

DECEMBER 18, 2017



## Meet Sandra Hindman of *Les Enluminures* in Downtown



Today we'd like to introduce you to Sandra Hindman.

**So, before we jump into specific questions about the business, why don't you give us some details about you and your story.**

I am a medievalist. I studied the Middle Ages at university, in graduate school, and taught most of my life in major research universities. Somewhere along the line, as an "expert" I was asked by dealers specialized in the field of medieval manuscripts to help describe their works (most dealers in my field outsource expertise because it is so specialized). I worked with dealers in Ohio, London, and Paris in this capacity. As my role evolved, I started to buy material for them, describe it, find clients for them, and eventually find funding opportunities. I decided in 1991 to buy my own gallery in Paris (because that's where most of my sources were). I was already also in Chicago, where I was Chair of the Department of Art History at Northwestern University. Now we have locations in Paris, New York (open 5 years ago), London (last year), and Chicago.

In Chicago, for the first time in 30 years, we are in spectacular new premises in the award-winning One Mag Mile Building. Although we are by appointment only, we use the space to display works of art, to host special events, and of course to meet clients. An Italian architect designed our unusual space with views of the city and lake.

**Has it been a smooth road?**

Well, just as when I started in academics (at Johns Hopkins University, my first teaching job, there were only four women full professors when I began in 1973), I am the only woman dealer in the small field of medieval manuscripts. This has its advantages and sometimes the usual disadvantages everyone hears about. The great thing about owning my own business, though, is that I define my own glass ceiling. Business is always a struggle. Finding the material is harder than finding the money. In a small market (there are three dealers in my field worldwide) there is a lot of competition often for the same manuscripts and sometimes for the same clients.

**So let's switch gears a bit and go into the Les Enluminures story. Tell us more about the business.**

Well, we specialize in medieval and Renaissance manuscripts (that is, books written entirely by hand before printing), and rings and jewelry from the same period. In general, I'm proud of my business: for having grown it from nothing to having fifteen employees on both sides of the Atlantic, with representation in five cities.

Most of my employees have advanced training in the Middle Ages. An unusually large number hold Ph.D. degrees. We are set apart by running a very pedagogical business. For example, we have a Curatorial Services program that gives advice to colleges, universities, museums, and private individuals on their collections. We sponsor internships for students in our field from colleges and universities across the country and in Europe.

We have a new program where we loan 21 manuscripts to colleges and universities on the sole condition that they use them for teaching — so that every student can experience the same thrill of handling original material that I still experience. We publish sometimes as many as three academic books and catalogs a year. No one else in my small field can make these claims.

For rings and jewelry, we are the only specialized jeweler in the world (although there are many world-class dealers of jewelry in general). I am especially proud of having written a book on a private collector's collection that was exhibited at the Cloisters in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Summer 2015.

I love my business. It's fun. I can't imagine doing anything else. But, I'm able to do so much because I have a great team.

**How do you think the industry will change over the next decade?**

I have already watched it get more and more specialized. The generalist dealer who might know about everything from Ming China to American firearms to medieval manuscripts is a thing of the past among up-and-coming dealers.

Plus, everyone is looking toward contemporary art — how to make their own fields comprehensible and intriguing to contemporary art collectors and to the younger

market because that's where the money (and the future) lies. Everyone has always said there is less and less material available. We'll see. There's still plenty to support my market.

### Pricing:

- Books of Hours from \$50,000 to two million dollars
- Medieval and Renaissance rings and jewelry from \$2,000 to \$200,000
- Illuminated manuscript leaves from \$5,000 to \$500,000

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