

Charter Illumination Basics

INSPIRATION:

The best sources of inspiration for the illumination design on your Charter Masters are from early Manuscripts and other diverse art forms gathered from our periods and cultures of study.

Countless specialty books and facsimiles have been published, which contain images of favored manuscript pages. Many of these books can be purchased from common bookstores or borrowed from a local library. Books about specific cultures, i.e., Vikings, Celts, Byzantines, etc. often contain a chapter or two on the art of that culture and include photos and reproduction drawings of choice fine art pieces representing typical design styles and motifs.

The internet offers hundreds of sites where these images are also available for viewing and searching the Internet has become an integral tool for research. If you do not have personal access to the Internet, you should be able to obtain access at your local public library.

BEST PRACTICES:

The most important rule to follow in illumination design is to match the design with your calligraphy style. For example, do not draw your illumination design from an Elizabethan inspiration and then use the Younger Futhark for the text. Likewise, do not draw Jellinge Style animals and then place a beautiful gothic quadrata ductus on the page.

The second most important rule to follow is to put the "Badge of the Award" into the design – if there is one.

Your line work should be of a nice thickness. Not too thin, not too heavy, although being on the heavy side is better than being on the thin side. When copied onto the charter paper, your design, now made of copier toner, resists paint. A good line thickness helps the novice painters to stay within the lines.

Do not create large black shapes, they do not copy well onto the Charter paper. Let the painters do that job.

Do not draw lines or hatching - or anything else - that represents shading. Let the painters do that job too.

Do not draw spaces that are really small. Remember that the painters need to color every space in the design that you create for them. On the flip side, do not design spaces that are really big and will take a lot of paint to cover. Large areas of paint tend to buckle.

Make sure that every space intended to be painted is fully edged. Be careful not to lead the painters off into open air.

Your final image should look like it could be published in an adult coloring book.

Note: You should be placing your entire 11" x 14" charter design on an 11" x 17" piece of paper. If you use a foreign text, put an alphabet translation cheat sheet in the extra 3" area that is intended to be cut off... along with any special notes to the painters.