldic media. It can no more replace the hand-painted arms on parchment or vellum than it can replace heraldic art in stained glass windows in a cathedral. The same artistic principles and heraldic rules apply to an image developed on a computer screen that apply to heraldic artwork created by traditional methods. As we now live in an online environment, having digital images of heraldic artwork available will further help achieve our collective aim to make more Canadians aware of heraldry emblems as signs both of our personal identity and of our national heritage.