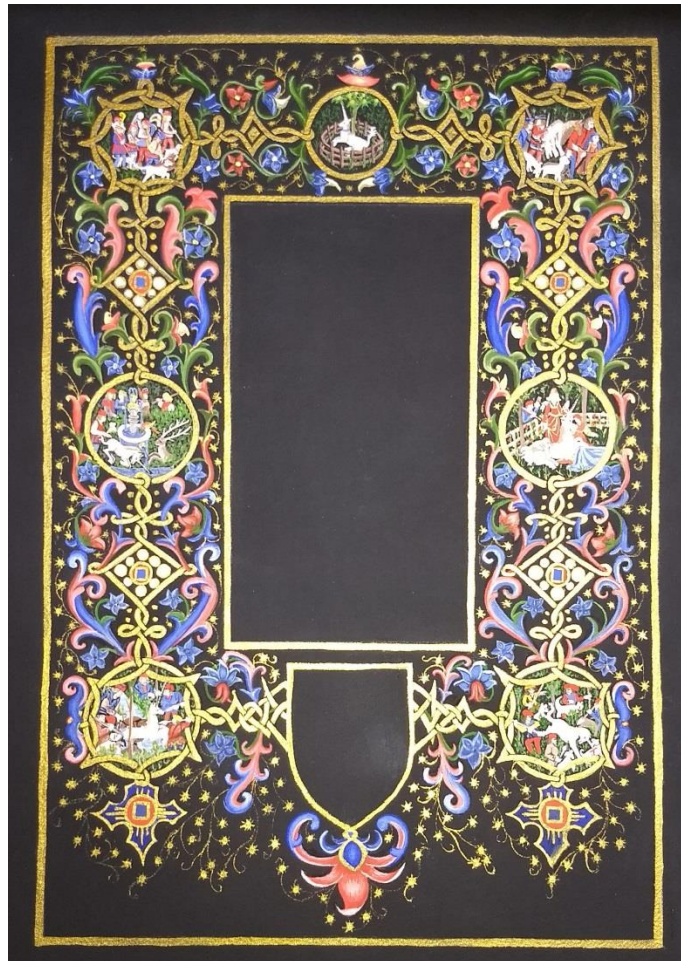


Scroll for Lord Tiberius of Sylvan Glen



by Lady Umm Samin bint Asad al-Isfahaniyya

AoA for Lord Tiberius of Sylvan Glen

Awarded at 12th Night, 2017 by Queen Margarite

Illumination by Lady Umm Samin bint Asad al-Isfahaniyya

The design:

The challenge of this AoA scroll was the subject matter preferred by the recipient. Inquiries to his family members revealed that this young man (12 years), liked unicorns, so I wanted to make a unicorn the main feature of this scroll. However, I wanted it to be something that he would be proud to hang on his wall as an adult, so it could not be childish.

The first decision I made was to create it on black paper. That decision led me to the idea of a scroll based on the seven existing black book of hours from Flanders, 15th century (The Black Hours, 2017).



The illuminator is unknown. This manuscript is currently housed in the [Austrian National Library](#) in [Vienna](#) (Codex Vindobo 1856).

Another thing I liked about the Black Book', is their use of small round windows that allowed pictures to be included. I could put unicorns in those little windows. Next came the hunt for the unicorn that I would use for this project (pardon the pun), but after a lot of looking in margins of illuminations, etc. I kept coming across the "Hunt of the Unicorn Tapestries". Suddenly it hit me, why not use those? They were of the same period and geographic location as the Black Books, it was a natural fit.

"Comprised of seven wall hangings, each at least 12 feet high by 8 feet wide, the Unicorn Tapestries at the Cloisters were created 500 years ago by an unknown artist for unknown royalty in Western Europe from somewhere in southern Holland. " around 1495-1505 (Unicorn Tapestries at the Cloisters, 2017).



The hunt begins



Purifying its horn in the waters



Trying to escape



Fighting back

Betrayed

Killed and taken to the castle



Resurrected and living in captivity

Of these seven existing tapestries, six in good condition and one in two fragments that I combined. That meant I needed seven circles, and a space for his future arms. This lead to third element - the layout. After much searching of the Black Books and other illuminations of Flanders, I finally decided to base the layout design on a Book of Hours illuminated by Vante di Gabriello di Vante Attavanti (COLOUR: The Art and Science of Illuminated Manuscripts, 2017).



Vante di Gabriello di Vante Attavanti (c. 1480–90), Florence. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambrio Vante di Gabriello di

Vante Attavanti was an Italian illuminator of the period. Since many of the Flanders artists were educated in Italy, and their styles overlapped as a result, I felt it was appropriate to use this Italian design. Attavanti painted during the same time frame as the Black Books were made, so I decided to use his art as my inspiration for the layout despite the different locations.

Materials:

Black paper, chalk, gouache paints, homemade brushes, three I made, and one I had purchased.



Process:

The design was drafted and transferred to the black paper using white chalk. The seven tapestries were put into the circles, starting at the top left and moving around the page, counter clockwise so the last tapestry, the “Unicorn Captured” was at the top, center. The tapestries were painted first, then the gold and finally the border areas. The original Black Books were done using egg tempura on vellum.

Since I could not find any vellum at a reasonable cost at the time of this painting, I used paper, which was in use at the time. Around 1435-1450 paper was starting to be used for books. By the fourteenth century, paper was readily available to anyone at a reasonable price (Clement, 1997).

Gouache paint was used, since it works well on paper while egg tempera works well on rigid surfaces, but can flak on flexible surfaces such as paper (Gottsegen, 1993). .

There is a story that surrounds these seven tapestries that I have added as an appendix.

Works Cited

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Appendix

Elaborate woven tapestries were a common art form during the period of late Medieval and the Renaissance. Tapestries served the dual purpose of adding warmth to a room and providing beautiful decorations. Biblical or historic themes were common and often tapestries would be created in a cycle of 4-10 works telling a story. They were hand-stitched from threads of wool and silk, created in workshops throughout Europe.

The unicorn was seen as a symbol of Christ and was frequently shown in medieval art. There are several interesting examples of unicorn tapestries, this blog post will focus on one of the most famous unicorn tapestry cycles known as The Hunt of the Unicorn.

The cycle tells the story of a royal hunt of the unicorn and in these tapestries there are many symbolic ties between the unicorn and Christ. The unicorn is seen in six of the seven tapestries but he is missing from the first one. It is the start of the hunt with huntsman and hunting dogs out looking for the unicorn. If you look carefully you will see the initials "A" and "E" hidden in each tapestry several times. The "E" is backwards and one example can be seen in the tree between two hunters, others are found in the bottom corners. Notice the distinctive style of clothing worn by everyone in the tapestry. Every part of the tapestry is filled and the forest floor contains dozens of types of plants and flowers.

In the next tapestry the Unicorn is discovered as he dips his horn into the stream to purify the water. A wide variety of animals wait by the side of the stream to drink out of it afterwards. The animals include: a panther, a stag, a lion, a rabbit and even a hyena. Rather than representing animals found in a typical French forest, each animal had its own symbolism.

At the very moment he is putting his horn into the water the unicorn is discovered by the hunters who all point to him. This lovely tapestry is rather faded and the blue sky was added later after the cycle was recovered. During the time that this was created the sky would have been replaced by something else such as more trees. As we can see in the other tapestries, all areas were filled in with decoration and not left solid flat areas of color.

The recurring initials have led historians to think these tapestries may have been commissioned for a marriage. Note that in this tapestry the letters "F" and "R" have been added to this particular work, but they appear to have been added later and not part of the original tapestry. The viewer can also see different coats of arms on the collars of the hunting dogs which is likely an allusion to the family or families represented by the initials. The "R" added later may stand for the La Rochefoucaulds, the French noble family who owned these works for a time.

The composition in the 3rd tapestry is quite similar to the 2nd, the unicorn is in the center by the stream and surrounded by hunters, in the 2nd they all point to him and in the work above they all lunge at him with spears. As in the first two we can also note the use of vivid colors and dense foliage.

In the 4th tapestry the unicorn has been surrounded and is making an escape by giving a powerful kick, as he kicks outward his horn gouges one of the hunting dogs. This two follows the compositional set up of the previous two works. In the foreground a variety of animals continue to drink from the purified stream.

There is also a #5: *The Mystic Capture of the Unicorn*, today this is badly torn and only fragments remain. This is unfortunate as we don't know how the unicorn came to be captured. In one strip of the tapestry the unicorn is with two women (only the hand of one remains). The woman who strokes the unicorn is thought to be a maiden (virgin) due to the fact that she is shown in an enclosed garden which was a popular symbol of virginity. As he is subdued it appears that the other woman is signaling to the hunters. However since only pieces of this work are still intact that isn't known for certain.

The killing of the unicorn is presented in a rather gruesome way. If we are to follow the Christian symbolism of the unicorn in this tapestry cycle we can note the following: The unicorn is capable of purifying the water, the unicorn is tamed by a maiden (virgin) and killed violently. However after he is dead, he is resurrected in the last tapestry.

The subdued and resurrected unicorn sits within another small enclosure in the final tapestry in this series. In addition to the Christian symbolism there are also symbols that could reflect that the "maiden" has in fact subdued a bachelor by marrying him, another reason that historians think this was commissioned for a wedding.

Flowers each had their own symbolic meaning and several in this would also tie into a matrimonial theme; for example the lily for faithfulness and the carnation for marriage. The Metropolitan Museum of Art website says of this work:

"The Unicorn in Captivity may have been created as a single image rather than part of a series. In this instance, the unicorn probably represents the beloved tamed. He is tethered to a tree and constrained by a fence, but the chain is not secure and the fence is low enough to leap over. The unicorn could escape if he wished but clearly his confinement is a happy one, to which the ripe, seed-laden pomegranates in the tree—a medieval symbol of fertility and marriage—testify. The red stains on his flank do not appear to be blood, as there are no visible wounds like those in the hunting series; rather, they represent juice dripping from the bursting pomegranates above." *

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