

Welcome to Open Studio

July 2022 BYU Museum of Art

This month's Open Studio focuses on illumination. You will take a closer look at several different works of art by James Tissot, a 19th Century French artist, that reflect the symbolism and significance of light and the illumination in the Bible. For this self-guided tour, you can start by heading downstairs to the MOA's exhibit of *Prophets, Priests and Queens: James Tissot's Men and Women of the Old Testament*.



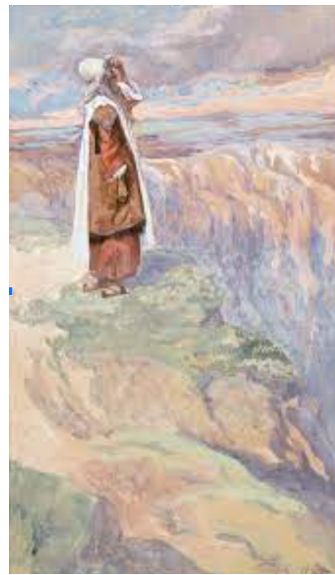
Let's Start!

First, find Tissot's *God Appears to Noah*. This painting depicts God speaking to Noah as a ray of light. The light acts as a symbol for God's goodness, holiness, purity, and more. By depicting God through the use of light, Tissot prevents himself from sharing his own interpretation of God, giving the viewer the liberty to choose how they view God. Many artists use symbolism in their art and light is something that can stand as a symbol for more than one thing. Thus, using light illuminates the complex yet simple nature of God.

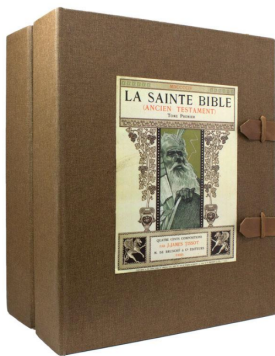
- What does Noah's physical response to the light tell you about how he feels?
- Can you find other paintings in this exhibit that depict God through the use of light? Perhaps you can even find this with other exhibits in the museum!

Next Up...

While in one work you may see a heavenly ray of light, another common way to illuminate a painting is through the use of sunlight. In *Moses Sees the Promised Land from Afar*, Tissot creates a narrative by highlighting not only Moses' gaze, but the sunset closing in on his labors. The realistic portrayal of a sunset not only helps develop the landscape, but its symbolic importance also contributes to the work. We can further analyze this piece as we not only consider the presence of light illuminating Moses' experiences, but also the change in light.



- *How could a sunset and a sunrise be interpreted differently?*
- *Why do you think Tissot chose to exclude the majority of what Moses was looking at?*



- *While Tissot's depiction of the old testament does not include handwritten scripture, how do his paintings allow us to further understand the experiences and stories they depict?*
- *If you have interest in seeing an illuminated bible on campus, visit special collections on the first floor in the Harold B. Lee Library. Here they have a copy of the St John's Bible Heritage Edition on display for the public to view!*

Last One!

If you head over to the display of *La Sainte Bible (Ancien Testament)* you will find several pages in a glass case. This demonstrates to us how Tissot envisioned his paintings of the Old Testament in the context of a bible filled with text and decoration. His artwork illuminates that which we read about in the bible, creating the opportunity to connect with the text in a new way. While on one hand we may see illumination as a type of enlightenment, it can also mean the decoration of manuscripts that are illuminated by the use of gold and silver, along with illustrations. Between 1100 and 1600, illuminated manuscripts were a popular book form, hand-written and decorated with ornate details shimmering in gold and silver.

Studio Activity

Make your own Illuminated Letter

For this activity you have several options! Today you will be creating your own illuminated artwork. You will be able to decorate and embellish your initials just as the pages of handwritten illuminated manuscripts were decorated with metallic golds, silvers and bright colors! Below is a list of the possible materials you will use and the potential methods you can try. If using hot glue, please do so on the cardboard. If you would like to just use paint, sharpies, or colored pencils, you can do so on paper or blank cardboard, it is entirely up to you!

Materials Tin Foil

- Cardboard
- Pencils
- Hotglue
- Tin foil
- Sharpies
- Paint
- Paint brushes
- Paper
- Elmer's glue
- Colored pencils
- Foil Smoothing Tool: firm, flat surface to apply pressure on foil. Such as a ruler, pencil eraser, flat end of a paintbrush or glue stick.

1. Draw your initial on the cardboard
2. Fill initial with hot glue
3. Allow hot glue to completely dry!
4. Starting from the top, begin smoothing down foil over the cardboard, being sure to press down around the raised surface and pushing from the middle out to get rid of any air bubble
5. Once foil is completely smoothed down and smoothed out around the initial, use elmers glue to adhere the foil to the back of the cardboard, once again smoothing out any air bubbles
6. Use sharpies to decorate your initial, but be careful not to put too much pressure on the tip of the marker, as this may cause the foil to tear



Painted Hot Glue

1. Using blank or cardboard, or cardboard wrapped in paper, outline your initial
2. Carefully apply hot glue on the outline of your initial, and be aware that the hot glue will be visible
3. Once glue is completely dry, using a small paintbrush, paint over hot glue letter with metallic paint
4. Once the paint has dried, and can use whatever materials you would like to decorate and illuminate your initial!

