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HIDDEN TREASURES

ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS FROM MIDWESTERN COLLECTIONS

DECEMBER 18, 2010 – FEBRUARY 27, 2011

This exhibition highlights the rarely seen holdings of ornately decorated handmade books from sixteen university libraries, museums, and private collections in seven states. Approximately forty manuscripts and single leaves are featured, dating from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries and made in Italy, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and England. Illuminated manuscripts were produced in Western Europe during the Middle Ages and early modern period, and the exhibition includes examples of Bibles, liturgical manuscripts, and books of private devotion, as well as literary, historical, and legal works. This exhibition explores the different book types most widely produced in the Middle Ages, considers the audiences for which they were made and how they were used, and presents the aesthetic brilliance of the medieval illuminator's craft. These illuminated manuscript examples, from some of the major artistic centers in Europe, can lead us to a greater understanding and appreciation of the past.

The illuminated manuscript exemplifies the convergence of medieval bookmaking, written text, and art. In the fourth century, the Roman Empire was failing and Christianity was gaining a foothold over the classical world. Roman law was being collected and codified, and the codex, the rectangular book form with pages invented in the first century, was replacing earlier forms of writing such as inscriptions in clay and stone, wax tablets, and the papyrus scroll. Handmade books, written in ink on animal skin, were adorned with painted decorations in brilliant pigments and gold leaf, and the leaves were bound in between leather-covered wooden boards centuries before the mid-fifteenth century invention of the printing press. Even after the broad dissemination of the printed book began, production of lavishly illuminated manuscripts continued into the sixteenth century as a testament to their aesthetic attraction, material durability, and signification of status. This specialized book art is still practiced today.

Artists used various design strategies to present the images that accompany the texts in these books. Miniature paintings—called “illuminations” for the frequent use of gold that literally illuminates the page in the presence of candlelight—stimulated the eyes, aided memory, and fueled the medieval imagination. They are still breathtakingly vibrant since they have been preserved for centuries between book covers and, in their more recent history, have been cherished as artistic treasures.

BIBLES

Bibles and biblical compendia were among the most important and widely produced books in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The scripture contained in the Bible was held as the divinely transmitted record of sacred history and thus considered to be humankind's ultimate spiritual guide. The English word bible comes from the Latin *biblia* or *biblia sacra*, “holy book,” which ultimately derives from the Greek τὰ βιβλία, *ta biblia*, meaning “the books.” From the beginning Christianity has relied upon the written word as the authority for religious teachings and worship. Among the earliest surviving texts are biblical manuscripts that were carried by monastic missionaries as far as the British Isles and Ireland where they wielded the power of literacy to convert local inhabitants and dominate existing oral traditions.



page 1: Initial 'O' from a Sistine Chapel Antiphonary with St. Clement I Pope and Martyr, 1539, Vincent Raymond de Lodève, French, active in Rome, ca. 1535–1557, tempera and gold on parchment, Chazen Museum of Art, Richard R. and Jean D. McKenzie Endowment Fund purchase, 2001.30

fig 1: Folio from a Bible with Marginalia, French, 14th century, ink, tempera, and gold on parchment Loyola University Museum of Art, Martin D'Arcy Collection, Gift of Mrs. John S. Millar, 1972-21

From the end of the eighth century, the central French city of Tours was an important ecclesiastical center and pilgrimage destination where the definitive text of the Latin Vulgate was compiled. The ninth century saw a prolific output of large Latin Bibles written in Caroline minuscule and often sumptuously decorated. These were disseminated throughout the Carolingian empire to monasteries in France, Germany, and Italy. A fragment of a ninth-century Bible in this exhibition was sent to the Abbey of Saint Maximin in the German city of Trier in the Rheinland, where it was cut up by monks in the fifteenth century when the abbey acquired the new Bible printed by Gutenberg.

The design, format, and decoration of bibles changed dramatically from the large, early medieval lectern bibles to smaller, portable, and densely written volumes that proliferated in Paris beginning in the thirteenth century. A leaf from a Bible illuminated in Cambrai, the northern French manuscript center, exemplifies the evolution of the two-column layout in the Gothic period. While the page margins are relatively wide, the text is written in closely spaced and heavily abbreviated Gothic script. This page from the Book of Daniel is embellished with a miniature showing Daniel in the lions' den aided by the prophet Habakkuk.

The margins of Gothic manuscripts were often populated by hybrid monsters, apes, and other animals engaged in human activities. In some instances such marginalia offer puns or commentary on the main text; in other cases, as in a leaf from a fourteenth-century Bible, the images appear to have little relation to the text, but suggest instead the artist's subversive pleasure in inverting the expected social mores and the established hierarchy. Thus, in the upper margin of a page devoted to Chapter Ten of Mark's Gospel, we see playful and satirical human-animal hybrid figures of a bishop, whose office required strict chastity, listening intently to the siren song of a woman with long locks of hair playing a psaltery, and in the lower margin, it appears that a woman is engaged in a kind of mock combat with a better-armed male knight. The mixture of animal and human parts may allude ultimately to humankind's lower "animal" nature as a foil for Christ's idealized humanity. *fig 1*

LITURGICAL MANUSCRIPTS

The liturgy is the public ritual performed by Roman Catholic clergy, and it is embodied in two rites: the Mass, usually celebrated daily with the focus on the sacrament of the Eucharist, and the Divine Office, communal prayers recited eight times daily at the Canonical Hours. *fig 2* The liturgy consists of spoken prayers, readings from the Bible or other religious texts, as well as sung parts. In order to perform the liturgies it was necessary to have a full complement of different kinds of books containing separate sections of the spoken or sung texts. These books, particularly those containing the sung portions of the Mass (known as the Gradual) or the sung portions of the Divine Office (referred to as the Antiphonary), were often lavishly decorated with large historiated initials, which contained narrative scenes relating to the subject of the feast being celebrated. *fig 3*

Liturgical manuscripts are among the deluxe manuscripts produced in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, because they are used to celebrate the central public Church rituals. They were

fig 2: Initial 'S' from a Choir Book with The Celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi and Initial 'R' with A Funeral Scene, Northern French or Flemish, ca. 1375, tempera and gold on parchment, Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, St., John's University (Collegeville, Minn.). Bean ms. 3, fols. 42v-43



fig 3: Folio from a Carmelite Gradual with the Ascension, Scenes of the Prophets Elijah and Elisha, and The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, French (Bourges or Tours), 1475–1483, ink, tempera, and gold on parchment, University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, Spurlock Museum, 1929.14.0003

often commissioned by popes, bishops, abbots, and cardinals, or by secular rulers and members of the nobility who gave books to religious institutions as a form of self-memorialization.

One of the Missals (Mass books) in the exhibition was produced around 1300 for the Dominican convent of Heiligen Kreuz (Convent of the Holy Cross) in the south German city of Regensburg, which was founded in 1233, only eleven years after the death of St. Dominic. The Canon of the Mass, in which the bread and wine are consecrated by the priest as the sacrificial offerings of the body and blood of Christ, is illustrated by the Crucifixion flanked by the Virgin and St. John with a diminutive figure of a Dominican monk kneeling in adoration at the base of the cross. *fig 4*

This exhibition reunites three initials that were cut out of a 1539 Antiphonary made for Pope Paul III Farnese to be used in the Sistine Chapel. The large-scale initials, painted in jewel-like colors and embellished with gold, served as easily recognized place markers for the choir members who would have sung from the oversized musical manuscript perched on a high wooden lectern, easily visible to the assembled singers. *page 1, figure 11*

BOOKS OF PRIVATE DEVOTION: PSALTERS, BREVIARIES, BOOKS OF HOURS, AND PRAYER BOOKS

From the early thirteenth to the fourteenth century, illustrated psalters became the most common prayer books used by the laity for private devotion. The practice of reciting the psalms as part of their daily prayers emulated the daily liturgy of the Divine Office performed by the clergy; all 150 psalms would have been read or, most likely, recited in the course of a week.

A breviary contains the canonical prayers, hymns, the Psalms, readings, and notations for everyday use. *fig 5* The Book of Hours developed from the Psalter and the Breviary as early as the thirteenth century and quickly became the bestselling book of private devotion for laymen and laywomen in the medieval period. The text and decoration in books of hours generally follow a predictable sequence, though variations occur depending on the patron commissioning the manuscript, the manuscript's place of origin, and historical and political concerns.

Miniatures from Netherlandish and French Books of Hours painted by some of the leading artists of the time such as Willem Vrelant and Jean Poyet are included in the exhibition, *fig 6* as well as two examples of prayer books produced in the Netherlands for the English market. The latter contain a variety of additional prayers, including illustrated prayers addressed to each of the wounds of Christ.

According to its colophon, the latest prayer book in the exhibition was written and illuminated in 1597 by the Cistercian nuns of the La Cambre monastery in Brussels, on the order of their abbess. The volume was produced for the Cardinal Archduke Albert VII of Austria, son of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II and nephew of King Philip II of Spain. The miniature on the page displayed shows the Cardinal embracing the crucified body of Christ as he takes it off the Cross, an image that reflects an intensely empathetic strain of personal piety that had developed by the end of the sixteenth century. *fig 7* Books of hours often contained heraldry, mottoes, portraits, and other personalizing features that indicated who owned and used a particular manuscript.

fig 4: Dominican Missal with Crucifixion, German (Regensburg), ca. 1300, ink, tempera, and gold on parchment, Lent by The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The Washburn Fund, 23.66, fols. 72v–73



fig 5: Folio from the Breviary of Leonello d'Este with Initial 'M' with St. James the Greater and Initial 'D' with Sts. Peter and Paul, 1441–1448, Workshop of Guglielmo Giralaldi, Italian (Ferrara), documented 1441–1494, ink, tempera, and gold on parchment, Michigan State University, Kresge Museum of Art, MSU purchase 67.13



LITERARY, HISTORICAL, AND LEGAL MANUSCRIPTS

The exhibition includes several examples of secular texts illuminated for medieval and Renaissance patrons. Among them are miniatures from an early copy of the medieval bestseller *Legenda Aurea*, or *Golden Legend*, a compendium of saints' lives including fanciful etymologies of the saints' names and allegorical interpretations, compiled around 1260 by Jacobus de Voragine, an Italian chronicler and archbishop of Genoa. The *Speculum humanae salvationis*, or *Mirror of Human Salvation*, was an anonymous, bestselling illustrated work of popular theology. It focused on typological interpretations, according to which figures and events in the Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament) were understood to foretell or anticipate those in the New Testament. Both texts were often copiously illustrated to convey didactic and often moralizing information in a lively and pedagogically effective manner. The exhibition includes a striking English fifteenth-century miniature depicting Joseph's bloodied coat, a prefiguration of Christ's Resurrection, which originally formed part of a *Speculum* manuscript. *fig 8*

Medieval law books, especially those from Bologna, the most important medieval university for legal studies, were also beautifully decorated. Two examples are in the exhibition: a leaf from the Statutes of the Tailors' Guild, and a miniature of Pope Boniface VIII Presiding over the Sacred College from a fourteenth-century canon law manuscript illuminated by the city's foremost manuscript painter, Nicolò di Giacomo. *fig 9* The Renaissance revival of antiquity in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries featured ninth-century manuscripts rediscovered by humanists, who mistook these books for ancient codices. These Carolingian copies of ancient texts were written in an uncluttered and legible script that became the model for Renaissance manuscripts and early printed books. Included in the exhibition is a volume of three texts authored by the influential Italian humanist Pier Candido Decembrio, written in the rounded, clearly legible script and illuminated with the white vine-scroll decoration characteristic of Italian humanist manuscripts.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES OF THE MEDIEVAL ILLUMINATOR

Medieval books were made of prepared animal skins from a calf (vellum) or from the skins of a sheep or goat (parchment). Because it can be extremely difficult to distinguish between the two, the term "parchment" will be used here to refer to any type of animal skin. The word "manuscript" comes from the Latin *manus* (hand) and *scribere* (to write), thus meaning a book handwritten by a scribe, generally using oak-gall ink applied with a quill pen. "Miniature" derives from the Italian term *miniatura*, which comes from the Latin noun *minium* for the mineral pigment red-lead most often used for writing rubrics, or the adjectival form *miniatus*, meaning colored with red-lead, painted with cinnabar, or simply colored red. It did not originally refer to the often diminutive size of these pictures. The decoration of an illuminated manuscript page is characterized by a hierarchy of decoration, including independent miniatures, historiated and decorated initials, full and partial borders, line fillers, penwork initials, and marginal imagery.

fig 6: Miniature from a Book of Hours with Virgin and Christ Child, ca. 1490–1500, Attributed to Jean Poyet, French (Tours), active 1483–1497, tempera and gold on parchment, Lent by The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, 14.12



fig 7: Prayerbook of Cardinal Archduke Albert VII of Austria with Crucifixion, Flemish (Brussels), 1597, tempera and gold on parchment, Private Collection



fig 8: Joseph's Coat Presented to Jacob, possibly from the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, English (London), ca. 1420, tempera and gold on parchment, Les Enluminures Ltd., Chicago, Ill.



The stages of creating an illuminated manuscript include preparing the animal skin for writing and painting; writing the text and rubrics; drawing figural and ornamental designs to accompany the text; applying thinly beaten gold leaf and bright pigments derived from mineral, vegetable, and animal sources; ordering the individually folded parchment sheets into gatherings, or quires; then stacking the quires and sewing and binding them together between leather-covered wooden boards. The labor was done by specialized craftsmen and occasionally women, namely parchmenters, scribes, rubricators, and illuminators. Even from the early medieval period, illuminated manuscripts were created in lay scriptoria and workshops as well as monastic establishments. The thirteenth century saw a sharp rise in secular production, but monks and nuns produced illuminated manuscripts in the monasteries and convents well into the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. In fact, book illumination was executed by some of the leading monumental artists of the day, especially in thirteenth- to fifteenth-century Italy.

These manuscripts were treasured from the moment of inception. The materials came at great expense, from processing parchment and acquiring mineral pigments, such as lapis lazuli for the intense blues, as well as the precious metals silver and especially gold. An unfinished French Book of Hours written and illuminated around 1450 allows the modern viewer to see the distinct phases of the making of a medieval manuscript. The exhibition also includes a rare alphabet pattern book created in northern Italy in 1450 by the illuminator Guiniforte da Vimercate. It is still unclear whether a manuscript such as this one would have been a repository of source material for the illuminator's workshop, used to transmit designs from master to assistant, or if it served as a book of samples shown to prospective clients. It is also possible that this collection of letter forms was made solely for the passionate bibliophile.

COLLECTING ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS

From the beginning, illuminated manuscripts have been, in some sense, collectors' items. Whether made for use in cathedrals, monasteries, or private chapels by priests, monks, or royalty, in universities or civic institutions by students or lawyers, or in private studies by collectors, these precious books exerted far-reaching power on their owners and on their beholders. To this day, illuminated manuscripts have been collected by bibliophiles, art collectors, scholars, and practitioners of the book arts, among others. Largely due to the dissolution of the monasteries during the eighteenth century, though selectively even earlier, manuscripts were dismembered and their beautiful illuminated pages dispersed far and wide, where they made their way into private and institutional collections, especially through increased auction activity in the nineteenth century. Many medieval manuscripts became obsolete after the invention of the printing press, yet their appreciation as works of art rather than as objects of veneration has prevailed.

fig 9: Miniature of Pope Boniface VIII Presiding over the Sacred College, late 14th century, Nicolò di Giacomo, Italian (Bologna), ca. 1325–1403, tempera and gold on parchment, University of Michigan Museum of Art, Museum Purchase, 1968/2.50

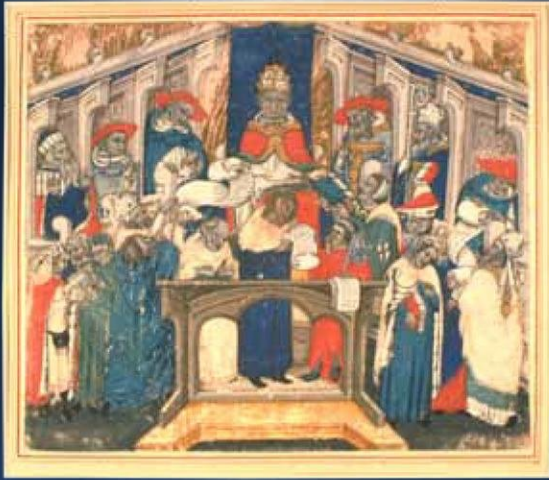


fig 10: Initial 'C' from a Choir Book with St. Dominic Loricatus, ca. 1440, Olivetan Master (Fra Girolamo da Milano), Italian (Milan), active 1429–1449, tempera and gold on parchment, Loyola University Museum of Art, Martin D'Arcy Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Chester D. Tripp, 1975-19-02



BIBLES

BIBLE FRAGMENT, IN LATIN

French (Tours), late 2nd
quarter of the 9th century

Ink and tempera on parchment

Courtesy, the Lilly Library, Indiana
University, Bloomington, Poole 30

This manuscript is written in Carolingian minuscule, the uniform, legible script championed by Charlemagne. Clear letter spacing, distinct upper and lower cases, and rounded letterforms gave this script a decisive role in disseminating literacy and classical texts throughout the Carolingian Empire. This Bible fragment comes the Abbey of Saint Maximin in Trier, Germany.

FOLIO FROM A BIBLE WITH DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN AIDED BY THE PROPHET HABAKKUK

French (Cambrai), ca. 1290

Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment

University of Michigan Museum of Art,
Anonymous Gift in memory of Mrs. John
Alexander, 1993/2.10

This densely written manuscript page contains the prologue and opening text of the Book of Daniel. A miniature in the right column marks the Book's beginning. The prophet Habakkuk, held aloft by an angel, offers a jug of water and a plate of bread to Daniel in the lions' den below.

BIBLE

French (Paris), 13th century

Ink and tempera on parchment

Department of Special Collections, Memorial
Library, University of Wisconsin–Madison, MS
255, fols. 164v–165

The turn of the thirteenth century saw a revolution in Bible production in Paris. Portable one-volume Bibles contained the whole standardized text, systematically divided into the books and numbered chapters we know today. Pocket Bibles were used by students, parish priests, and preachers. This manuscript is writ-

ten in compact Gothic script with heavily abbreviated words. The large red and blue “puzzle” initial ‘E’ on the left page opens Chapter 1 of the Book of Jonah, and the similar initial ‘V’ on the right page signals the Book of Micah.

FOLIO FROM A BIBLE WITH MARGINALIA

French, 14th century

Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment

Loyola University Museum of Art, Martin
D'Arcy Collection, Gift of Mrs. John S. Millar,
1972-21

fig 1

INITIAL 'M' WITH HYBRID CREATURES

French, 13th century

Ink and tempera on parchment

Private Collection, Madison, Wisconsin

MINIATURE FROM GUYART DE MOULINS, BIBLE HISTORIALE, WITH CHRIST PREACHING TO THE APOSTLES

Circle of the Master of the
Berry Apocalypse

French (Paris), active ca. 1405–1420

Tempera and gold on parchment

Thrivent Financial Collection of Religious Art,
92-11

This miniature was cut out of a deluxe manuscript of the principal French translation of the Bible composed between 1291 and 1295 by the priest and canon Guyart de Moulins. The text of the Bible Historiale also contained a translation of the *Historia Scholastica*, a Biblical paraphrase written for students by the twelfth-century French theologian Peter Comestor.

LITURGICAL MANUSCRIPTS

DOMINICAN MISSAL WITH CRUCIFIXION

German (Regensburg), ca. 1300
Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment
Lent by The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The Washburn Fund, 23.66, fols. 72v-73

fig 4

FOLIO FROM A MISSAL WITH INITIAL 'I'

Italian (Perugia), ca. 1350
Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment
Department of Special Collections, Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison, MS 170a (31-4)

INITIAL 'S' FROM A CHOIR BOOK WITH THE CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI AND INITIAL 'R' WITH A FUNERAL SCENE

Northern French or Flemish, ca. 1375
Tempera and gold on parchment
Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, St. John's University (Collegeville, Minn.). Bean ms. 3, fols. 42v-43

The top large initial 'S' utilizes the two compartments of the letter to situate the two principal actors in the liturgical drama being enacted. In the upper portion, the celebration of the Mass of Corpus Christi is depicted with the priest facing the altar at the most sacred ritual moment of the Elevation of the Host. In the lower portion, the community of Benedictine monks is gathered, led by their abbot, with the crozier at center left. Eucharistic images became popular in liturgical manuscripts following the promulgation of the doctrine of Transubstantiation by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, according to which the body of Christ is believed to be present in the consecrated host.

fig 2

INITIAL 'F' FROM A GRADUAL WITH ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PREACHING, LATE 14TH CENTURY

Attributed to Martino di Bartolomeo
Italian (Siena), documented 1389-ca. 1435
Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment
Thrivent Financial Collection of Religious Art, 95-10

The initial 'F' opens the chant "Fuit homo missus a deo. [There was a man sent from God.]" for the Mass for the Vigil of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24) in the Gradual. This illuminated initial would likely have come from the volume containing the Proper of the Mass from a multivolume choir book set used for the celebration of Mass.

INITIAL 'C' FROM A CHOIR BOOK WITH ST. DOMINIC LORICATUS, CA. 1440

Olivetian Master (Fra Girolamo da Milano)
Italian (Milan), active 1429-1449
Tempera and gold on parchment
Loyola University Museum of Art, Martin D'Arcy Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Chester D. Tripp, 1975-19-02

Saint Dominic Loricatus (995-1060), an Umbrian hermit who became a Benedictine monk, was known to practice extreme penitential self-mortification. He is shown here reciting the psalms, inflicting 100 lashes for each psalm. The illuminator of this initial was also a Benedictine monk and a member of the ascetic Olivetan branch of white monks that was founded in 1319 at the hermitage of Monte Oliveto Maggiore outside of Siena, Tuscany.

fig 10

INITIAL 'D' FROM A CHOIR BOOK WITH KING DAVID

Collaborator of Olivetan Master (Fra Girolamo da Milano)
Italian (Milan), active 1429-1449
Tempera and gold on parchment
Loyola University Museum of Art, Martin D'Arcy Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Chester D. Tripp, 1975-19-01

FOLIO FROM A CARMELITE GRADUAL WITH THE ASCENSION, SCENES OF THE PROPHETS ELIJAH AND ELISHA, AND THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

French (Bourges or Tours), 1475-1483
Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Spurlock Museum, 1929.14.0003

This page contains a thirteen-line historiated miniature with the Ascension of Christ that accompanies the text "Viri Galilei quid admiramini aspicientes in celum? [Men of Galilee, what are you looking at, staring into heaven?]," the introit to the Feast of the Ascension, and a full border with three scenes along the right margin depicting the prophets Elijah and Elisha dressed as Carmelite friars, and a bas-de-page scene with the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. This manuscript was produced for a Carmelite monastic establishment and the iconography contains propaganda supporting the order's belief that the prophets were their founders.

fig 3

INITIAL 'D' FROM AN ANTIPHONARY FROM COMO CATHEDRAL WITH A TEMPLE

Italian (Lombardy), late 15th century
Tempera and gold on parchment
Chazen Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Carol L. Brewster, 1972.80

INITIAL 'L' FROM A SISTINE CHAPEL ANTIPHONARY WITH ST. LAWRENCE, 1539

Vincent Raymond de Lodève
French, active in Rome, ca. 1535-1557
Tempera and gold on parchment
Collection of Jim Wiggins

fig 11

INITIAL 'V' FROM A SISTINE CHAPEL ANTIPHONARY WITH ALL SAINTS, 1539

Vincent Raymond de Lodève
French, active in Rome, ca. 1535-d. 1557
Tempera and gold on parchment
Collection of Jim Wiggins

INITIAL 'O' FROM A SISTINE CHAPEL ANTIPHONARY WITH ST. CLEMENT I POPE AND MARTYR, 1539

Vincent Raymond de Lodève
French, active in Rome, ca. 1535-1557
Tempera and gold on parchment
Chazen Museum of Art, Richard R. and Jean D. McKenzie Endowment Fund purchase, 2001.30

page 1

BOOKS OF PRIVATE DEVOTION

FOLIO FROM A PSALTER

Flemish (Artois), ca. 1260
Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment
University of Michigan Museum of Art, Gift of Ann and Leonard Eaton in appreciation for the excellent teaching of Ilene Forsyth and Marvin Eisenberg, 1986/2.87

A psalter contains the Book of Psalms, 150 sacred poems from the Hebrew Bible. In the early middle ages, it was one of the most luxuriously illuminated types of manuscripts, and by the thirteenth century it was produced widely. This text page contains modest decoration consisting of a small two-line illuminated initial 'E' beginning Psalm 30, "Exaltabo te domine [I will magnify thee, O Lord]," in addition to the smaller blue and gold capitals flourished in alternating red and blue, and the decorative line fillers. The page is animated by a small green songbird, a reference to the psalm's final verse: "Therefore shall every good man sing of thy praise without ceasing."

fig 11: Initial 'L' from a Sistine Chapel Antiphony with St. Lawrence, 1539, Vincent Raymond de Lodève, French, active in Rome, ca. 1535–1557, tempera and gold on parchment, Collection of Jim Wiggins



fig 12: One of two folios from a Book of Hours with Mass of St. Gregory and Funeral Scene with Mourners, ca. 1470, Willem Vrelant, Netherlandish (Bruges), active 1454–1481, tempera and gold on parchment, Loyola University Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Edward J. Ryan, 1979-25-01, 1979-25-02



FOLIO FROM THE BREVIARY OF LEONELLO D'ESTE WITH INITIAL 'M' WITH ST. JAMES THE GREATER AND INITIAL 'D' WITH STS. PETER AND PAUL, 1441–1448

Workshop of Guglielmo Giraldi
Italian (Ferrara), documented 1441–1494
Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment
Michigan State University, Kresge Museum of Art, MSU purchase 67.13

By the fourteenth century, the breviary contained the entire text of the canonical hours and copies were made for lay users, as well as for the clergy and members of religious orders, for use in the daily recitation of the Divine Office. The deluxe manuscript to which these two folios belonged is now recognized as the Breviary of Leonello d'Este, Duke of Ferrara from 1441–1450. It was recorded in the Este accounts as having been illuminated between 1441 and 1448 by some of the major Ferrarese artists of the day, including Giorgio d'Alemagna, Guglielmo Giraldi, and Matteo de' Pasti.

fig 5

FOLIO FROM THE BREVIARY OF LEONELLO D'ESTE, 1441–1448

Workshop of Guglielmo Giraldi
Italian (Ferrara), documented 1441–1494
Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment
Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, St. John's University (Collegeville, Minn.). Arca Artium Collection

This leaf from the Breviary of Leonello d'Este, also known in more recent times as the Llangatock Breviary, which was brought to Wales in the early nineteenth century by the Rolls family, later the Barons Llangatock, The Hendre, Monmouth, and sold at Christie's in 1958. The manuscript was purchased by Goodspeed's of Boston and dismantled in 1959.

TWO FOLIOS FROM A BOOK OF HOURS WITH MASS OF ST. GREGORY AND FUNERAL SCENE WITH MOURNERS, CA. 1470

Willem Vrelant
Netherlandish (Bruges), active 1454–1481
Tempera and gold on parchment
Loyola University Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Edward J. Ryan, 1979-25-01, 1979-25-02

Painted by Willem Vrelant, one of the leading illuminators in Bruges during the late 1400s, these miniatures are executed in grisaille, or tones of gray with gold highlights. Bruges was a major European center for the production of illuminated manuscripts, especially books of hours. Vrelant, as a member of the city's guild of St. John the Evangelist, which served artisans involved in the book trade (parchment makers, scribes, and illuminators), operated one of the city's large commercial workshops.

fig 12

THREE FOLIOS FROM A BOOK OF HOURS(?), IN DUTCH

Netherlandish, ca. 1440
Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment
Loyola University Museum of Art, Martin D'Arcy Collection, Gift of Mrs. Diane W. Chisek, 1974-06

Books for private devotion used by the laity were not only written in Latin but in vernacular languages such as Dutch.

BOOK OF HOURS, SARUM USE

Netherlandish, made for the English market, ca. 1465–1470

Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment
Underwood Prayer Book Collection at Nashotah House

In this section of prayers to the wounds of Christ, each opening initial is illustrated with the object of the prayer—the crown of thorns, the wound of the right hand, the wound of the left hand, and the wounds of Christ's torso. Such images attest to the increased popular devotion to the passion of Christ in the fifteenth century.

fig 13

BOOK OF HOURS, LIMOGES
USE, WITH PENTECOST

French, ca. 1475–ca. 1500

Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment

Private Collection, fols. 84v–85

The miniature shows the Virgin kneeling under a baldachin and holding a prayer book, surrounded by adoring disciples as the dove of the Holy Spirit enters the room on golden rays. This image, while providing an immediate visual model to the user of this book, introduces the Hours of the Holy Spirit—a short series of invocations, prayers, and hymns recited to seek the aid of the third person of the Trinity.

MINIATURE FROM A BOOK
OF HOURS WITH VIRGIN AND
CHRIST CHILD, CA. 1490–1500

Attributed to Jean Poyet

French (Tours), active 1483–1497

Tempera and gold on parchment

Lent by The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, 14.12

Jean Poyet was a French illuminator working in Tours at the end of the fifteenth century, whose artistry was sought for commissions for Queen Anne of Brittany and other royal patrons. Conceived as an independently framed picture within a Book of Hours, this type of miniature illustrates an innovation introduced by Poyet and others working in the Loire valley. The Virgin is shown offering a carnation to the Christ Child, which symbolizes love. The holy figures are surrounded by musical angels playing the lute, recorder, and rebec.

fig 6

FOLIO FROM A BOOK OF HOURS
WITH GOSPEL OF MARK

Flemish (Ghent-Bruges), ca. 1500–1510

Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment

Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas, Letha Churchill Walker Memorial Art Fund, 1980.0021

The illusionistic painted border of naturalistically rendered flowers, fruits, birds, and insects is the hallmark of manuscripts illuminated in Ghent and Bruges in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This page contains the beginning of the Gospel Lesson of Mark.

PSALTER-HOURS WITH
COMMENDATION OF A SOUL

Netherlandish, made for the English market,
mid-15th century–1549

Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment

Underwood Prayer Book Collection at
Nashotah House

The only miniature in this volume shows two angels lifting a small naked figure in a cloth, which is the figural representation of the commendation of a soul. This image accompanies a series of prayers and psalms that were recited by a priest at the bed of a dying person.

PRAYERBOOK OF CARDINAL
ARCHDUKE ALBERT VII OF
AUSTRIA WITH CRUCIFIXION

Flemish (Brussels), 1597

Tempera and gold on parchment

Private Collection

According to the colophon, this prayerbook was written and illuminated by the Cistercian nuns of the monastery of La Cambre, on the order of their abbess, in Brussels in 1597 for the Cardinal Archduke Albert VII of Austria, who was the son of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II and the nephew of King Philip II of Spain. The miniature facing a prayer to the heart of Christ crucified shows the Cardinal embracing the body of the crucified Christ as he removes it from the Cross, an image that reflects the intensely empathetic strain of personal piety that had developed by the end of the sixteenth century.

fig 7

LITERARY,
HISTORICAL, AND
LEGAL MANUSCRIPTS

STANDING FEMALE SAINT
FROM JACOBUS DE VORAGINE,
GOLDEN LEGEND, CA. 1275–1285

Master of Monza

Italian (active in Lombardy), ca. 1270–1290

Tempera on parchment

Les Enluminures Ltd., Chicago, Ill.

These two miniatures and numerous others that survive were cut out of one of the earliest illuminated manuscripts of the *Golden Legend*.

STANDING FRIAR SAINT FROM
JACOBUS DE VORAGINE,
GOLDEN LEGEND, CA. 1275–1285

Master of Monza

Italian (active in Lombardy), ca. 1270–1290

Tempera on parchment

Les Enluminures Ltd., Chicago, Ill.

TWO INITIALS 'S' WITH
PORTRAITS OF FAMOUS MEN

Italian (Bologna or Padua), ca. 1380–1400

Tempera and gold on parchment

Private Collection, Madison, Wisconsin

The anonymous men that inhabit two initials 'S' are shown in contemporary dress, one in profile and one in three-quarter view. From fragmentary texts on the back it can be deduced that these initials illustrated a historical text, possibly one recounting the lives of famous men and women, or "uomini illustri." Fresco cycles in North Italian Renaissance palaces also illustrate these texts on a monumental scale.

JOSEPH'S COAT PRESENTED
TO JACOB, POSSIBLY FROM
THE SPECULUM HUMANAE
SALVATIONIS

English (London), ca. 1420

Tempera and gold on parchment

Les Enluminures Ltd., Chicago, Ill.

fig 8

PIER CANDIDO DECEMBRIO,
DE GESTIS ROMANORUM. VITA
HOMERI. DE ORIGINE, SITUQUE
ET QUALITATE URBS ROME

Italian, ca. 1460–1470

Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment

Department of Special Collections, Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin–Madison, MS 162, fols. 18v–19

FOLIO FROM THE STATUTES OF
THE TAILORS' GUILD, CA. 1340
(AFTER 1334)

Maestro del 1346

Italian (Bologna), active 1330–1348

Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment

Les Enluminures Ltd., Chicago, Ill.

Bolognese legal documents were typically illuminated by the city's most prominent artists. The Maestro del 1346, though unidentified, illuminated other statute books, including one for the guild of cloth merchants. He collaborated with his younger contemporary Nicolò di Giacomo. Around 1348, the year the plague decimated Europe, the artist of this miniature ceases any documented activity.

MINIATURE OF POPE
BONIFACE VIII PRESIDING
OVER THE SACRED COLLEGE,
LATE 14TH CENTURY

Nicolò di Giacomo

Italian (Bologna), ca. 1325–1403

Tempera and gold on parchment

University of Michigan Museum of Art,
Museum Purchase, 1968/2.50

Books abound in this miniature, a witness to the emphasis on books, especially law books, in Bologna, an important center of manuscript production.

fig 9

fig 13: Book of Hours, Sarum Use, Netherlandish, made for the English market, ca. 1465–1470, Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment, Underwood Prayer Book Collection at Nashotah House



fig 14: Miniature of David Confronting Abner, German(?), early 16th century, tempera and gold on parchment, Michigan State University, Kresge Museum of Art, MSU purchase, 67.14



MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES OF THE MEDIEVAL ILLUMINATOR

FRANCISCAN ANTIPHONARY

Italian, 15th century

Ink and tempera on parchment

Department of Special Collections, Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin–Madison, MS 441, fols. 64v–65

This volume of the Antiphony contains feasts of the Franciscan Order, namely St. Francis, St. Clare, and St. Louis of Toulouse, indicating that it was made for a house of mendicant friars or nuns. The text and square musical notation were used for singing the antiphon of the Vigil of the Feast of St. Francis, “Franciscus vir catholicus et totus apostolicus [Francis, a catholic and totally apostolic man].” Choir books required a significant expenditure of whole animal skins for each large folio.

PATTERN BOOK, DATED AUGUST 1, 1450

Guiniforte da Vimercate

Italian (Ferrara), documented 1449–1450

Tempera on parchment

Courtesy, the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ricketts 240, fols. 3v–4

This rare specimen of an alphabet pattern book is signed and dated by the Lombard illuminator Guiniforte of Vimercate who is documented in Ferrara in the late 1440s. A second illuminator signs his name, “Basilius de Gallis,” in the initial on folio 16 verso. A third anonymous artist adds at a later date some examples of painted borders toward the end of the manuscript.

BOOK OF HOURS

French (possibly Autun), ca. 1450

Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment

Department of Special Collections, Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin–Madison, MS 161, fols. 59v–60

This Book of Hours was never finished, leaving blank the arched spaces intended for narrative scenes to mark the principal sections. The full border and illuminated initial ‘D’ containing a blue fleur-de-lis begins the text of Prime in the Hours of the Virgin section of the book. On the page at left is a red rubric written in French “A prime”; the illustration for Prime in the standard cycle of miniatures would have been the Nativity.

MINIATURE OF DAVID CONFRONTING ABNER

German(?), early 16th century

Tempera and gold on parchment

Michigan State University, Kresge Museum of Art, MSU purchase, 67.14

The narrative moment depicted in this miniature is based on a passage in the Hebrew Bible, 1 Samuel 26:14, in which King David has ascended to the top of the hill and calls down to Abner who looks out from behind the tent where Saul sleeps. The artist depicts the military encampment with an archaeological interest in antiquity. The foreshortening of sleeping soldiers indicates the Renaissance interest in perspective, but the style of figure and landscape points to a northern, possibly German, illuminator. The back of this miniature is blank and unruled, suggesting it was created as an independent work of art not intended for a book.

fig 14