

## SAFE SPACES:

**A Collaborative Exhibition between Atsushi Kaga and Les Enluminures**

**September 11<sup>th</sup> – October 30<sup>th</sup> 2026**

At first glance, a collaboration between a Japanese contemporary artist, Atsushi Kaga, and a dealer of medieval illuminated manuscripts, Les Enluminures, may not seem like an obvious one. However, the synergy between the two is genuine. Originally from Tokyo and now living and working between Dublin, Ireland and Kyoto, Japan, Atsushi Kaga (born 1978) focuses on imaginary worlds often populated by made-up allegorical figures, especially animals. Usacchi, his alter-ego white rabbit, derives partly from the Japanese manga images that fascinated Kaga in his youth. Usacchi (almost an anagram for the artist's name) navigates an alternate universe – usually comic, occasionally dark – populated by other animals, cats, mice, monkeys, fox, and a Panda (the rabbit's Dad). Vivid colors, often enlivened by gold leaf, characterize Kaga's paintings and drawings, many of which (though not all) are small and intimate in scale. Sometimes the images take on three-dimensional forms as small sculptures.

There are some obvious superficial parallels between Kaga's work and medieval illuminated manuscripts, such as the palette, the use of gold leaf, and the scale. But, on a deeper level, the manga-like imagery links the two art forms. Recent research stresses the relationship between manga and medieval Europe, claiming that Japanese manga reimagines the European Middle Ages. If we look more closely at the margins of medieval Gothic manuscripts, we do indeed find comic-like manga imagery – made-up hybrid creatures, unicorns, and all sorts of figures, including angels, sea monsters and mermaids, monks and musicians. Cute little bunny rabbits, white and otherwise, proliferate there too!

Moving past the characters themselves, the spaces which the figures occupy in Kaga's art and those found in medieval manuscripts can also be compared. Kaga's alternate universe is immersive; it is a substitute for the real world – a safe space in which the artist and his viewers can lose themselves. Medieval manuscripts offer a similarly immersive experience, not just in the borders full of comic surprises, but in the intimate spaces in which the narrative subjects develop. Pictorial storytelling is at the heart of both genres. The SAFE SPACES in Atsushi Kaga's art and in medieval illuminated manuscripts offer a respite from the often chaotic, highly technological, sometimes disturbing modern world. And what a nice respite it is.

### **About Les Enluminures:**

Founded by Dr. Sandra Hindman more than thirty years ago and with locations in Paris and Chicago, Les Enluminures has forged long-standing relationships with major museums and prestigious private collections throughout the world. Among its clients are the Met, the Getty, the National Gallery of Art, the Louvre, the Cluny, the British Museum, the British Library, and many others. It exhibits at TEFAF Maastricht, EXPO Chicago, and the Winter Show. The gallery is well-known for the level of its scholarship but also for the diversity, high quality, and provenance of the works it offers for sale.

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

PRESS CONTACT: [info@lesenluminures.com](mailto:info@lesenluminures.com)

**About Atsushi Kaga:**

Atsushi Kaga (born 1978) is a Japanese artist who lives and works between Ireland and Japan. He graduated from the National College of Art & Design in Dublin with a degree in Fine Art in 2005. In 2008, he presented his first solo museum exhibition at the Butler Gallery in Kilkenny, which received critical acclaim.

**Recent solo exhibitions include:**

*The world will not end tomorrow*, Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco (2024)

*Ukiyo-e, Encounters, mother's tankstation*, Art Basel Hong Kong (2024)

*Things Will Carry Us Through*, Tanya Leighton, Berlin (2023)

*Your memorabilia floats in the air*, mother's tankstation, London (2022)

Solo exhibitions at Maho Kubota Gallery, Tokyo

Solo exhibitions at Jack Hanley Gallery, New York

Solo exhibitions at Galeria Leme, São Paulo

Solo exhibitions at Galerie Nicolas Krupp, Basel



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Master of the Boethius of Montpellier

*Thourotte Hours (use of Metz)*

France, Metz, c. 1340

In Latin and French, illuminated manuscript on parchment. 40 miniatures (2 full-page, 7 miniatures, 7 large historiated initials, and 24 calendar miniatures)

by the Master of the Boethius of Montpellier

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Atsushi Kaga

*Untitled, 2025*

Acrylic on linen, 33 x 18 cm

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Atsushi Kaga

*Life without dancing would be boring, 2026*

Acrylic on linen

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