

Better Together: April Showers Bring a May Bouquet of Rings at Les Enluminures

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Les Enluminures Chicago gallery

Milk and cookies; wine and cheese; apple and cinnamon; beer and pretzels. These pairings have been around for a long time, but Les Enluminures believes unusual combinations are the most pleasing. Why not flowers and rings?

Les Enluminures was founded in 1991 as a gallery specializing in manuscripts, miniatures and rings from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and maintains a strong digital presence as their global audience grows. With galleries in Chicago, Paris and New York, and an inviting online catalogue, it did not matter where you were in the world

if you wanted to purchase a Book of Hours, the Christian devotional book popular in the Middle Ages.

Now amid the crisis, that digital presence means more than just marketing for Sandra Hindman, Les Enluminures' founder and owner.

"I got back to Chicago after Italy shut down and everyone is afraid, and it's hard to think about emailing out something that asks about buying a manuscript," she says. "We wanted to stay in touch but also to lighten everything. We wanted something that would be comic, funny and delightful so that people would feel good."

Their subsequent virtual newsletter, designed by Fabio Epifani, called "April Showers: 30 Days of Digital Delights" was a light, amusing offering which connected stories, jokes or quotes in pop culture to a subject in art. This was meant to be a less commercial venture—something to ease the collective tension of what was going on in the world.



Les Enluminures' catalogue, "Pairings: A May Bouquet of Rings"

Les Enluminures has unveiled a new catalogue for May, "Pairings: A May Bouquet of Rings," designed by Karen Gennaro, as part of their series "April Showers Brings May Flowers." Each day shows a flower and an ornate ring to go along with it. The pairing is meant to be esthetically pleasing more than anything, but Hindman says that it may inspire other musings.

Unlike the April newsletter, everything in the May catalogue is for sale. Hindman says that while they are a business, she is prioritizing making their work visible for all to see and enjoy.

"People are starved for art right now," she says. "This field of art can be considered old and dusty, but we can be fun. Art is not for the elite. It should be for everyone."

With this in mind, Les Enluminures is rolling out two podcasts in their May Pairings series, one with Marc Montefusco, managing horticulturist

at The Met Cloisters in New York City, and one with Diana Scarisbrick, a historian specializing in engraved gems and jewelry. They are also hosting a “Friday Faves” video series highlighting experts’ favorite manuscripts, miniatures and rings. Hindman says “Friday Faves” will be “candid, spontaneous and personal.”

With the new Pairings catalogue, podcasts and video projects, Les Enluminures is aiming to reach new audiences and keep loyal spectators smiling and admiring art. (Nicole NeSmith)

You can follow Les Enluminures on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook, or sign up for their newsletter.