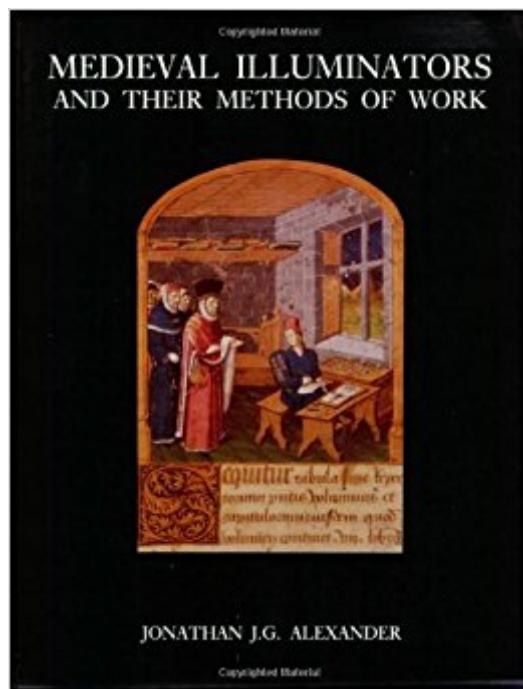


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Medieval Illuminators And Their Methods Of Work



Synopsis

Who were the medieval illuminators and how were their hand-produced books illustrated and decorated? In this book, Jonathan Alexander presents a survey of manuscript illumination throughout Europe from the fourth to the 16th century. He discusses the social and historical context of the illuminators' lives, considers their methods of work, and presents a series of case studies to show the range and nature of the visual sources and the ways in which they were adapted, copied or created anew. Alexander explains that in the early period, Christian monasteries and churches were the main centres for the copying of manuscripts, and so the majority of illuminators were monks working in and for their own monasteries. From the 11th century, lay scribes and illuminators became increasingly numerous and by the 13th century professional illuminators dominated the field. During this later period, illuminators travelled in search of work, joined guilds and included nuns and secular women among their ranks. Work was regularly collaborative and the craft was learned through an apprenticeship system. Alexander analyzes surviving manuscripts and medieval treatises in order to explain the technical processes of illumination - its materials, methods, tools, choice of illustration and execution. The book is illustrated with examples chosen from religious and secular manuscripts made all over Europe.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

whether you are interested in the typical lives, education, training, as well as social status of the people whose work became immortal or in the techniques and tools used to create the magnificent pages.. this is a well written and interesting read. beautiful photographs of works in various levels of

completion, numerous countries, schools and eras combined with well researched documentation and critiques makes this book an excellent resource. focusing mainly on the creation of illumination and explaining the lives of those creating the page, covering multiple aspects of training, techniques and changing social status throughout the decades leads to an overall thorough understanding. you will walk away not only being able to understand the illuminated page, its significance and construction but also those who toiled to create it. whether an art history lover, in love with the illuminated page or interested in the lives of people who lived centuries ago this book is a wonderful addition to your personal library. i wish my art history books were this well written.

In a world of literary scholars interpreting the meanings of the art produced by manuscript illuminators, Alexander's book is a required read that explains the practicalities of the actual process of illuminating the manuscript page. Especially useful are the chapters on instructions to the illuminator (who did less interpreting than following the directions of a copyist or compiler laying out the construction of the codex) and on the contracts that established that work that was to be completed. This is a book I've consulted over and over for years and recommended to colleagues and students.

I admit I bought this for someone else as a gift, and he loved it. He said it was very beautiful and of value to medieval historians. Book describes the types of illuminations and has a lot of history.

Although I have been collecting and studying illuminated MS for decades, this book has been untouched on a shelf for many years. My need to research certain points on a French illumination probably dating between 1385 - 1420 led me to include this book in the books I reviewed. On the one relevant illustration in this book, the descriptions were so ambiguous that I was forced to make a guess as to which description pertains. Few illustrations are in color, and the resolution is poor by today's standards. If your interest lies in Romanesque works you may be satisfied with this book as it seems to over emphasise that period.

Medieval Illuminators has been invaluable to my own studies and construction of illuminated manuscripts. The author presents a timeline of the history of illuminated manuscripts, their layout, methods of construction and their purpose, couched within a socio-cultural context of the eras in which the manuscripts were constructed. I found the large reproductions of key manuscripts extremely helpful in identifying the minute brush strokes of the white work, which is often difficult to

discern in smaller reproductions. The enlargements also provided lovely details of designs and images that are not easily observed in non-enlarged reproductions. Lastly, I appreciated the author's discussion of the monastic book lending tradition for the purposes of copying manuscripts to expand a library's holdings on a particular subject and the inclusion of illustrations to demonstrate this practice. This is a must have for anyone pursuing the study of this literary and artistic tradition.

This book introduces the reader to the people and processes involved in the production of manuscripts, and is interesting as a resource for methods of book production as much as it is for the insight it gives into the lives of the very real people whose efforts and whose lives went into the production of books by hand. With more than enough information to interest the scholar, this book is at the same time extremely accessible to the average reader interested in the subject. I would recommend this as a textbook and as a good read, but would suggest that a reader have a good guide, such as Michelle Brown's *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts* on hand, in order to best understand every facet of the material being presented. The book is clear and well-written, but a deeper understanding of the finished product adds greatly to the value of reading about their creators. This is a book I am proud to have on my bookshelf, for its readability, its attractiveness, and its value as a source for interesting historical information.

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