

# Illuminate an Initial Activity

Created by Susan Kelly vonMedicus, Manuscript Illuminator



To begin this activity, watch a demonstration by Susan vonMedicus by clicking the play button on the video!



This project is in the style of the Spanish Hymnal in the Glencairn Museum collection, on display in the Library.

For information and images of the book please visit and look closely at the issue of Glencairn Museum News titled [Glencairn's Two-Foot Tall Medieval Hymnal](#)

## Materials:

- Sheet of watercolor paper
- Pencil
- Fine point markers
- (optional) Water color paints and fine brush
- Ruler
- Eraser
- Tape



## Instructions:

- Choose a letter from the sample alphabet on page 2.
- Using your printer at home, or at your local office store, enlarge the letter to be at least 3 inches tall – the taller the letter the more room for decorations!
- Using the side of the pencil, rub the pencil to color over the back of the printed letter template.
- Tape the template onto your watercolor paper, with a generous border of space all around.
- Using a sharp pencil trace the outline of the letter onto the watercolor paper. Remove the taped down template, and you will have a traced outline to work with. Now you can decorate your letter.
- Using your pencil, lightly sketch a box around your letter with at least a ¼ inch border all around. You can use a ruler to make the lines straight and even, or draw it freeform.
- Fill in the area inside of the letter itself - use watercolor or your markers to fill this space with a color as smooth and solid as possible. If using watercolors stir until a lot of pigment is dissolved so you can have an opaque color on your letter.
- You now have blank space surrounding your colored letter with the box and holes of the letter's shape to decorate with patterns such as geometric designs, polka dots, leaves or vines or flowers, swirls, stripes - the limit is your imagination! You can divide the letter's holes into sections. The box around your letter can sprout vines and knots from corners or centers – make it a beautiful celebration!
- I plan with faint pencil then go over these lines with fine point markers or pen and ink. When everything is dry you can erase the pencil lines. Medieval scribes and illuminators prized bright colors and fine delicate lines for this work. The traditional style uses a bright red letter surrounded with deep blue patterns of decoration or reversed with an intense blue letter surrounded by bright red decorative patterns- but you can use whatever colors you love.

Share your at-home activity creations with us on social media by tagging us @glencairnmuseum #glencairnmedievalfestival or email a photo to [info@glencairnmuseum.org](mailto:info@glencairnmuseum.org)

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14th Century  
16. Uncials



Sample alphabet from Graphic Arts Archive Book of Medieval & Renaissance Alphabets.