

THE "RICH" HOURS OF AN ILLUMINATOR*

Sheepskin or goatskin parchment, oak gall ink, goose quills, colors ground by hand from semi-precious stones such as lapis lazuli (blue), and malachite (green), minerals and flowers, 22k gold...All these materials seem to come directly from the corridors of the time. They haven't changed since the Middle Ages. The technique is the same and the result is superb. Diane Calvert's illuminations are real miniature masterpieces.

Coming into her boutique, Diane is seated facing the door, working. On her head is a cap or "coif". She wears a costume that could have been worn by Eleanor of Aquitaine or Anne of Brittany. Medieval music plays softly in the background. Next to the artist, instead of a palette, there are mussel shells filled with blues, yellows, greens, her handmade colors. The walls are lined with illuminations...one expects to see a troubador going out the door, or one of the barons who made the history of Noyers.

"The Middle Ages have fascinated me since I was about 14 years old," Diane Calvert, this American born in Dallas, Texas, explains. "The music, the art, the clothing, all of it I love. I even make my costumes myself," continues this former New York textile designer. There are history books and fairy tales which make her passionate about this time period. Then it was love at first sight for the illuminations which she began to study at New York's School of Sacred Arts. At the beginning it was an avocation. It became a profession. "I took a two-month sabbatical from textile designing, and I decided, on an impulse, to concentrate entirely on the painting of illuminations "<in the medieval style>.

This decision, which turned her life upside down, was also a decision to live in France; a country she already knew quite well as she has had an apartment in Paris since 1985. "It was a complete accident that we discovered Noyers and our house there. We were immediately charmed by the village", she explains.

Diane works an enormous amount of time. Her illuminations, entirely handmade, are all originals, or reproductions of medieval "originals" taken from Books of Hours, psalters and bibles from the 12th to the 16th centuries. Her talent has become a reference point: she received in Sweden, for the third consecutive year, the worldwide prize for illumination.**

As well as these masterpieces hanging on her gallery walls, she is mounting an exhibition from the 3rd of August*** to the 21st of September, entitled "Around the Gardens of Times Past...600 to 1600". Purple irises, blue borage, aubepines and poppies will be in the spotlight of magnificent new illuminations taken from a XVth century Book of Hours belonging to Anne of Brittany.****

* this is a sort of pun; probably the most famous manuscript of all time is translated as *The Very Rich Hours of the Duke de Berry*.

** an ENORMOUS exaggeration on the journalist's part! I had explained to him that for the 3rd consecutive year, I had won the prize for illumination given by the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), a worldwide medieval organization.

*** the opening is Aug. 9, not the 3rd.

**** as well as many other medieval references.

Entering into her boutique, Diane is a woman fitting the direct, working. On her head is a cap or "hood". She wears a costume that would have been worn by a peasant of Aquitaine or Anjou or Brittany. Medieval music plays softly in the background. Next to the entrance is a display of papers, some are stained and filled with letters, yellow, green, for handmade colors. The walls are lined with historical photos and objects to see a woodblock going out the door, or one of the banners who would see history of events.

"The Middle Ages were fascinating to me when I was about 14 years old," Diane Calvert, this American born in the San Texas, explains. "The music, the art, the clothing, all of it I love. I even made my own 'tunic' and 'hood' - medieval - like former New York textile designer. "I was in many books and libraries which made her passionate about the time period. "Then I went to live in France for the 10 years which she began to study at New York's School of Sacred Arts, an apprenticeship it was set up for. It became a profession. I was able to learn a great deal from textile designing, and I decided, out of respect, to concentrate entirely on the making of illuminations in the medieval style."

That decision, which turned her life upside down, was also a decision to live in France. A woman who already knew quite well as she has had an apartment in Paris since 1985. "It was a complete accident that we discovered Nancy and our house there. We were immediately charmed by the village, the people."

Diane spends an enormous amount of time. Her illustrations, mainly hand-drawn, are all original, or reproductions of medieval "originals" taken from books of hours, psalters and other books from the 12th to the 16th centuries. Her talent has become a reference point, she received a Dayton, for the third consecutive year, the worldwide prize for illumination.

As well as these masterpieces hanging on her gallery walls, she is the only an exhibition from the 1st of August** to the 21st of September, entitled "Around the Courts of France Aug. 2002 to 1997". Prints, linens, tapestries, and other supplies will be in the spotlight of magnificent new illuminations taken from a XVth century Book of Hours belonging to Anne of Brittany.***

*this is a sort of pun; probably the most famous manuscript of all time is translated in The Percy-Nich Hours of the Duke de Berry.