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A History of Illuminated Manuscripts

Christopher De Hamel

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Medieval manuscripts are counted among the greatest glories of Western civilization. With their gold and painted decoration and their charming miniatures, they have always had immense appeal, and images from them can be seen everywhere - from greeting cards and wrapping paper to expensive facsimiles. This entertaining and authoritative book is the first to provide a general introduction to the whole subject of the making of books from the Dark Ages to the invention of printing and beyond. Christopher de Hamel vividly describes the widely different circumstances in which manuscripts were created, from the earliest monastic Gospel Books to university textbooks, secular romances, Books of Hours and classical texts for humanist bibliophiles. As the story unfolds the wonderful variety of manuscripts and their illumination is revealed, and many fundamental questions are answered - who wrote the books, what texts they contained, who read them, how they were made and what purposes they served. Illuminated manuscripts have always been highly valued, and among them are some of the world's great masterpieces of art. With its lively narrative and many new and superb illustrations, this new edition of a much-praised book provides the perfect introduction to a large and fascinating subject.

From Library JournalThis 1986 title throws light on the world of illuminated manuscripts, which function as works of both art and literature. De Hamel provides a full history of the illuminated manuscript through text and dozens of glorious color illustrations. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. "It is no mere history, but an original, lively and richly illustrated commentary."-Times Literary Supplement "Gorgeous and informative. A wonderful introduction to handwritten books from the Dark Ages to the invention of printing in the fifteenth century."-Houston Chronicle "Lavish, beautiful and sweeping look at the beginning of the printed word."-Graphic Arts Monthly "Along with excellent illustrations, this large volume includes a bibliography and index of manuscripts."-The Good Book GuideAbout the AuthorChristopher de Hamel is a Fellow Librarian of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. For many years he was head of the Western Manuscripts department at Sotheby's in London. He is the author of *The Book: A History of the Bible*, also published by Phaidon, which has become established as a definitive work and magnum opus in itself.