



The Monypenny Hours, France, Paris, c.1490

A Personal glimpse: 25 years of Les Enluminures

NEW YORK, NY.- September marks the 25th anniversary of Les Enluminures, the creation of Sandra Hindman. In 1991, Ms. Hindman bought a tiny space just ten square meters large (about 100 square feet) in the Louvre des Antiquaires in the center of Paris.

Ms. Hindman states: "Our gallery was so small you could barely turn around, and there was space for no more than ten or fifteen manuscript illuminations on the walls. It was a miniature glassed-in fishbowl."

At the time, she commuted at least once a month to Northwestern University in Chicago where she was Professor and Chair of the Department of Art History. A long-time friend, Charlotte Lacaze, art historian at the American University of Paris, and a student from the University ran day-to-day operations in the gallery. In the days before Skype, Gotomeeting, and Cloud-based sharing of information, she faxed and phoned back and forth daily. It was tiring. She didn't retire from Northwestern until 2002, and even then she continued to teach from time to time.

Over the next twenty years the gallery moved twice in the Louvre des Antiquaires, each time to larger and more centrally located spaces.

Today, Les Enluminures is a global enterprise. It manages three locations – in Paris, New York, and Chicago – and has fifteen employees spread between Chicago, Paris, New York, Boston, and London. Quite an accomplishment? Yes. But, it grew little by little.



Sandra Hindman Founder and President

How did the business really start? A long-time expert in medieval manuscripts, Ms. Hindman wrote catalogues for Bruce Ferrini, Guy Ladrière, Sam Fogg (see his comments below), and other dealers. Gradually she advised dealers what to buy and eventually she located works of art for them, especially in Paris, back in the days when the closest thing to a specialized medieval manuscript dealer was the great Pierre Beres. She says, "Unusually generous dealers, such as Bruce, let me purchase shares in manuscripts I found, which eventually provided the nest-egg for my new business. Everything seemed possible. It was the affluent 1980s."

Sandra reminisces: "Someone like Guy Ladrière, whom I met at the Comtesse de Behague sale in 1987 Monaco, was enormously influential for me in the early years. I was there with Bruce Ferrini, who was bidding for a Simon Marmion (my specialty) miniature for the J. Paul Getty Museum. Every time Bruce raised the bid, someone one row in front of us bid against us. At the end (we were successful), I tapped him on the shoulder and asked who he was. It was Guy. He invited me to see his collection in Paris, and we became friends. The rest, as they say, is history. Thirty years later, we are still friends and colleagues, sharing many interests (for example in medieval rings)."

Guy Ladrière remembers: " I met my dear friend Sandra the day I acquired the Psalter of Philippe Auguste, many years ago now... She had come to visit me at my gallery on Rue de Marignan. Our mutual interests in manuscripts, illuminations and medieval rings brought us together. Since, we have spent many interesting and exciting moments together, like the day at the remarkable Béhague sale in Monaco. "

The cover lot of the very first catalogue published by Les Enluminures in 1992, one year after opening, was a miniature by Bartholomeo Rigossi da Gallarate. It sold to the J. Paul Getty Museum. Two other fifteenth-century Lombard animal studies in the same first catalogue went straightaway to the Musée du Louvre. Not bad first-time clients for a brand new operation!

"I was lucky – I found good things, and I had great contacts."

Other clients over the twenty five years include the British Library and Museum, the Metropolitan Museum, the National Gallery of Art, and the Cluny, as well as a great many other prestigious museums and private collectors. Landmark sales include a miniature by Giovanni Pietro da Birago to the British Library (rejoining the manuscript from which it was separated for five centuries), a Roman de la Rose to the University of Chicago (also to be reunited with a volume which it formed part of a century before), an extraordinary miniature of St. John from an Apocalypse manuscript, of which the other leaves are in the National Museum in Nuremberg, to the J. Paul Getty Museum. And many others.

Rings came later, not until the mid to late 1990s. Sandra says: "My mother was a ring collector, but of Victorian jewelry. Here, too, Guy Ladrière played a big role by introducing me to medieval rings. They are, after all, not unlike medieval manuscripts – intimate objects made of precious metals and stones." She bought her first medieval ring at her first TEFAF Maastricht more than twenty years ago – a ring that she still wears every day and which is not for sale. Today, she has helped organize an exhibition at the Cloisters of the Metropolitan Museum of a private client's extraordinary collection ("Take this Ring," in 2015). Five books by her on rings constitute a basic reference library. Important jewelry projects are already on the books for the next four years.

Academics and commerce may not seem to go together, but in Ms. Hindman's case it has worked well. There are seven doctorates among the employees, and nearly everyone has an advanced degree with a specialty in the Middle Ages. The gallery has published a staggering number of 60+ catalogues on manuscripts, and more recently rings.

Librarian at Corpus Christi College in Cambridge and long-time specialist at Sotheby's Christopher de Hamel, who was appointed Senior Vice-President and Specialist of Les Enluminures in 2014, states: "The joy of illuminated manuscripts captivates all kinds of people: it crosses the barriers between academia and commerce, and I love being able to move back and forth between the two. Les Enluminures is the most professional and the most academic manuscript dealership in the world, supplying universities and museums as much as private collectors. I am immensely proud and pleased to have been allowed to join it."

Slowing down? No not really. In fact not at all! In 2012, Les Enluminures New York opened in a historic townhouse on the Upper East Side. The same year Les Enluminures Paris finally left the Louvre des Antiquaires and moved to private quarters across the street facing the Louvre. In September 2016, Les Enluminures Chicago (long housed in Sandra Hindman's private apartment) will move into an award-winning Skidmore and Owings building in Chicago (One Magnificent Mile). Plans to open in London are afoot for January 2017. And after that? Stay tuned.