



30 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Telling the *Les Enluminures* Story: The Painter Simon Bening

JULY 2021

I'm a medievalist, and I have spent my life researching medieval manuscripts, first as a professor and now as an art dealer. Research figures prominently in the *Les Enluminures* story; it is at the very center of what *Les Enluminures* is all about. Take the example of the Flemish illuminator Simon Bening (1488-1561) – the “greatest master of illumination in all of Europe,” according to his contemporaries. As a university professor, I taught courses on manuscript illumination that included Bening, his superb art straddling late Gothic illusionism and Flemish realism of the Golden Age.

As an expert, initially working for other dealers, I published the first full study of the miniatures Bening painted for a manuscript known as the Enriquez de Ribera Prayerbook in 1988.

As an art dealer, I have been lucky to have purchased and sold the occasional manuscript illumination by Simon Bening. Recently, I was delighted to purchase three additional manuscript illuminations from the Enriquez de Ribera Prayerbook. These **three new miniatures showcase Bening's exceptional talent as an illuminator:** his flair for using natural light, haunting poetic landscapes, devotional pathos, narrative use of color, and especially his delicate touches of paint on small surfaces.

Studying these leaves reawakened my interest in Bening, and as often happens at *Les Enluminures*, led to **exciting new discoveries which are explored in our newest publication.** With members of my research team, we discovered the name of the actual patron from Enriquez de Ribera family and can now suggest his motivation for commissioning the original manuscript following a pilgrimage. In addition, our identification of the Spanish text – previously unknown – allows us to understand Bening's unusual handling of the subjects of the illuminations and their relationship to devotional practices in the late Middle Ages. In 1988, I knew of only a handful of miniatures from this manuscript, including the four that figured in my publication. Now the group has grown to seventeen, which we have arranged in order, allowing us to speculate about the few that are still missing. Today, miniatures from the Prayerbook are in the Musée du Louvre, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Morgan Library and Museum, the Saint Louis Museum of Art, and elsewhere. **Our miniatures, beautiful paintings made even more enticing by our new understanding of their origin, seek a new home.**

Les Enluminures is an internationally recognized leader in the fields of Medieval and Renaissance illuminated manuscripts, miniatures, and historic jewelry. Dr. Sandra Hindman, an expert on manuscript illumination and Professor Emerita at Northwestern University, founded *Les Enluminures* in Paris in 1991. Today it manages three locations with about a dozen employees. The gallery exhibits throughout the world at the most celebrated art fairs and has maintained relationships with important public and private collections. It is active online on social media and through its portal site: www.lesenluminures.com

Please contact us for high resolution images and descriptions of the featured work of art.

PRESS CONTACT: info@lesenluminures.com

TWO PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN WORKS BY SIMON BENING

Simon Bening (Bruges and Antwerp, 1483–1561)

Two leaves from the Enríquez de Ribera Prayer Book

(A) *Betrayal of Christ, Christ Confounding Soldiers, Arrest of Christ, and Christ Healing Malchus*

(B) *Souls Entering Heaven, Christ Appearing to His Mother, Souls of the Saved Brought to Heaven, and Last Judgment*

Flanders, probably Bruges, c. 1520–early 1530s

Price on request



A.



B.

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PRESS CONTACT: info@lesenluminures.com

PARIS

1, rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau
75001 Paris
France

CHICAGO

980 North Michigan Ave.,
Suite 1330
Chicago IL 60611

NEW YORK

23 East 73rd Street
7th Floor, Penthouse
New York, NY 10021

Simon Bening (Bruges and Antwerp, 1483–1561)

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus in the Passion of Christ

Single leaf from the Prayerbook of the Enriquez de Ribera family

Flanders, probably Bruges, c. 1520-early 1530s

Price on request



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