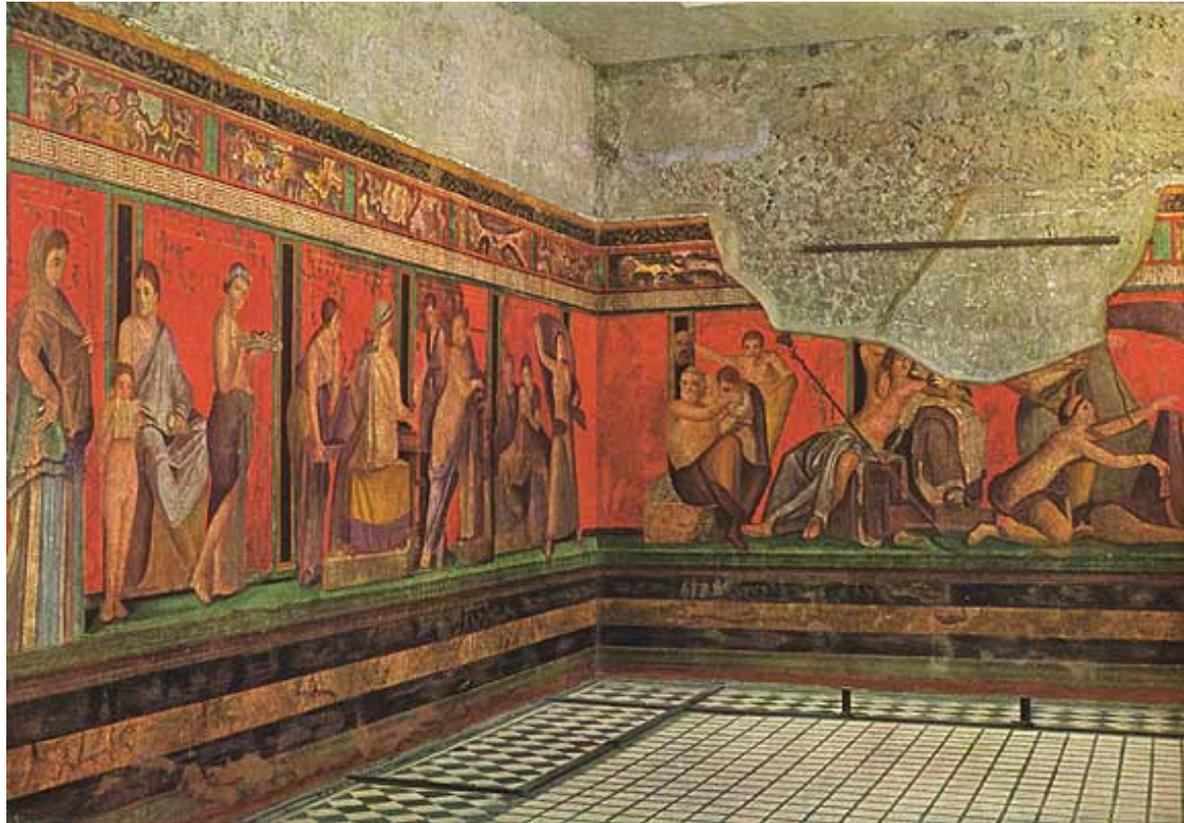


MEDIEVAL PAINTING



WEEK 9
VERMILION
HOUNDS WITH TULIPS

BEFORE CLASS

- ATTENDANCE
- HOMEWORK
- ANNOUNCEMENTS- QUEST
- PRAYER
- EXTRA CREDIT- QUEST GALA RAFFLE BASKET ITEMS- DUE TODAY

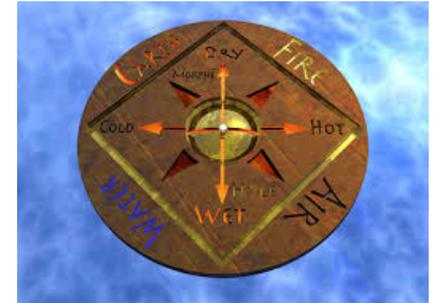
SULPHUR-MERCURY THEORY

- Discovered by Islamic alchemist Jabir ibn Hayyan.
- One element represents form, and one element represents matter in a substance.
- Fire and air (formal, yang) will always be enclosed by water and earth (matter, yin).
- So, possible combos:
 - Fire-water
 - Fire-earth
 - Air-water
 - Air-earth



SULPHUR-MERCURY THEORY

- In order to be a legitimate substance, each element in the pair cannot be concordant (next to each other).
- They need to be contrasting in order to represent a balance of all 4 qualities.
- So the only 2 real combinations are air-earth or fire-water.
- Empedocles would have classified these as Zeus-Hera and Aidoneus-Nestis (Hades-Persephone).
- In this case, the less well-known names actually disguise the more important pair.



SULPHUR-MERCURY THEORY

- Zeus and Hera's marriage was much more well-known and dramatic.
- Hades-Persephone's marriage was more mysterious and complicated.
- The combination of opposites is the source of life.
- Zeus-Hera's air-earth supports life- we can see and feel it.
- Hades-Persephone's fire-water actually produces the cycle of life.
- Their mysterious union is exemplified by 6 months of winter/b where g takes place



SULPHUR-MERCURY THEORY

- Jabbar believed that best elements to represent form and matter are fire and water.
- In his theory, he uses two principles.
- Sulphur is form-like (from a hylomorphic point of view), and fire-like (from an elemental point of view).
- Mercury is matter-like (hylomorphic) and water-like (elemental).
- These are different than sulphur and mercury.

SULPHUR-MERCURY THEORY

- With capital letters, Mercury and Sulphur are principles, like form/matter and yin/yang.
- Sulphur corresponds with yang and form.
- It is the seed of all things that can be.
- Mercury is similar to yin and matter.
- It is the “field” in which all things come into being.
- Since Sulphur and Mercury are like pure form and pure matter, they are not the same as the imperfect sulphur and matter.

MERCURY



- The two principles and the actual substances are somewhat related however.
- mercury exhibits many properties similar to Mercury, which is “un-formed” matter.
 - It can take the shape of its container, like a liquid.
 - Since it is reflective, it can also “take on” the colors of objects around it.
 - Mercury can be said to be **passive** when responding to its environment
 - It is also “**volatile**” because it can adopt different shapes and colors

SULPHUR



- Albertus Magnus: “sulphur has the power of impressing its seal of form upon things.”
- One of the methods of gathering sulphur depended upon its nature, which was “mysterious” like (Hades) and “active”.
- Artists would leave smooth clean stones on top of fumaroles and then come back a few weeks later to find that the undersides of the stones would be coated with yellow crystals of sulphur.
- Fumaroles- holes in the ground where subterranean vapors can escape the earth. This is usually in volcanic areas, and was thought to be because the elemental fire was trying to get back to its elemental sphere.

SULPHUR

- Because sulphur could be found so close to volcanic activity, it was a matter of course that it was related to fire.
- All artists were aware of the relation between sulphur and volcanoes as far as their choking smell went. Some would even paint scenes of fire or volcanoes using actual crystals of sulphur for added effect.



MERCURY

- Mercury is related to elemental water and to the form principle yin.
- Yin, the feminine principle, was also considered to be “passive”. Combining the passive mercury with the “active” sulphur resulted in the forming of a new structure.
- It became crystal in form, and no longer reflected the color of its surroundings.
- The mixture was now red (vermilion).

VERMILION

- Vermilion thus represented the ideas of heaven and earth, form and matter joining together in perfect union to create something new.
- Even though it was dangerous to make, people still did it anyways.
- Bladder-skin masks were often worn even by artists as they ground up the pigment so they wouldn't become ill.
- Odder still though, there was no need to make vermilion when one wanted a red color.



CINNABAR

- Cinnabar is a mineral, and was fairly easy to find throughout Europe.
- Sometimes alchemists and artists actually referred to their vermilion as “cinnabar” and even today the names can be interchangeable in some companies.
- Mercury could also be extracted from cinnabar.
- Cinnabar was said to “sweat” droplets of quicksilver.

CINNABAR



- At the time of Jesus, a lot of cinnabar came from Spain.
- Local processing of it was forbidden- 2,000 pounds of cinnabar ore was sent each year to Rome.
- Security around the mines was “second to none.”
- Aside from obvious economical importance, it also had significance in Roman religion. “...on holidays it was the custom for the face of the statue of Jupiter himself to be covered with cinnabar, as well as the bodies of persons going in a triumphal procession.” ----Pliny
- The origins of the custom remained a secret as information was transferred from Greek (Empedocles) to Rome but was retained in the Islamic world. It was brought back to Europe via Spain.

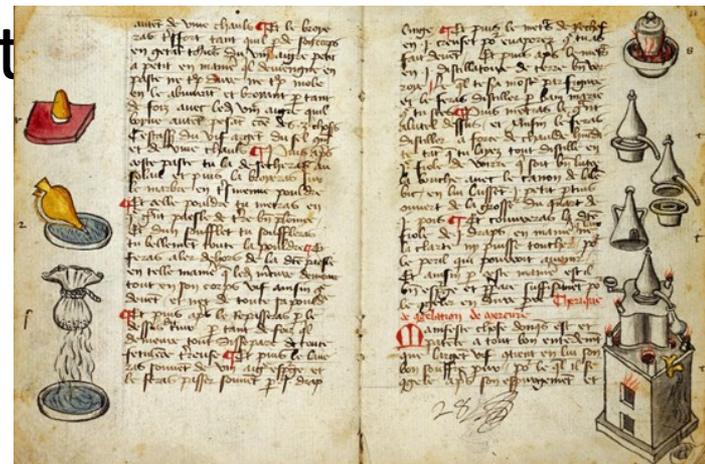
CINNABAR



- Curiously, Spain was a place where Judaism, Islam, and Christianity combined knowledge to form a very sophisticated understanding of the world around them and also to protect and decipher ancient information that had been retained there.
- After Rome had dissolved, Spain continued to be a place that supplied Europe with cinnabar, and the information about its mystical properties was shared via the study of alchemy.
- Cennini said that vermilion was “made via alchemy”.
- A 14th c. alchemist said cinnabar vermilion was the “stone that the philosophers (the alchemists) concealed.”

CINNABAR

- But since the recipe to make vermilion (or even cinnabar) was so easy, we know that they were talking about its spiritual properties.
- To understand what wasn't said about vermilion, we can look at lapidaries of the time.





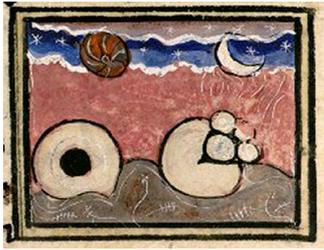
LAPIDARIES

- They were divided into 3 categories:
 - Popular- demonstrated a belief in the magical properties of stones.
 - Symbolic
 - Scientific
- Sometimes the popular lapidaries described a stones' properties or functions without even naming the stone. It was expected that readers already knew which stone the author was talking about.
- Cinnabar is not mentioned in these lapidaries
- It can't be used as an amulet, cut like ruby, or polished like ultramarine.



LAPIDARIES

- Symbolic Christian lapidaries attempted to marry pagan magic beliefs with Church teaching.
- Most of this was based upon the Biblical references to the breastplate of Aaron and the 12 stones in the gates of the New Jerusalem in Revelations.
- Neither of these contains cinnabar.



LAPIDARIES

- The scientific (Aristotelian) lapidaries all reflect the theory of the 4 elements (like the one written by Albert the Great).
- He divided his into the categories of
 - Stones (these were infusible mixtures of the elements)
 - Metals (these were fusible but more complex)
 - Intermediaries (had properties of both)
 - Contained salts
 - Ores of metals
- The first 2 were in most lapidaries, but the 3rd he made up himself.

LAPIDARIES- ALBERTUS MAGNUS

- Cinnabar is not mentioned in the *Book of Stones* or the *Book of Intermediaries*.
- However, it mentioned in the *Book of Metals* as “the stone in which mercury is produced.”
- Albert the Great also talks about the synthesis of a “shining red powder” and indentifies both cinnabar and vermilion as being made of sulphur and mercury.

LAPIDARIES

- Pliny also wrote about it in the context of metals in his *Book of Silver and Gold*, mentioning that it was 'found in the silver mines'.
- Cinnabar, vermilion, sulphur and mercury were always associated with metals in the traditional world.
- Whenever ores were roasted (like galena, pyrite, cinnabar), a yellow sulphurous smoke was given off.
- Metals readily formed an amalgam with mercury, which aided in their purification.



LAPIDARIES

- Albert the Great saw Sulphur (not sulphur) as the father of all metals and Mercury as their mother.
- The marriage of the two resulted in the natural conceiving of cinnabar, and synthetically in the production of vermilion.
- Therefore, part of vermilion's importance had to lie in not only process of making it, but also in the identity of its ingredients.
- After all, it seems a little silly to take the mercury out of a sulphur-mercury compound (cinnabar) just to risk the danger of combining it with sulphur to create another sulphur-mercury compound.
- The answer lies in the sacred associations that the philosophers tried to conceal and Pliny was unable to decipher.



RED

1. Start with the red flowers, dog and collar. Also the red stripe on the border. Make your **MEDIUM SHADE**
2. Separate into 4 piles: for light, medium and 2 dark.
3. Paint all red areas the **medium shade**.
4. Add the **darkest shade** for the shadows on the flowers.
5. Add the lighter **dark shade** for the dog fur, collar and to blend the flowers.
6. Add the **lightest shade** to the lighter areas of the dog and flowers.
7. Highlight with white.



GREEN- can be the pistachio or mix yellow +light blue

1. Mix your **MEDIUM SHADE**.

2. Divide this into 3- make one **dark**, one **DARKER** and leave one as is.

3. Paint with your **MEDIUM shade** all over the stems, leaf, and bottom line by dog's feet.

4. Paint the **DARK shade** over all the green parts as a second coat.

5. Add the **DARKER SHADE** to the leaf and parts of the stem.

5. Use white to add highlights.