

ELLEN FRANK ILLUMINATION ARTS FOUNDATION, Inc.



*Dedicated to the transformative power
of art to build a culture of understanding.*

HISTORY AND PURPOSE

FOR MANY CENTURIES, societies far apart in culture and religion, sometimes at war with each other, have had in common an exquisite art form: the illumination, with pictures, paint and precious metals of their most sacred documents. In archives and museums, a decorated Hebrew marriage contract (or *katubab*), an embellished New Testament manuscript, a dazzling Koran, bespeak the reverence and intensity of feeling expressed through that fine art.

Today what is called “reverence” is often expressed in violence rather than art, and illumination -- labor intensive and reliant on rare materials -- has few practitioners. Artist and scholar Ellen Frank has explored the application and adaptation of illumination techniques and metaphors from various canons to contemporary manuscripts and large paintings. Her work has attracted wide interest among museums and cultural institutions, fine art publishers and collectors.

In 2004, Dr. Frank created the non-profit ELLEN FRANK ILLUMINATION ARTS FOUNDATION, Inc (EFIAF). Its purpose is to enhance understanding of the art and history of illumination among artists and the public and to enable the creation of new work in this historic genre.

The Foundation has established an ILLUMINATION ATELIER, in which interns and experienced artists learn the techniques of illumination under Dr. Frank’s guidance as master teacher while collaborating on major projects of illuminated art. The ATELIER brings together students, artists, scholars, curators, librarians and more from all over the world to work on its projects. Their dialogue, no less than their joint creations, bridging gaps in religion, ethnicity and aesthetic ideas, testifies to the transformative power of the collaborative artistic enterprise.

The work of ELLEN FRANK ILLUMINATION ARTS FOUNDATION insists upon the centrality of aesthetic activity in human experience and its transformative impact on humanity. In all cultures art has realized universal yearnings for beauty, awe and creative expression. The mystery of how this impulse is sustained against the odds imposed by humanity’s destructive impulse is insoluble, but clearly art is the mainstay of civilized tendencies. The ELLEN FRANK ILLUMINATION ARTS FOUNDATION revives and gives currency to an artistic form that might otherwise be lost or fall into disuse. In so doing, it renews and celebrates a tradition of vibrant aesthetic and inspirational power.

ELLEN FRANK ILLUMINATION ARTS FOUNDATION and the ILLUMINATION ATELIER were created to make this work possible.