

Documentation for Illumination

by Lady Merewen de Sweynesheie

There has been some confusion as to how many illuminations I have completed prior to these two. Because the pieces were donated to another kingdom, I was not sure. However, through discussion with my husband of what I have done, we are both fairly confident that these are my third and fourth illuminations.

Types of paints used:

Pentel watercolour. Gold and silver are also watercolour, but Cottman, I believe. The silver is an interference silver, meaning that it is easy to layer with other colours as backgrounds to create different shades.

Type of paper used:

120 lb acid free watercolour paper

Inspiration:

for 3rd painting - attempting to do justice to the design of the illumination. Choosing period colours for clothing, and aiming to show the transition in colour of the foliage, the details in the hair, feather, and clothing shading.

for 4th painting - honouring the idea of a wood cut. Using the background and border textures to bring out the idea of a real wood carving.

Methods:

for 3rd illumination - using a toothpick to create lines on the pouch of the bottom subject and dots in the center of the flower. Using colour to create the folds of the white headpiece on the woman. Using a regular-sized brush to delicately create minute detail work on the feather and fur edging on the center figure. I tried to make each flower unique from the others in some way, by varying the use of colouring and the design of the center. I also chose to make the greenery darker at the bottom, with brown tones showing that the bottom end was the transition to roots, while the brown becomes less and the green becomes brighter as you move toward new growth.

for the 4th illumination - Aiming to use believable colouring of the combatants and their cultural clothing, while using enough contrast around edges to properly delineate overlapping sections of cloth and armour. This was my first time not using a pen to outline the design prior to painting. This was also my first time using my own skin colour palette that I created using ideas from a book. There was a completely separate skin colour for each combatant because of their different heritages. I used blue and white in the furry lining of the right-hand subject's outer garment because I saw telltale shapes indicating blue and white fur (miniver). I attempted to make this look "fluffier" than the blue and white in the left-hand subject's headpiece by softening the edges. In order to create the shaved wood effect in the background, I used a lighter brown wash and then overlaid that with a thicker, darker brown paint, scratching off lines with a toothpick.

Difficulties:

for the 3rd illumination - shading of faces, lumpiness of gold paint used, trying to figure out what parts to outline in pen and which to leave un-outlined.

for the 4th illumination - finding believable colours for clothing, figuring out how to reverse shade the black hose, shading of armour and chainmail, trying to make the right-hand outer garment look appropriately fur-lined, trying to make varying shades of brown that are enough different but still clearly brown. And trying to decide which parts of the left-hand subject's armour were the same piece as other pieces, which were leather, and which were metal.

Things I'd do differently:

3rd illumination - make it a day scene, reduce outlining in pen, make faces more believable.

4th illumination - use colours to represent metals rather than metallic paints within the scene.

References:

Powell, William F., "1500 Color Mixing Recipes for Oil, Acrylic, and Watercolour," Walter Foster, 2012.

Scott, Margaret, "Fashion in the Middle Ages," The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA, USA, 2011.