Illuminated Manuscript

An illuminated manuscript is a document in which the text is supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as ornamented initials, margins and miniature graphics. In the strictest definition of the term, an illuminated manuscript refers only to manuscripts decorated with gold or silver but, in both common usage and modern scholarship, the term is now used to refer to any decorated or illustrated manuscript.

Procedure

I chose to illuminate a poem circa late 1980's early 1990's titled 'Cross the Sky.

I began, as many of these documents do, with an elaborate, oversized first letter and descending - yet still larger than the majority of the prose - text for the lines adjacent to said letter. I completed the first stanza with decreasing text dimensions until I reached the standard font size I would utilize for the remainder of the poem.







NOT OF TERROR NOR OF PAIN IT'S A SLEEPLESS VOICE, QUITE INSANE IT ECHOES DEEP WITHIN MY HEAD SOUNDING NOT UNLIKE THE DEAD AND AS THE MOON CREEPS 'CROSS THE SI IT ASKS ME IT WANT TO DIE...

Next, I added the second stanza but right-aligned it to produce a sense of movement within the piece. The third, and last, stanza was aligned back on the left, which balanced the text and centered the movement. Borders are a staple of the illuminated manuscript; so, I added stars around my poem.



IT'S A SLEEPLESS VOICE,
QUITE INSANE
IT ECHOES DEP WITHIN MY HEAD
SOUNDING NOT UNLIKE THE DEAD
SAD AS THE MOON CREEPS 'CROSS THE SKY
IT ASKS ME IF I WANT TO DIE ...
STHE STARS SHINE THROUGH THE NIGHT

AS THE STARS SHIKE THROUGH THE NIGHT MY MIND FELLS HEAVY, MY BODY LIGHT FLOATING TOWARD A LAND I OWN FLOATING PAST MY EARTHLY HOME THE VOICE, STILL DISTANT, SEEMS SO CLEAR SOMETHING GRIPS ME, SOMETHING KEAR AND AS THE CLOUDS SWEEP CROSS THE SKY IT ASKS ME IF I WANT TO DIE...



NOT OF TERROR NOR OF PAIN
ITS A SLEEPLESS VOICE,
QUITE INSANE
IT ECHOES DEEP WITHIN MY HEAD
SOUNDING NOT UNLIKE THE DEAD
AND AS THE MOON CREEPS CROSS THE SKY
IT ASKS ME IF I WANT TO DIE ...
STHE STARS SHINE THROUGH THE NIGHT

AS THE STARS SHINE THROUGH THE NIGHT
MY MIND FELLS HEAVY, MY 800Y LIGHT
FLOATING TOWARD A LAND I OWN
FLOATING TOWARD A LAND I OWN
THE VOICE, STILL DISTANT, SEEMS SO CLEAR
SOMETHING GRIPS ME, SOMETHING NEAR
AND AS THE CLOUDS SWEEP YGOSS THE SKY

SOMETHING GRIPS ME, SOMETHING NEAR
AND AS THE CLOUDS SWEEP CROSS THE SKY
IT ASKS ME IF I WANT TO DIE...
AS THE SUN BEGINS TO RISE
I FEEL THE PAIN WITHIN THE CRIES
WEEPING FOR AN UNTAMED LOVE
DENYING THAT IT'S HAD ENOUGH
THE SOUNDS VIBRATE THEN PADE AWAY
FOR DARNESS IS WHERE THEY WIJST STAY
AND AS THE LIGHT SPREADS 'CROSS THE SKY I WHISPER,
'I DONT WANT TO DIE.'



To complete the decorative elements, I added a sun icon and fancy moon symbol to the white spaces next to the first two stanzas. I reserved the third white space for a field of tiny stars.



This could be a finished product, however, color was a large part of the illumination process since all books, documents and manuscripts were already written in black ink. To include this effect, I started by simply adding color to the initial letter, some of the surrounding stars, the sun and even the last line of the poem.

Still, some decoration needed to be added to truly encompass the spirit of illumination; so, I replicated the moon, sun and stars and overlaid miniature versions on the initial letter to produce the ornamented embellishment well known within classical illumination.



Finally, I added my initials to the star-field at the bottom of the work. This monogram is a principal element to fine art and the illuminated manuscript is no exception. In this case, the signature reveals not only the illuminator but also the author of the prose.

