



# Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work

*Professor Jonathan J. G. Alexander*

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Who were the medieval illuminators and how were their hand-produced books illustrated and decorated? In this book, Jonathan Alexander presents a survey of manuscript illumination throughout Europe from the fourth to the 16th century. He discusses the social and historical context of the illuminators' lives, considers their methods of work, and presents a series of case studies to show the range and nature of the visual sources and the ways in which they were adapted, copied or created anew. Alexander explains that in the early period, Christian monasteries and churches were the main centres for the copying of manuscripts, and so the majority of illuminators were monks working in and for their own monasteries. From the 11th century, lay scribes and illuminators became increasingly numerous and by the 13th century professional illuminators dominated the field. During this later period, illuminators travelled in search of work, joined guilds and included nuns and secular women among their ranks. Work was regularly collaborative and the craft was learned through an apprenticeship system. Alexander analyzes surviving manuscripts and medieval treatises in order to explain the technical processes of illumination - its materials, methods, tools, choice of illustration and execution. The book is illustrated with examples chosen from religious and secular manuscripts made all over Europe.

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