HOLY HOAXES: A BEAUTIFUL DECEPTION

Les Enluminures

Celebrating William Voelkle’s Collecting
Forgeries tell us much about any civilization. Look at what people are forging, and we will learn what matters to them most. Christians of the early Middle Ages were earnestly counterfeiting relics of saints, to create tangible evidence of supernatural beliefs which they longed to validate. In twelfth-century Europe, people fabricated land charters, inventing documentation of title to feudal property on which livelihoods and society depended. In the sixteenth century, it was commonplace to concoct spurious ancestors, faking up complex family trees for the ambitious, in a time when social ranking was a necessity for advancement. Today, people forge works of art. This is the ultimate tribute to the place of art in our lives, both as objects of beauty and as tokens of wealth.

In the modern age, museums and great private collections are perceived to be at the apex of culture. The Pierpont Morgan Library, reinventing itself as “Library & Museum,” is one of highest points of civilization in America, for it is the guardian of some of the most precious relics of the past, not in reproductions or replicas, but in the actual originals. That sense of unimpeachable authenticity gives the Morgan its standing in the eyes of the world. To us, it is why museums matter.

At one time potential acquisitions by the Morgan Library had to pass the scrutiny of Belle da Costa Greene (1879-1950). She had been librarian to both Pierpont Morgans, father and son, and then became first Director of the newly-opened Library in 1924. In about 1930 she was shown a painting then ascribed to the fifteenth-century Spanish artist, Maestro Jorge Inglés, and she recognized it as a modern forgery by a painter who had also fabricated illuminated manuscripts. She gave him the provisional name of the ‘Spanish Forger’ and by 1939 she had a list of fourteen items by the same hand. In the time of Belle da Costa Greene, the Morgan Library became a kind of public sifting house for the detection of forgery. In his autobiography, the dealer H. P. Kraus described how in the 1940s he nervously placed a newly-bought manuscript on her desk, awaiting judgement. He says that she fixed him with an icy stare: “Young man,” she said, after briefly examining the manuscript, “you have a splendid book there … Yes, a splendid example of the work of the Spanish Forger.” Even as the exchange is reported, we can detect her grudging admiration of the artistry. The twist in that particular story is that she was in this instance wrong: the manuscript (perhaps even to her disappointment) was actually genuine.

No other manuscript custodian in the world has taken up this responsibility with more diligence and joy than William Voelkle. He is one of best known and most widely liked curators the Morgan has ever had. He is genial and generous. He presided over medieval manuscripts in the Library for more than half a century, serving under every Director of the Library except Belle da Costa Greene herself. His own fascination for forgery is evident in his exhibition of 1978, The Spanish Forger, still the largest exhibition ever dedicated in America to the work of any single illuminator. It has all the ingredients of mystery, money and art, and the public adored it. William Voelkle has taken the topic into the intimacy of his own home. Forgeries are an intellectually complex area of collecting, and the bewitching paradoxes of the field have enchanted Bill Voelkle for decades.

It will be impossible to leave this extraordinary exhibition without asking oneself what a forgery precisely is. Exquisite copies from the much-revered Grimani Breviary were made in the nineteenth century by Germano Prosdocimi and others (nos. 51-54): they were upmarket reproductions for wealthy visitors to Italy on the Grand Tour, before the invention of color photography. If the buyers framed them at home, murmuring to guests that this was “a little something I bought in Venice,” should we blame them if the pictures were accidentally mistaken for the real thing? If that assumption was made and the untraveled viewer was, for the first time, utterly entranced by an apparent first-hand experience of
Renaissance painting, is that not exactly what art should do?

Caleb Wing was not a forger, at least not in the conventional sense (nos. 55-56). He too was a copyist, as indeed most medieval artists had been, and there is no evidence that he or his best-known client John Boykett Jarman ever attempted to sell the facsimiles as authentic. However, both Wing and Jarman clearly delighted in multiple layers of deception: genuine miniatures had new borders painted (no. 48); miniatures were cut out and were replaced by exact copies within medieval borders; and pictures that ‘should have been’ were inserted where they might have been, or were they? Miniatures by Wing still emerge unnoticed, probably (for even now, we are often never quite sure). Like the three-card trick, the thrill was in the illusion, but is it forgery or simply a titillating sleight of hand for the Victorian drawing-room? The Chicago illuminator and collector C. Lindsay Ricketts (1859-1941) owned a number of miniatures by Wing (and he knew it), and he reproduced one as a Christmas card, forgetting to mention that it was a copy. Ricketts too was consciously reveling in the deftness of the nineteenth-century conjurer.

William Voelkle’s friend Scott Schwartz has painted a comic miniature of him in the late fourteenth-century style of Don Silvestro dei Gherarducci (no. 64). There is no question of it being a forgery, and the figure is holding a tennis racket. But if in 500 years it is mistaken for the work of the medieval master, Bill and Scott, meeting on their celestial clouds for dinner every Saturday, will both chuckle with pleasure. Deceiving the so-called experts would be part of the joy, especially when no one notices the tennis racket.

Icilio Federico Joni (nos. 39-40) probably was indeed a rogue and a forger by conventional definition, in that his irresistible Tavolette di Biccherna were spurious and were intended to deceive gullible buyers. He appears in early photographs dressed as a showman. In old age, however, Joni owned up, and he wrote a book in 1932 explaining how he had made them (knitting needles come into it): does that now exonerate him? Somehow it seems to, and Joni comes over as strangely likeable and even admirable in his own view.

Oddly, the most unambiguous of manuscript forgeries are usually at least partly or mostly genuine. The Spanish Forger painted pictures on parchment cuttings of authentic medieval Choir Books. There are many other perfectly real leaves of medieval manuscripts exhibited here with illuminations added by modern counterfeitors. These were intended to trick buyers into paying more money than the unadorned manuscript page would have been worth. The venerable leaves were so obviously ancient that suspicion was allayed. Some of the most glorious additions are of subjects which the forgers knew would easily find buyers – Agnes Sorel in her nightwear (no. 13) or erotic Indian fantasies (nos. 59-62). That too will tell future historians something depressing about our own times. The painters must have been astounded at the predictable naivety of profligate customers readily emptying their wallets, and it is hard too not to relish the buyer’s presumed comeuppance when the deception was realized. And yet … and yet … updating and adapting old manuscripts to new purposes was a common medieval custom, and illumination of different dates is not unusual in real manuscripts and is today of academic importance. Even when modern embellishments are added to manuscripts, the moral issue is one of degree, not of absolutes.

It must be emphasized that most medieval illuminated manuscripts are completely authentic; entire forgeries are rare and usually easily detectable. This wonderful exhibition raises ethical and aesthetic issues that tell us a great deal about the age in which we live. This collection could really only have been assembled by a humane scholar deeply immersed throughout a lifetime among the incomparable and authentic treasures of somewhere like the Pierpont Morgan Library. These are fantasies on the very fringes of the illuminator’s craft. Are they really forgeries, hoaxes, jokes, conjurers’ tricks and illusions, or works of art? You decide.

Dr. Christopher de Hamel
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A PERSONAL FORWARD
GENESIS OF THE COLLECTION

Shortly after I began my fifty-year career at the Morgan Library & Museum, a visitor, seeking information, brought in two illuminated manuscript leaves. I had not previously seen anything like them, so I sought the advice of my colleague, John Plummer, curator and department head of the Department of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts. Much to my amazement he immediately identified them as the work the Spanish Forger. Thus began my fascination with the Spanish Forger, an interest that I could not have imagined would eventually lead to the Morgan’s groundbreaking exhibition of his works in 1978, the first ever given to a forger by a major institution. The idea that a forger’s style could be distinctive and have an art history was a revelation. I subsequently learned, in fact, that keeping track of his works was a library tradition inaugurated by Belle da Costa Greene herself, who had exposed and named the Spanish Forger about 1930. The tradition was continued by John Plummer and maintained by me. I subsequently learned about the mysterious black solander box kept in the Reserve Vault, which then housed oversize manuscripts and single leaves. It contained photographs of forged or suspect leaves and codices, many by the Spanish Forger. The contents became the starting point for my own research. The benefits of recording his work became immediately apparent. If one was confronted with his work the first time, it could be difficult to assess and place his style. By gathering numerous examples, however, it became clear that he had a distinctive and instantly recognizable style. Once my interest became known, many new examples were called to my attention, over three dozen by Christopher de Hamel alone. Consequently, the number of examples was greatly expanded (now over 400), making it possible to reach certain conclusions about the forger. Since the works contained Paris or Emerald green, they must date after 1814, when the pigment was introduced. Furthermore, the works date from the first quarter of the twentieth century, when his primary source material - the various volumes originally published by Paul Lacroix in Paris between 1869 and 1882 - became obsolete. More important is the absence of any documented provenances before 1900. Forgers don’t sit on works, and thus their appearance on the market usually indicates they were made shortly before. The early documented provenances also indicated that the main center of distribution was Paris, already a thriving center of forgery production.

My own group of his forgeries (nos. 1-12) was assembled to demonstrate the variety in the oeuvre, and to show that there are differences in both style and quality, suggesting the participation of assistants. Even though the Spanish Forger continues to defy identification, there is no question that he dominated the market during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Parisian forgers active during the last quarter of the nineteenth century worked in a harder, more linear, style and often chose patriotic themes related to French history and especially Joan of Arc. Numerous examples were reproduced in the other forgeries section of the 1978 Spanish Forger catalog. My own collection contains two such pre-Spanish Forger works, both connected with the Morgan Library, but in different ways. The leaf (no. 14) with scenes from the life of St. Louis was previously known from the unannotated photograph found in the mysterious black solander box mentioned above, while a daring portrait of Agnes Sorel and Charles VII (no. 13) was offered to the library as a genuine fifteenth-century work by
Jean Fouquet, the leading French artist of his time.

My interest in the Spanish Forger subsequently led to a broader, more general fascination with manuscript forgeries, and the conviction that a knowledge of various types of forgeries and styles would be of general interest and use for student and scholar alike. As a result, I began to acquire examples when occasions to do so arose. The present collection of over sixty items, however, can hardly claim to be complete or comprehensive. Forgery production is truly global, and few cultures have been spared. Since I did not have access to laboratory equipment very little testing was done on most of the items, and sometimes the fine line between fake and original could not be drawn, especially when the opinions of experts were divided. As with the Spanish Forger, however, definitive conclusions could be reached in many cases by relying on tested art historical methods, such as identifying sources or models, discovering iconographical errors or inconsistencies, or incorrect relationships between text and illustration. The present catalog, it should be said, represents a work in progress, and any further information about the forgeries, related forgeries or forgers, would be most welcome.

Bibliography: fakes as art and other considerations

The Spanish Forger exhibition at the Morgan Library was very well received and elicited provocative reviews. For Hilton Kramer (New York Times, 26 May 1978) the exhibition paid respect to an activity that museums usually deplore, showing “inauthentic works of art of superior esthetic quality. What greater tribute could a forger ask for? First to be accepted as authentic, and then to be studied and honored even when unmasked! Many a genuine artist has received a lot less from posterity.” He also observed that the forger did not simply copy known works but created his own originals, which are now collected as “authentic” fakes.

For the poet John Ashbery (review in New York Magazine, 3 July 1978) the exhibition raised disturbing questions about forgeries and art, and especially to his response to one of the paintings. He asked if it was “permissible to react to their sometimes-considerable aesthetic qualities? Or is art really art only when it’s genuine?” “There seems no reason,” he wrote, “not to let oneself respond to this picture as a work of art and as a fake.” He observed that the works were “being collected as the work of the Spanish Forger,” and predicted that “perhaps future generations of forgers would be forging the Spanish Forger’s works.”

Ashbery’s concerns were further addressed in Curtis L. Carter’s thought-provoking preface, “Can a Forgery be a Work of Art,” for the catalog of the Spanish Forger exhibition held in Milwaukee in 1987 (The Spanish Forger, Master of Deception). For him, “within the perimeters of imitation, aesthetic object, and conceptual Postmodernism,” he would argue, “that ethical considerations of fraud and deceit aside, he would not preclude considering a forgery a work of art.” “These matters appear superfluous in the case of undetected forgeries which are treated as if they were genuine art. Once a forgery is unmasked, moreover, it can then knowingly be experienced for its own merits, imitative, aesthetic, or conceptual, without fear of moral culpability.”

The continuing public fascination with the world of forgeries has given rise to important exhibitions and studies which examine forgeries and forgers from many other points of view, which have in turn led to broader and nuanced insights into the craft. Many of these aspects are not considered here for they are admirably covered in the comprehensive exhibition catalog, Fake? The Art of Deception, published by the British Museum in 1990, which provides a history of forgery going back to ancient Egypt. In addition, there are important essays by Mark Jones (Why fakes?), David Lowenthal (Forging the past), and Nicolas Barker (Textual forgery). Other catalog sections are: What is a fake, the art and craft of faking, the scientific detection of fakes and forgeries, and the limits of expertise. Since the views expressed are so all-encompassing, I have little to add to them. I would, however, like to quote the last paragraph of the Jones essay (p.16), as it sums up my own reasons for collecting and cataloging fakes and forgeries, perhaps even making a compelling case for establishing a database specifically for manuscript forgeries:

“This, finally, is our complaint against fakes. It is not that they cheat their
purchasers of money, reprehensible though that is, that they loosen our
hold on reality, deform and falsify our understanding of the past. What
makes them dangerous, however, also makes them valuable. The feelings
of anger and shame that they arouse among those that have been de-
ceived are understandable, but the consequent tendency to dispose of or
destroy fakes, once identified, is misguided. Even if the errors of the past
only provided lessons for the future they would be worthy of retention
and study. But fakes do far more than that. As keys to understanding the
changing nature of our vision of the past, as motors for the development
of scholarly and scientific techniques of analysis, as subverters of aesthetic
certainties, they deserve our closer attention, while as the most enter-
taining of monuments to the wayward talents of gifted rogues they claim
our reluctant admiration.”

A second book of interest on our topic is Noah Charney’s The Art of
Forgery: The Minds, Motives and Methods of Master Forgers, London, New York,
2015, which ends with a chapter on “Digital Technology: The Forger’s
Ally and Enemy.”

Beyond the Spanish Forger: expanding the collection

Unlike the two aforementioned books, however, “Holy Hoaxes: A Beau-
tiful Deception,” is specifically focused on manuscript illumination. The
first part of the exhibition is devoted to the Spanish Forger, who first
peaked my interest in collecting forgeries, and with whom this introduc-
tion began. The Spanish Forger, however, stands apart from other manu-
script forgers because of the sheer size of his oeuvre (400 and counting)
and the widespread distribution of his works today. As with the Spanish
Forger, other types of forgeries came to my attention by auction catalogs
or owners who brought them to the Morgan Library. Such was the case for
the Spanish Forger’s celebrated counterpart, Ilcilio Federico Joni (1865-
1946), the Sienese “Prince of Forgers.” In his autobiography (1932) he
wrote that his Tavolette di Biccherna (nos. 39-40) were imitations, blam-
ing unscrupulous dealers for selling them as originals. (The same claim
would be made some seventy years later by Pei-Shen Qian, who produced
imitations of Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock for those who could not
afford originals. The trouble began when Knoedler’s sold them as origi-
nals, eventually leading to its closure.)

More frequently, however, visitors brought in Ethiopian manuscripts with
modern miniatures, which they invariably thought were Coptic. None,
however, measured up to the important early fifteenth-century Gospels of
Zir Ganela in the Morgan Library (MS M. 828). Some were purchased by
tourists in Ethiopia itself, and many had miniatures added on blank pages
at the beginning or end of the volume or were crudely painted over text.
If visitors wanted more information, I suggested contacting Getachew
Haile, the acknowledged world expert of Ge’ez, and Curator emeritus
at the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, St. John’s University, Col-
legeville, Minnesota. Indeed, he has been most generous and helpful in
identifying Ethiopian manuscripts in my own collection. After I acquired
an Ethiopian manuscript at Phillips New York on 20 October 1983 (lot
138), for example, I sought his expertise. Much to my delight he con-
firmed that the unusually richly illustrated Homilies of St. Michael were
genuine. In the auction catalog the illustrations in the eighteenth-centu-
ry manuscript were described as modern additions! The original owners,
according to Haile, were Melkesedek (family name, Abba Daget) and his
wife Wallata Iyyasus, the second owner, possibly Askale Maryam. From
there I went on to acquire five more Ethiopian manuscripts, but these all
had modern miniatures, two by the so-called Synkessar Miniature Forger,
a true master of his craft. Indeed, given the Morgan’s superb collection
of works by the Spanish Forger, I strongly supported the acquisition of
one of the Synkessar’s most impressive works (MS M. 1088) in 1993, a
Synkessar (a Synaxary or Book of Saints) with a fake colophon claiming
it was written in 1638 (Gregorian 1646) for Queen Sabla Wangel, wife
of Emperor Fasiladas (1632-67). In the same year I added two works by
the Synkessar Forger (nos. 18, 20) to my own collection. In terms of the
sheer quality, quantity, iconography, and religious intensity of the paint-
ings, they generated a visual excitement that went beyond that in the
original manuscript acquired in 1983. The Synkessar Forger was, after all,
an Ethiopian, one who understood better than most the Ethiopian ethos.
Further research is needed, but thus far his works do not appear to be
copies of known originals. He certainly loved his work, for how else can
one explain why he added forty-one full-page miniatures (no. 20) to an
unillustrated Gebre Hemamat (Services for Passion Week) when half that
number would already have been impressive. Hopefully this painter, who
was active in the 1980s, will be identified before his trail freezes over. The
second manuscript (no. 18), a Synkessar ostensibly written and illuminat-
ed in 1681 (i.e. 1688-89) for Atse Yohannes I (reigned 1667-82) and his
Queen Sebl Wengel, has 21 large miniatures and 23 decorated borders. A
second, less gifted, but easily recognizable, forger added 29 full-page mini-
atures (no. 21) in the 1980s to an eighteenth-century Arganon (Hymns
to the Virgin). The other two Ethiopian manuscripts (nos. 19, 22) are of
interest but of mediocre quality. Processional crosses (nos. 23-24) were
also available, and these may have been made for the tourist trade.

The Morgan Library possesses one of the most important collections of
Coptic manuscripts and bindings in the world, a feat accomplished in
1911 when Pierpont Morgan purchased over fifty of the manuscripts dis-
covered a year earlier in a cistern, and comprising most of the monastic
library of the Archangel Michael in upper Egypt. These dated from the
ninth and tenth centuries. The most important addition to the collection
came in 1984, when the Library received title to the William S. Glazier
Collection, which Included the earliest surviving Coptic manuscript of
the Acts of the Apostles (MS G.67). Incredibly, the sixth-century codex
also contained a miniature of an anastyle cross decorated with interlace, one
of the earliest surviving Christian miniatures. The Morgan, however, did
not pursue a fifth-seventh century Coptic manuscript (no. 17) offered by
Parke-Bernet Galleries in 1952, hailed as the “earliest remnant of Chris-
tian musical notation. Frederick B. Adams, Jr., then director, called the
catalog to the attention of Meta Harrsen, but apparently took no action.
The manuscript was brought to America in 1896 by two brothers Hadji
Saris Gulezyan and H. Aram Gulezyan, architects and builders who had
lived in Asia Minor and Egypt. The latter put it up for auction, and it was
sold to Cornelius J. Hauck (1893-1967) of Cincinnati, who later gave his
collection to the Cincinnati Historical Society Library. I first saw the in-
triguing manuscript at Christie’s New York, when a portion of the Hauck
collection was being cataloged for its 2006 sale. In spite of the scholarly
account given in the 1952 auction catalog, serious reservations were ex-
pressed about the manuscript, and a scientific investigation ensued. The
presence of titanium white, a pigment introduced after WWI, settled the
matter, and the manuscript was returned to the consignor. Little wonder
that Frederik B. Adams passed it by. But for me it was a highly unusual and
fascinating candidate for the forgery collection! I managed to acquire it
(no. 17) a few years later, in 2008.

Frederick Adams, who hired me, must have frequently noticed the alle-
gorical painting, “Time Unveiling Truth,” on the ceiling of the Morgan’s
North Room, which then served as his office. The suggestion that Time
eventually exposes the forger was certainly not lost on him. On the oth-
er hand, Time is also a valuable ally of the forgery collector. I had to
wait patiently over twenty years before the risqué miniature depicting
Agnes Sorel and Charles VII (no. 13) eventually appeared at auction as a
forgery. Fortunately, I did not have to wait nearly as long to acquire two
other forgeries that had initially generated considerable excitement at the
Morgan. The first was an amazing drawing of a battle scene (no. 29) that
resembled the famous battle scenes in the Morgan’s celebrated Crusader
Bible (MS M.638), made for Louis IX about 1250. The drawing was dis-
covered in 1999 in a binding, sandwiched between discarded pages from
a late fifteenth-century edition of Gratian’s Decretals. After the drawing
was sent on approval in 2000, further study revealed that it was copied
after a mid-thirteenth-century English illustration in a manuscript by Mat-
thew Paris in the British Library. The subject was Offa piercing the body
of Sueno. Once the source was identified it was easy to note differences
between the two drawings. The drawing, moreover, must have been made
after 1926, for it was based on a reproduction of the original published
in that year. A comparison between the two provided even more telling
differences, as the reproduction excluded details (due to a tight binding)
that were consequently lacking in the copy as well. Three years later my
offer to buy the leaf was accepted.

The second example appeared quite recently, when Joshua O’Driscoll,
the Morgan’s assistant curator, became intrigued by a pair of Romanesque
drawings (nos. 27-28) offered by Bloomsbury Auctions in London (7 De-
cember 2016, lot 34). Such early drawings, especially of secular subjects,
are increasingly rare on the market. These appeared to form a frontispiece for a copy of Boethius’ Consolation of Philosophy. One leaf depicted Boethius writing and inspired by three muses; on the other, a facing page, Philosophy and Wisdom are represented as noblewomen. While researching the iconography he made the alarming discovery that they were unbelievably exact copies of a little-known twelfth-century manuscript in Sélestat. Had he not shared his findings with Bloomsbury, which withdrew the leaves, some unsuspecting buyer would have acquired them. In time, however, research would doubtless have revealed the truth. The curator at Sélestat, when informed about the sale, rushed to make sure his two drawings were still in the manuscript. The forgery is especially disturbing because it demonstrates how convincingly signs of wear and rubbing can be replicated. Here, however, a close examination of the text revealed errors of transcription. More research needs to be done, and one wonders what role the public availability of a high-resolution digital surrogate of the manuscript might have played in the creation of the forgery. In 2018 the leaves took a special place in the collection as contemporaneous witnesses to the forger’s art.

Most of the forgeries in the collection, however, were never offered to or considered for purchase by the Morgan Library, but were acquired to show representative examples from Spain, Italy, France, and Belgium. Spain is represented by a monumental Christ in Majesty (no. 26) that was originally offered by Sotheby’s in 1968 as one of the finest examples of twelfth-century Catalan painting but was withdrawn after its authenticity was questioned. I purchased it in 1987 when it was offered by Christie’s as a clever nineteenth-century forgery in the style of twelfth-century Catalan illumination.

Italy is particularly well represented, with examples reflecting thirteenth to sixteenth-century styles. A pair of fourteenth-century leaves (nos. 31-32) from a Choir Psalter with historiated initials are particularly intriguing. I acquired them in 1988 at a Sotheby’s sale in New York, where the initials were regarded as forgeries, but not everybody agrees. The most fascinating - because of its unusual iconography- is a leaf in fourteenth-century style depicting the story of the miraculous Icon of Berytus (no. 33). Especially intriguing is the fact that it’s painted over a Ketubah celebrating a Jewish marriage that took place in Rome in 1711-12. Two other illuminations (nos. 34-35) are attributed to Ernest Sprega (1829-1911), who helped restore Raphael’s frescoes at the Vatican and produced copies of historiated initials by Liberale da Verona and others, including an Assumption of the Virgin (no. 35) after Girolamo da Cremona. Some of his copies after Liberale da Verona were commissioned by London’s Arundel Society, but others were subsequently passed off as originals. Sprega also copied or made variations on historiated initials found in the Bible of Borso d’Este (no. 34), and some of these are currently on the market.

Among the French examples a Gradual leaf (no. 43) with a modern historiated initial depicting a bishop should be pointed out, not for its quality, but because dozens of similar leaves from the same manuscript continue to appear on the market.

More typical are two unillustrated leaves (nos. 45-46) from a fifteenth-century French Book of Hours made more valuable by the addition of calendar scenes (hawking and pruning) at the bottoms of the pages. Perhaps the flashiest forgery is a Breviary leaf (no. 47) which has been embellished with an elaborate border of branches with flowers, berries, and a peacock set against a brilliant gold background.

The Flemish examples include a tiny miniature of Christ before Herod (no. 48) by Simon Bening or workshop with a painted frame added after 1846 by Caleb William Wing (1801-1875) and a pastiche (no.49) based on Petrus Alamire’s Choir Book illustration, Homage to Archduke Charles (future Charles V). The Choir Book was made in Malines between 1511 and 1519. The pastiche, on vellum, is mounted to give the appearance of being a small panel painting. A special favorite is the Baptism of Christ miniature (no. 50) with border roundels depicting Moses Striking the Rock, bringing forth water, and Pharaoh’s Daughter Finding Moses on the Nile. The aquatic imagery extended to the borders as well, with fish and turtles swimming among the plants. But it was the pyramids of Giza in the Nile scene that suggested both a late date and made it a must have.
Facsimilists and copies

During the nineteenth century there was not only a rise in the collecting of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts and forgery production, but also in the practice of illumination itself. Especially influential was John Bradley’s *Manual of Illumination*, which went through seven editions in 1860, the first year of issue. Such manuals led to the production of many copies and facsimiles. These, of course, were not intended as forgeries, though some were so good they could be sold as genuine. There were some artists who specialized in the production of facsimiles, notably Caleb William Wing (nos. 48, 55, 56,) and Germano and Alberto Prosdocimi (nos. 51-54), Venetian artists famous for their copies of miniatures from the celebrated Grimani Breviary, a masterpiece of Flemish illumination by Gerard Horenbout, Alexander and Simon Bening, and others. It was purchased in 1520 by Cardinal Domenico Grimani (1461-1530) and is a great treasure of the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice. Chromolithographs of many of its miniatures were already published in 1864 in Léon Curmer’s *Les Évangiles des dimanches et fêtes de l’année suivis de prières à la saint Vierge et aux saints* (Paris) from copies supplied by Germano Prosdocimi. Curmer himself included an essay (p.19) on the Grimani Breviary where he praised the superiority and faithfulness of Germano’s brush. Two signed work, ones dated 1863? were included in the Morgan Library’s copy of Salomone Morpurgo and Scato de Vries’ facsimile, *Le Bréviaire Grimani*, published in Leyden between 1903 and 1908. I had them removed in the 1970s and cataloged as MS M.260d. 1-2. One of my four copies after the Grimani Breviary, the Annunciation (no. 51), is signed “G. Prosdocimi.” The three others (nos. 52-54) are not signed, but a French note on the back of one of the frames (no. 54) states they are the work of the celebrated G. Prosdocimi, along with the date 1863. It is not clear, however, if the note is simply based on Curmer’s essay, in which case the copies could also be by Alberto (1852-1925), who was likewise known for producing copies after the Grimani Breviary. Further research is clearly needed to establish the relationship between Germano and Alberto. Given the fame of the Grimani Breviary, it’s quite possible such copies were made as souvenirs for tourists.

In the late nineteenth-century the nuns of Maredret in Belgium set up a monastic scriptorium that continued producing illuminated manuscripts well up to the Second World War. My favorite copy/facsimile, a Nativity (no. 57), was made there about 1920 by Sister Marie Madeleine Kerger, its principal artist. It was a must-have for the collection, as it was a brilliant copy of a Flemish Psalter of about 1270-80 in the Morgan Library (MS M. 72, fol. 8v). Moreover, the copy was made possible because Belle da Costa Greene gave the nuns a copy of M. R. James’s 1906 *Catalogue of Manuscripts from the Libraries of William Morris, Richard Bennett... now in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan*, which contained an actual size color reproduction of that Nativity. Sister Kerger herself wrote to Belle da Costa Greene on 1 October 1920 regretting that she was not there to “experience the great joy that the splendid catalogue caused.”

An especially cherished illumination (no. 64) is neither a copy nor a forgery but was made by my good friend Scott Schwartz to commemorate my exhibition of illuminated Choir Books at the Morgan Library.

Non-European forgeries

Forgery production is truly global and thus a few examples from Mexico, the Middle East, and India were added as well. The Mexican forgery (no. 25) was probably made as a result of publicity given to the discovery of the twelfth-century Mixtec manuscript known as the Codex Colombino. It was acquired in 1891 by the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, reproduced in 1892, and copied or falsified thereafter. The manuscript chronicles the life of Lord Eight Deer Jaguar Claw (1063-1115), and the forged fragment depicts his death/sacrifice by Four Wind, his nephew and brother-in-law.

Here too there is an equally fascinating back story behind my interest in pre-Columbian manuscripts. Over thirty years ago I learned about the incredible discovery of Mayan manuscripts purporting to be the earliest surviving American manuscripts. They had been carbon dated from the eighth to the twelfth century. The ancient library was apparently placed in a cave for safekeeping and was thus spared the destruction that befell others at the hands of overly zealous missionaries. There were profusely
illustrated scrolls and accordion type codices with terra cotta bindings. Some were offered to the Morgan Library, which was seriously interested in acquiring one or two examples, providing that authenticity could be confirmed and that the Guatemalan government approved the sale.

Initial carbon dating indicated that the bark paper on which the manuscripts were painted could go back a thousand years, but pigment analysis revealed the presence of titanium, used after World War I. The Mayan glyphs were also misunderstood and manuscripts by the same hand were carbon dated several centuries apart. Virtually all of the Mayan scholars were of the view that the manuscripts were bogus. The Morgan was given a sample leaf (MS M.1087) in 1992, but I was never able to acquire one. When I asked Howard Nowes, a local antiquities dealer, if he ever had any Mayan forgeries he replied no, but he just happened to have the Colombino forgery, which I purchased without hesitation.

In the Middle East, as elsewhere, forgers added miniatures to unillustrated paper manuscripts to make them more attractive and sellable. Since texts cannot be scraped from paper manuscripts forgers simply painted over them. In this example (no. 58) a twentieth-century forger added five large miniatures in an archaizing style to a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century Persian manuscript containing a history of the Mongols and Tartars. Sometimes forgeries can be dated by their appearance on the market. This was certainly the case for a group of erotic miniatures (nos. 59-62) that appeared in local New York auctions in the 1980s. Since forgers don’t stockpile their productions they were probably made shortly before their appearance. The four miniatures, all by the same talented artist, are painted over paper leaves from a Persian manuscript. Because of his subject matter he can be dubbed the Erotica Master.

**Caveat emptor - let the buyer beware**

The expression caveat emptor serves as a warning for those seeking the joys of collecting, whatever their motivation, be it of originals or fakes. Forgeries have always been with us and there is no reason to believe that they will not continue to do. With increasingly sophisticated means of replication (see nos. 27-28) and forgery production collectors will face ever new challenges. Had I been familiar with the style of the Spanish Forger, I would have immediately recognized the leaf a visitor brought to the Morgan Library some fifty years ago. A data bank of forgeries, much like the catalog of the Spanish Forger’s works maintained at the Morgan Library, would be helpful. A multiplication of examples of forgeries is important in localizing and dating them, perhaps even leading to their place of manufacture and the identification of the forgers. The purpose and motivation of the present collection was to document and gather what examples I could, but it’s just a small and limited beginning step. As important exhibitions on the history of forgeries have already demonstrated they can also be investigated as significant and telling objects, revealing much about the history of taste, collecting, and culture. Financial considerations, of course, are also very much involved, and lawsuits involving forgeries have brought down established dealerships. Thus, when the opportunity arose to acquire a forgery (no. 63) that led to the earliest and most famous lawsuit between artists I could not resist, because it formed an appropriate, if not perfect coda.

It was, of course, the lawsuit that Albrecht Dürer brought against Marcan-tonio Raimondi in 1506 after he learned that Raimondi was making copies of his prints of the Life of the Virgin, including even his “AD” monogram. But he received little satisfaction from the Venetian signoria, which concluded that Raimondi could continue to make and sell his copies, but without the “AD” monogram. Dürer was not pleased and added a stern and threatening warning to copyists in the colophon to the 1511 edition of his Life of the Virgin series.

“Hold! You crafty ones, strangers to work, and pilferers of other men’s brains! Think not rashly to lay your thievish hands upon my works. -Albrecht Dürer (as cited by Charney, The Art of Forgery,
In spite of the warning, Dürer remained one of the most frequently forged artists. Nor were buyers wanting. Twelve years later, in 1523, the expression caveat emptor entered the English language!

Acknowledgements

I owe Sandra Hindman a profound debt of gratitude for having suggested and supported this exhibition and catalogue and for having taken the time and energy for bringing it to fruition. I have known her since her days as a graduate student and witnessed her development as a leading scholar, and then as an imaginative and highly successful dealer, bringing a much-needed gallery to New York specializing in Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts. But Les Enluminures does more than simply sell manuscripts, it produces many exhibitions, catalogues and studies on various types and aspects of manuscript illumination, keeping an interest in that art alive and well in New York and around the world. I am also grateful to her devoted, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic staff, especially Keegan Goepfert, Christopher de Hamel, Kristin Racaniello, Laura Light, and Karen Gennaro who helped in all aspects of the exhibition itself.

William M. Voelkle
6 January 2019
THE SPANISH FORGER

The Spanish Forger was one of the most skillful, successful, and prolific forgers of all time. Formerly his numerous panels, manuscripts, and illuminated leaves were appreciated and admired as genuine fifteenth- and sixteenth century works. Now they are sold and collected as works by the Spanish Forger. He has been known as the Spanish Forger since about 1930, when Belle da Costa Greene, then director of the Morgan Library, so christened him. She did so after exposing a Betrothal of St. Ursula attributed to Maestro Jorge Inglès, who was active in Spain about 1450.

Although the forger’s name may suggest he was Spanish, there is no evidence that he was. He was probably active in Paris at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, which was then not only a center of consequential art movements, but also of forgery production. Most of the forger’s works were acquired in Paris, and nineteenth-century illustrated Parisian publications on medieval and Renaissance life, especially those by Paul Lacroix, were the forger’s chief compositional, thematic, and to some extent, stylistic sources. Ironically, the Lacroix volumes also helped pave the way for the forger’s market, as they popularized and fostered a taste for medieval art. The forger’s identity and nationality, alas, have not been established, but he may have been a chromolithographer, for which he clearly had the skills. If so, he would have begun his new career as a forger about 1900, when photographic reproductions replaced chromolithography. The forgeries date after 1814, when the green pigment, copper arsenite or Paris green, became available. But they must date later than the Lacroix volumes, and none have an established provenance before 1900.

Part of the forger’s appeal may be due to the fact that he did not simply copy genuine works but developed an easily recognizable and charming style of his own. He was the first forger to be given a one-man show at a major museum (Morgan Library, 1978) and a catalogue raisonné. Astonishingly, the oeuvre now consists of 117 panels (including triptychs), 11 manuscripts, 284 illuminated leaves, and continues to grow.
Betrothal of St. Ursula (P19)
The Spanish Forger, Paris, 1st quarter 20th century
Panel, 354 x 242 mm

Provenance: Dr. Fritz Schwyzzer, Lucerne; his daughter Ula Schwyzzer, about 1930; Mrs. Margaret Nohowel; Dr. and Mrs. Philip Weidel; acquired from Monique Weidel, 1993.

The betrothal composition was one of the forger’s favorites, and this panel is a reduction of the Betrothal of St. Ursula which had been attributed to Maestro Jorge Inglès and exposed as a forgery by Belle da Costa Greene. Because the latter was taken to be Spanish she nicknamed him the Spanish Forger. The forger often painted generic scenes of various activities undertaken by the nobility, and, as here, no specific couple seems to have been intended. We have, however, titled the work the Betrothal of St. Ursula because that was the title the forger gave to the larger work, though Ursula does not have a halo in either painting. The green pigment is copper arsenite, known as Emerald or Paris green, which was not available before 1814. The old label on the frame is in French, and reads “Flemish School, XVIth Century.”

St. Martha Taming the Tarasque (P20)
The Spanish Forger, Paris, 1st quarter 20th century
Panel, 715 x 445 mm

Provenance: Mrs. J. Miller, New York, who inherited from her aunt; William Doyle Galleries, New York, 9 October 1974, lot 354 (as 18th-century German Madonna); acquired after the sale when the buyer refused to pick it up.

In addition to Martha taming tarasque there are two earlier episodes: her arrival at Marseilles with Mary Magdalene and Lazarus, and her destruction of a pagan idol by holding up a cross. According to Voragine’s Golden Legend (ca. 1260-1275) Martha overpowered the man-eating monster with holy water and a cross, and then bound it with her girdle. The Marseilles arrival is derived from Hans Memling’s Arrival of St. Ursula in Cologne, and even includes the tower of St. Martin’s. (The fictitious trip to Marseilles also played an important role in the Da Vinci Code, Dan Brown’s best seller.) Martha’s destruction of the idol by the cross, not part of her traditional iconography, was probably suggested by the apocryphal falling of idols when the Holy Family fled to Egypt, a subject he painted elsewhere.

One of the Forger’s largest and most ambitious panels, it includes most of the stylistic features that define the artist: the sugary-sentimental faces and décolletage of the ladies, the page costumes of the men, the limited number of colors, the theatrical postures and gestures of the stock figures, the tapestry-like foliage, the stage-set architecture, and the swirling water.

Bibliography: The Spanish Forger, 1978, P20 p. 25, fig. 21, color frontispiece.
Triptych with Baptism Scene; wings with Saints George and Barbara (P21)
The Spanish Forger, Paris, 1st quarter 20th century
Panels, 475 x 378 mm (with wings open)


Although it is fairly easy to assign works in the style of the Martha Panel to the Spanish Forger, paintings in the style of this triptych are more problematic. The color palette, the archeological attention to detail, the figures and their eggshell-smooth faces, and the hard crisp drapery, seem different, yet there are close parallels in the leaf from the Yale Lectionary and in works more clearly in the style of the Martha panel. The saints in the stained glass are Spanish Forger types. These differences, however, raise legitimate questions about chronology and the existence of a workshop. Does the hard style represent an early work, or a different forger? To complicate matters works in both styles and by other forgers used the same sources. The forger, who always used old wood, did not decorate the outer wings.

Crusader Knights Purchasing the Bones of a Saint (P95)
The Spanish Forger, Paris, 1st quarter 20th century
Panel, 240 x 280 mm


Panel paintings by the Spanish Forger continue to appear, and the number included in the 1978 catalogue (42) has now expanded to 117, including some new subjects. Although the forger did many paintings and manuscript illuminations depicting crusaders departing or returning from the Holy Land, this panel is unique in showing armored knights negotiating a sale of relics, presumably the bones of a saint. The transaction is generic and thus the saint cannot be identified. Here the palette is exceptionally brilliant and includes a depiction of a negro. It was a panel in this jewel-like style that prompted John Ashbury, reviewer of the Morgan’s Spanish Forger exhibition, to ask if art could only be art if it is genuine; he saw no reason why one could not respond to it as a work of art and as a fake, noting that the forger’s output is now being collected and sold as his work.
Among the many secular scenes painted by the Spanish Forger were numerous boating scenes, many with the same figures. The same formulas were also used in his manuscript illuminations. The forger’s use of the octagonal format is not unique, as several other examples are recorded. The queen, with her lapdog, arrives in a canopied boat driven by two oarsmen. Although the painting includes the expected Spanish Forger features, it seems hastily executed and does not share the brilliance of the panel depicting Crusaders negotiating the sale of relics. Consequently, there are also qualitative as well as stylistic differences in the forger’s oeuvre.
Flight into Egypt (L46)
The Spanish Forger, Paris, 1st quarter 20th century
Vellum, 526 x 360 mm

Provenance: Mr. Brown (died about 1925), Switzerland; his wife; bequeathed to Maria Teweles, Twentynine Palms, California; purchased from Zeitlin & Ver Brugge in 1975

In this leaf, the forger’s largest, he thematically integrated the Flight into Egypt with both the historiated initial “E” containing King Herod, who ordered the massacre of the innocents, and the scene in the right border depicting a soldier killing an infant. The falling idols in the background are based on the apocryphal gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, where the pagan statues fell when Jesus entered the temple in Sotina, Egypt. The relevance of the woman looking at herself in a mirror is unclear, but she is certainly based on a mid-fifteenth engraving of the Master of the Playing Cards’ Queen of Deer, which was reproduced in Paul Lacroix’s Les arts au moyen-âge (Paris, 1869). In any case, none of the scenes are appropriate for the text (“Et omnes angeli stabant in circuitu...”), which is for the office for the feast of All Saints.

Martyrdom of St. Lawrence (L51)
The Spanish Forger, Paris, 1st quarter 20th century
Vellum, 470 x 358 mm

Provenance: said to have been found in an attic in the Neuilly section of Paris; Librairie Lardanchet, Paris; purchased in 1977

This impressive and especially deceptive leaf, like the Surrender of the Keys of a Besieged City, is painted on the same manuscript stock, a fourteenth-century Italian antiphonary, and exhibits the same stylistic features. It also has a similar border, suggesting it came from the same manuscript. Although the miniature does illustrate the text, the Matins response for the Divine Office of St. Lawrence, the leaf was not originally laid out to receive a miniature, as the rubric identifying the text should precede the miniature, and the illuminated initial “L” of Levita would generally be attached to the bottom of the miniature. Here the forger has closely followed several details in a chromolithograph (1857) of the same subject from a fifteenth-century Parisian Missal, making it certain that the forger used reproductions rather than originals as sources. The telling detail is that in the original the man on the left is ferociously pumping the bellows with his right foot, a detail less apparent in the chromolithograph. The extent to which the forger used the color in the chromolithograph and drapery folds of individual costumes is also revealing. To those whose knowledge of medieval illumination depended on such chromolithographs, which tended to sentimentalize the original, the forgeries must have seemed super real.

Just as the forger always used old wood for his panels, he used old vellum, mostly from Choir Books, for his manuscript illuminations. Thus the text and musical notation on the verso of the left are genuine, adding to the deception. He never painted over text to avoid tell-tale see-through, and he scraped it away wherever he added miniatures. The roughed surface also added the deception. Suspicion is aroused, however, where he added secular illustrations to Choir Book leaves, where they would have been out of place. There is no reason why this subject would have been appropriate, for the text on the verso contains the music for the Divine Office for Wednesday of Holy Week. Nevertheless, the large folio illustration ranks among his most ambitious works, exhibiting many characteristic features of his easily recognizable style. Here, however, the style is broader, coarser, and less detailed, perhaps representing the forger’s late style, one for which there is no documented provenance before 1920.

Visit to the Bell Foundry (L80)
The Spanish Forger, Paris, 1st quarter 20th century
Vellum, 239 x 243 mm

Provenance: acquired in Luxembourg in 1930 by Carl Nordenfalk, who sold it to the present owner in 1978.

The visit to the foundry is based on Lacroix’s illustration from a fourteenth-century manuscript of the *Rationale divinorum officium* of Durandus, where a bishop presides over the casting, giving it his benediction. The forger, however, makes the scene courtly, replacing the bishop with a couple and their entourage. The youth working the bellows is included in both. To judge by the text and music on the back, the leaf is from the same fourteenth-century Italian Antiphonary he used elsewhere. The music, for the Friday and Saturday of the third week of Lent, is usually not illustrated, and the subject, in any case, would have been inappropriate.

Mary Magdalene Visited by a Couple at Her Cave (L117)
The Spanish Forger, Paris, 1st quarter 20th century
Vellum, 232 x 175 mm

Provenance: Astor Galleries, New York, 9 June 1981, lot 136 (as a Gothic figural picture); Tepper Galleries, New York, 29 August 1981, lot 540 A (as a Dutch oil painting).

According to medieval French legends Mary Magdalene, along with Martha and Lazarus (her sister and brother) went to Marseilles after Christ’s crucifixion. Near Marseilles, in a cave fashioned by angels, Mary Magdalene lived a life of contemplation for thirty years. Here, in front of her cave, she greets two elegantly dressed visitors. Whereas the front of the full-page miniature, complete with a border, appears to have been cut from a Book of Hours, the portion of text and music on the verso indicates it was painted on a piece of vellum originally forming the lower and outer corner of a large Choir Book with generous margins, indicating the spurious nature of the miniature.

Lover Harping for a Recumbent Lady (L140)
The Spanish Forger, Paris, 1st quarter 20th century
Vellum, 210 x 175 mm

Provenance: Estate of Elizabeth Adelaide Leonard, sold at Christie’s, New York, 14 May 1985, lot 428 (as Spanish Forger); to James Cummins, his Catalogue no. 17, no. 401, purchased in 1991.

Here a young harpist serenades a recumbent lady, who holds a rose presumably a gift of the harpist. The Spanish Forger did several versions of the theme, which may have been inspired by Manet’s Olympia of 1863; one of the versions (L85), a leaf from the Yale Lectionary in a private collection, shows the woman nude. In that version a male admonishing saint stands behind the bed, recalling two of Johannes Kerer’s (1430-1507) student rules of 1497 at Freiburg: that no woman of ill repute should be smuggled into the house, and that no musical instruments should be played there except for the clavichord. No such warning occurs here, however. The music on the back indicates the forger reused a leaf from an unillustrated Italian Choir Book, his cheapest source of vellum. Closely related examples are L14 (The Spanish Forger, 1978, fig.225) and L235, sold at Sotheby’s, London, 29 June 2007, lot 19. The “antiqued” gold background also arouses suspicion because the gold should be bright and shiny.
Female Saint Arriving by Boat (L217)
The Spanish Forger, Paris, 1st quarter 20th century
Vellum, 340 x 240 mm, 1 col., 18 lines


Although the forger almost always used vellum from unillustrated Choir Books, in this case he extracted a leaf from a sixteenth-century Cistercian Lectionary (Epistles only) of Spanish origin now in the Beinecke Library at Yale University (MS 283). The forger added thirteen large miniatures to the Lectionary, which was purchased by the Beinecke in 1960 as a superb example of his work. The present leaf was once folio 159, the number on the back. While the forger sometimes correctly illustrated the Epistles, he did not do so here. The reading on the verso (Ecclesiasticus 15:1-6) is for the Mass of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist, celebrated on December 27. The forger evidently removed the leaf before adding miniatures to the Lectionary, as it does not have the floral borders found in the Yale manuscript.
Agnes Sorel and Charles VII
Paris, late 19th-century
Vellum, 133 x 115 mm

Provenance: Sotheby’s, London, 18 June 2002, lot 23 (as style of Spanish Forger)

Over thirty years ago this leaf was offered for sale – as genuine – for $27,500, with
an attribution to Jean Fouquet and a provenance going back to the Robertet family.
The Morgan Library possesses Jean Robertet’s Book of Hours, which was begun
by Fouquet and finished by Jean Colombe (MS M.834). The miniature, however,
is part of a group of French forgeries that preceded the Spanish Forger. The fasci-
nating and daring miniature depicts Charles VII and Agnes Sorel, the first French
royal mistress to be so recognized. She was nicknamed Dame de Beauté and her
skillfully rendered diaphanous garment leaves nothing to the imagination, though
Charles attempts to lift it. As an argument for authenticity it was suggested that the
pose of Agnes was used by the mid-fifteenth-century German Master of the Playing
Cards in his Queen of Deer, but the influence was in the other direction. The card
was reproduced by Paul Lacroix and was used in the bottom border of the Spanish
Forger’s Flight into Egypt exhibited nearby. Could Charles VII really have made
such a personal miniature to the German engraver for reproduction on playing cards
for the masses? Fouquet’s famous portraits of Charles VII and Agnes Sorel as the
Virgin Mary have little in common with the caricatures in the miniature.
Three scenes from the life of St. Louis and Prayer for the Franks, in French
Paris, late 19th-century
Vellum, 2 conjoint leaves, ca. 245 x 345 mm, each leaf, 245 x 180 mm,
1 column, 17 lines. text box 138 x 93 mm

Provenance: Eleanor Gimbel estate; to Kene Rosa in 1997, who gave it to
Rodger Friedman; purchased from Friedman in 2004.

Parisian forgers, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, seem to have been
quite patriotic, producing numerous miniatures depicting St. Louis and Joan of Arc,
or scenes from their lives. Two forged manuscripts illustrating the life of St. Louis
are, in fact, in the Morgan Library (MS M.49 and MS M.786b). The three scenes
in the present leaf depict St. Louis enthroned, flanked by two clerics; washing the
feet of cripples; and visited by his brother, Charles I of Anjou, in Louis’s tent near
Tunis, where he died on a crusade (25 August 1270). According to the prayer God
established the kingdom of the Franks to be, for the world, the instrument of his
divine will.

Bibliography: The Spanish Forger, 1978, for MS M.49 and MS M.786b, figs. 261-67; for the
present leaf see fig. 312.
Pair of panels, each with a Bishop Standing in a Landscape
German, 20th century
Gothic style frame, 900 x 370 mm, panel 635 x 270 mm.

Provenance: Alice Tully Collection; Christie’s East, New York, 10 January 1995, lot 66 (not sold); Christie’s East, New York, 17 May 1995, lot 223

This pair of austere, though somewhat glum, German bishops once greeted visitors to Alice Tully’s penthouse on Central Park South. According to one of her friends she may have been drawn to them because of her affinity with Germans owing to her close relationship to an Istrian. Each stands in a landscape, one facing right, the other left; both hold crosiers and wear mitres and richly embroidered copes. Give-away details are the poorly painted figures on the copes, the disparity between the seemingly realistically painted bishops and the background, and no feet protrude from their albs.
Music of the Spheres, a Coptic Music Manuscript with two hymns  
Egypt, V-VII century (but a 20th-century forgery), with some inscriptions in  
Coptic, Greek, and Persian  
Coarse animal skin, 6 matted leaves, dimensions vary: leaf 1 (395 x 360 mm),  
leaf 2 (370 x 380 mm). The backs are blank.  

Provenance: H. Aram Gulezyan (Caldwell, New Jersey), an Armenian architect  
and builder who lived in Asia Minor and Egypt, brought the leaves to the United  
States in 1896, when he moved there with his brother Hadji Sarkis Gulezyan  
and their families; he put them up for sale at Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York,  
29 January 1952, to Emil Offenbacher ($7,000) for Cornelius J. Hauck (Cinci-  
natti), whose collection was given to the Cincinnati Historical Society Library,  
Cincinnati Museum Center; purchased privately, 2008.  

Extensive research was done on the leaves for the Parke-Bernet sale, where the  
manuscript was hailed as an early method of Coptic musical notation, and the  
earliest record of written music. The “notes” are circles of various colors, each  
representing a different note in the scale; the size gave the length of the note.  
Others have suggested our “chromatic scale” may have originated from this type  
of notation (the Greek chromos means color). For Eric Werner, however, the scale  
of circles graphically represented Ptolemy’s Harmonia Mundi. For him “the Ptolemaic cycles and epicycles are clearly visible on the manuscripts, and  
the 7 + 5 spheres, which appear on the left of leaf 1, indicate the Zodiac in a musical interpretation.” At the top of the leaf are two groups of men clad  
in skirts and facing each other. Are these the “sacred hymn singers” that Ludlow Bull read as the meaning of the Greek inscription beneath them: “hagios  
hymnodos.” The manuscript was to be included in Christie’s sale of the Hauck Collection in 2006, but a detailed examination of the pigments revealed,  
among others, titanium white, introduced after World War I. Gulezyan’s account of the manuscript is thus discredited, giving rise to legitimate questions  
regarding what he knew of the “real” provenance of the manuscript.  

For Werner’s and other interpretations, one linking the colors of the spheres with our major scale and semi-tones, see the auction catalogue.
Synkessar (Synaxary), second part, in Ge’ez Ethiopia, late 17th or early 18th-century with miniatures supplied in the 1980s by the Synkessar Miniature Forger and associates; according to bogus colophon on fol. 1v it was written in 1681 (i.e. 1688-89) for Atse Yohannes I (reigned 1667-82) and his Queen Sebl Wengel
Vellum, 195 fols. (370 x 335 mm), 3 cols., 33 lines, text box 250 x 271 mm (77-20-77-20-77): 3 full-page miniatures, 18 two-column miniatures, 13 borders with branches, 10 borders with lattices.
Binding: brown blind-stamped goatskin over wooden boards

Under Emperor Haile Selassie (1892-1975) no manuscripts of any antiquity could be exported without a license, making it virtually impossible to obtain richly illuminated royal manuscripts. Nevertheless, around 1987, such manuscripts with export licenses began to appear on the market, including this one. Ostensibly the Synkessar (Book of Saints) was made for Atse Yohannes and Queen Sebl Wengel, who are depicted on the frontispiece (fol. 1v) lovingly gazing at each other. They are protected by the royal guard, while above, in a mandorla flanked by angels, a blessing God looks on. Synkessars, however, are common (The British Library has 24), but suspicions should have been aroused because none are illustrated. Most miniatures were painted over text and do not exhibit the signs of wear found on the vellum. Their condition is at variance with that of the vellum. Clearly the licensers were aware of the hoax. Another splendid Synkessar by the same forger is in The Morgan Library & Museum (MS M.1088).

St. Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Archangels
Michael and Gabriel, and Christ Lowered into His Tomb, fol. iv verso
Synkessar (Synaxary), first part, in Ge’ez
Ethiopia, 19th-century, supplied with modern miniatures
Vellum, 220 fols. plus 4 unruled ones added at the beginning with 5 pages
of modern miniatures, 350 x 270 mm, 3 cols, 35 lines, text box 250 x 220
mm (65-12-66-12-65). There is also a modern miniature on fol. 220. The
first gathering of 8 leaves is missing.
Binding: plain wooden boards

Provenance: Milos Simovic, New York, 2006

This Synkessar, the Ethiopian “Lives of the Saints,” is unillustrated, as it
should be. The miniatures, in Gondar style, are on four leaves added before
the text, and one has been added in a blank space at the end of the book,
doubtless to add interest and value. Gabra Manfas Qeddus (died ca. 1433) is
one of Ethiopia’s favorite saints. He is shown with the lions and leopards with
which he lived in the desert and clad in the thick coat-like hair he developed
there. Michael and Gabriel are shown because they restored his eyes after
they were plucked out by the devil in the form of a raven. Below, Nicodemus
and Joseph of Arimathea lower the bloody shrouded body of Christ into his
tomb.
These miniatures, which are more like paintings, are among the most impressive and vibrant works by the Synkessar Forger, powerfully evoking the Ethiopian ethos. The pairing of St. George and the Virgin and Child (fols. 3v-4) is frequently found in small devotional diptychs. In the opening “diptych” five standing angels bearing censers adore the Trinity (fols. 3v-4). The three persons are shown as old men, but God (center), holds an orb that, unusually, is also touched by the other two. The symbols of the evangelists are also present. The paintings are over text, and rulings are visible in the gutter. The paintings, moreover, unlike the vellum, exhibit no signs of wear.

Crucifixion and Entombment of Christ
Arganon (Hymns to the Blessed Virgin), in Geez Ethiopia, late 17th or early 18th-century, according to colophon in a different hand at the end of the manuscript it was written in 1756 (i.e. 1763 or 1764) and given to the monastery of St. George, Walatta Maryam in province of Gondar
Vellum, 131 fols. (280 x 260 mm), 2 cols., 15-19 lines, text box varies from front 167 x 185 mm (83-18-84) to back, 29 full-page miniatures (modern).
Binding: brown, blind-stamped (cross motif in center panel) native goatskin over wooden boards

In the Crucifixion scene (fol. 104v) Christ is flanked by Mary and John, as well as two angels; falling stars/comets mark the moment of Christ’s death. On the right (fol. 105) Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, in the presence of three angels, lower the shrouded body of Christ in the tomb; above, the Virgin and six other women mourn. The text has been scraped, and the miniatures extend beyond the text-box, as the visible rulings make clear. The same Ethiopian forger also added 29 full-page miniatures to a Ta’Amre Maryam offered by Sam Fogg (location unknown), about 26 full-page miniatures to an Arganon described by Juel-Jensen with a bogus date of 1756 (i.e. 1763 or 1764), and numerous full-page miniatures to a Gebret Hemammat (also described by Juel-Jensen) supposedly written in 1772 (i.e. 1779 or 1780) and given by the priest Memer Genre Kirestos to Gebre Kussam, the Gondar.

Fountain of Life Composition with Evangelist, fol. 39v
Ma’araf (chants for singing psalms and other events), with musical notation, in Geez
Ethiopia, late 18th-19th-century
Vellum, 40 fols. (180 x 160 mm), 2 cols., 22 lines, text box 113 x 126 mm (58 x 10 x 58), 6 modern full-page miniatures
Binding: brown blind-stamped (cross motif in center panel) native goatskin over wooden boards

Provenance: Milos Simovic, New York, 2006

The six miniatures (fols. 36-39) were added over scraped text at the end of the volume, rather than forming a pictorial cycle at the beginning. The selection is odd, for it begins and ends with an evangelist portrait. In between are double page illustrations of the Entry into Jerusalem and the Entombment. Clearly they were added to enhance salability. The Fountain of Life or Tempietto image is found in Ethiopian Gospel books from the 14th to the early 16th-century, but the motif goes back to Carolingian Gospel books, where it is part of Canon Table illustration. Here, however, it is out of context, and an evangelist has inhabited the structure, the word on his book is ‘Gospels.’ The deer and birds are present, but not the water. The miniature is painted over scraped text (note ruling) and after the leaf on the opposite page was stained.

For early Ethiopian examples of the Fountain of Life see: Jules Leroy, *Ethiopian Painting in the Middle Ages and During the Gondar Dynasty*, New York, 1967, pl. II (a 15th-century Gospel book in the church of Kebran Gabriel, Lake Tana, and Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.828, fol. 6r (Gospels of Zir Ganela, 1400-1401).
Cross with two compartments, each with two painted religious scenes
Ethiopia, 20th-century
Bronze, 355 x 137 mm

Provenance: International Auction Gallery, Anaheim, California, 21 May 2018, Lot 80 (as antique Russian/Spanish)

Ethiopian crosses have a long history, but ones with compartments are fairly modern, and are still made today by such Ethiopian artists such as Gebre Merha, who works in Addis Ababa. The early crosses were decorated with incised designs, but the modern ones also have hinged flip-open compartments containing painted images. Those at the top include the popular pairing of St. George on a white horse with the Virgin and Child flanked by angels. Those at the bottom include heads of a royal couple and two male saints.
Processional Cross with four compartments each with two painted religious scenes
Ethiopia, 20th-century
Bronze, 410 x 310 mm

Provenance: International Auction Galley, Anaheim, California, 21 May 2018, lot 166

Early Ethiopian processional crosses exhibited striking and characteristic open-work designs in silhouette, along with incised motifs. But in very modern times flip-open compartments were added, making it possible to enclose protected miniatures. Though somewhat impractical in processions, they did add color. They can be ordered today on Gebre Merha’s website. Left compartment – Virgin, Christ; top – Virgin, Christ; right – Christ risen, women coming to tomb?; center – Christ preaching, Christ holding staff.
The Killing/Sacrifice of Lord Eight Deer Jaguar Claw (bottom Mexico?, early 20th-century Bark covered with slaked lime, 200 x 315 mm, with paintings on both sides


Lord Eight Deer Jaguar Claw (1063-1115) was a powerful Mixtec ruler whose life is known from several illustrated Mixtec manuscripts. The present double-sided leaf is based on the 12th-century Codex Colombino (National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City), which was acquired in 1891 and reproduced in 1892. Forgeries based on the manuscript were made thereafter, following a pattern of forgery production occurring after publicity given to recent finds. The leaf’s central image (detail of lower illustration) depicts the killing/sacrifice of Lord Eight Deer by 4 Wind, his own nephew and brother-in-law. “8 deer” refers to his birth date according to the Mixtec calendar (elsewhere indicated by 8 red dots above his name) whereas Jaguar Claw is the name he was given later. 4 Wind, identified by his firebird headdress, stands to the left of the sacrifice and witnesses it. At least three copies or falsifications of the Codex Colombino exist, the one in the Peabody Museum at Yale was made by Manuel de Velasco about 1912. The Colombino manuscript is of the accordion type and on deer skin.

Bibliography: For The Codex Colombino and the second part in Vienna (Museum for Ethnology, Inv. Nr. 60306 and 603070) see the facsimile Codice Alfonso Case: la vida de 8-Venado, Garra de Tigre (Colombino-Becker 1), Mexico City, 1996, with introduction by Miguel Leon Portilla, for the sources of the leaf see lam. 44 (front) and lam.22 (back). For the identification of the Sacrifice/Killing scene see: Nancy P. Troika, “The identification of individuals in the Codex Colombino-Becker,” Tlalocan VIII, 1980, pp. 397- 418 (also issued as No. 217 in the Offprint Series).
Romanesque Forgery

26

Christ in Majesty
Spain, 19th-century
Vellum, 515 x 355 mm

Provenance: Munich, Dr. August Liebmann Mayer Collection; Sotheby’s, London, 10 July 1968, lot 263, but withdrawn; Christie’s, London, 24 June 1987, lot 255.

Although the Christ in Majesty is now regarded as a clever nineteenth-century forgery, Mayer, a respected art historian, described it as Spanish work of the twelfth century, probably Catalan, and “equal to the finest known productions of the period.” It was withdrawn from the 1968 sale and sold in 1987 as twelfth-century Catalan style. The miniature shares details with the Christ in Majesty fresco formerly at San Clemente de Tàull, but now in the Museo de Arte de Cataluña in Barcelona. In the corners are books inscribed with the names of the evangelists: IOANNES, MATEVS, LVCAS, and MARCVS. The back of the leaf is blank.

Bibliography: The fresco is reproduced by Pedro de Palol and Max Hirmer, Early Medieval Art in Spain, New York, 1966, pl. XXIX, fig. 125. For a similar highly abraded Christ in Majesty leaf in Madrid (National Archeological Museum) see Jesús Domínguez Bordona, Spanish Illumination, Paris, 1930, pl. 56.
Boethius Writing (top) and Receiving Inspiration from the Muses (bottom); and Philosophy and Wisdom as Noblewomen, two leaves forming a frontispiece to Boethius’ Consolation of Philosophy.
Each 263 x 195 mm, backs are blank


Since the Morgan Library has few early secular manuscripts, assistant curator Joshua O’Driscoll was naturally eager to recommend it for acquisition. While researching the two leaves he made the surprising discovery that they were exact copies of a little known 12th-century manuscript in Sélestat (Bibliothèque humaniste, MS 93, fols. 73v-74r). He immediately informed Bloomsbury and the Sélestat curator, who rushed to his vault and was greatly relieved to find that the two drawings had not been removed from his manuscript. Bloomsbury, on the other hand, withdrew the two leaves from the sale. The forgery is particularly disturbing because it so accurately replicates both the worn/faded texts and those that were enhanced, and parts of the illustrations that suffered considerable abrasion. The forger, however, gave himself away when he attempted to decipher the medieval abbreviations found in the original. In the manuscript the Boethius text continues on the verso of fol. 74, as it should, whereas the back of the second miniature is blank, suggesting the leaves were never part of a manuscript. The sewing holes replicate those in the original, suggesting technical replication.

On the left Boethius is shown twice, as an author writing in a book, and below, in prison, contemplating his death; three muses of poetry inspire nothing but sad songs.

The texts above and to the sides of the author portrait were supposedly inscribed by Gerbert on Boethius’ tomb in the tenth century. Boethius, however,
looks to the opposite page for consolation, where Lady Philosophy is shown standing. Above her is a bust of “Sapiencia.” The bold inscriptions, in red, name the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit as given in Isaias 11.2-3: Sapientia (Wisdom), as the first and greatest gift, heads the list, followed by Intellectus (Understanding), Fortitudo (Fortitude), Consilium (Counsel), Pietas (Godliness), Scientia (Knowledge), and Timor Domini (Fear of the Lord). The dialogue with Philosophy, of course, deals with spiritual matters. The faded inscription to the right of Lady Philosophy lists the seven liberal arts in reverse order, numbered 1 to 7: Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectics, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy.

For the iconography, which has an earlier history, see: Pierre Courcelle, La Consolation de philosophie dans la tradition littéraire. Antécédents et postérité de Boèce, Paris, 1967. For high resolution images of the Sélestat manuscript see: http://bhnu-merique.ville-selestat.fr/bhnum/player/index.html?id=MS093&v=257&p=1
Drawing of a Battle Scene
Vellum, 195 x 270 mm, ink drawing with frame,
106 x 210 mm, back blank
After 1926


When this drawing was found (1999) in a binding sandwiched among eight pages of a late fifteenth-century edition of Gratian’s Decretals, it created considerable excitement, as such early drawings rarely appeared on the market. Moreover, the drawing style invited comparison with the great mid-thirteenth century battle scenes made famous by the Morgan Library’s Crusader Bible, made for Louis IX. The leaf was subsequently sent to the Morgan Library for consideration and further study. It had also been shown to various Dutch curators and an auctioneer, who emphasized its rarity, but none questioned its authenticity. Initial enthusiasm, however, quickly changed to disappointment with the discovery that it was a copy of Matthew Paris’s drawing of Offa piercing his spear into the body of Sueno, younger son of Rigan. The drawing (and five others), illustrated his Lives of the Two Offas (ca. 1250), now in the British Library (Cotton MS Nero D.1, fol. 4). Offa was an Anglo-Saxon king who ruled Mercia from 757-796, unified Southern England, and was involved with a commercial treaty with Charlemagne in 796. The folio was apparently first reproduced in Montague Rhodes James’s seminal study, “The Drawings of Matthew Paris” (Walpole Society Journal 14, 1925-1926, pp. 1-26, fig. plate XXIV). The leaf is the same size as the illustration and was evidently derived from it, as telling details revealed. The illustration is cropped on the left because of a tight binding, and thus only one horse’s leg extended beyond the frame, whereas there are two in the original. Other details that make sense in the original are more vaguely rendered in the drawing, such as the fluttering drapery on Sueno’s leg, and the arbitrarily placed hatchings on the right arm of the knight grabbing the right arm of Sueno. Consequently, the drawing was probably made after the publication of M. R. James’s study, and the story of its preservation and discovery in a binding are part of a hoax which made it appear that the drawing was ancient and not modern. The eight pages from the Decretals are in a type face used by Anton Koberger of Nuremberg, who produced many editions.
Christ in Majesty and Instruction Scene, in an initial “B”
Leaf from a 13th-century Tuscan Antiphonary, in Latin, with modern historiated initial “B”
Vellum cutting, 425 x 315 mm, 9 staves of four red lines with square notation

Provenance: purchased from Thomas Carson, Highview, 1987

The spurious nature of the initial, which resembles thirteenth-century Tuscan illumination, is indicated by the clumsy way it covers up part of the first four lines of music (parts of the red lines are visible where the paint has flaked). Nor is there any reason why the subject should illustrate this particular response for the Monday of Holy Week, which begins (“Viri impii...”) on the other side (recto) of the leaf. Thus, the initial “B” makes no sense, as it does not belong to the text that follows. Such responses, in fact, are never illustrated in Antiphonaries. The top four lines of text would have read as follows, with the covered portions indicated by brackets: [-freamus memoriam illius de] terra et de spoliis eius sortem [mittamus inter nos ip.-] si enim homicidae thesaurizaver- [unt sibi mala. Insipientes] et maligni oderunt sapientiam: [et rei facti sunt in cogit-] ationibus suis.

English translation of the response: Godless men said, “Let us oppress the just man without cause. Let us swallow him up, as the nether world does, alive. Let us efface the memory of him from the earth and cast lots for the spoils he leaves. Yes, those murderers laid up a store of evil for themselves. The foolish and the evil-minded hate wisdom, and they are guilty in their thoughts.”

Bibliography: The Spanish Forger, 1987, p. 32, no. 34.
Male Saint with Pen and Open Book, in an initial “C” of Cantate Domino...
(Psalm 97)
Leaf from a Choir Psalter, in Latin,
Central Italy, 14th-century or later
Vellum, 472 x 333 mm, 1 col., 15 lines, text box 310 x 220 mm

Provenance: James Rawlings Herbert Boone (died 1983) of Baltimore; his sale,
Sotheby’s, New York, 16 September 1988, lot 558 (as Italy, 15th century, with
later additions)

The initial begins Psalm 97, one of the major Psalter divisions, indicated also by the
vestige of a page tab. Although the sale catalog regarded the initial as forged, one
was certainly planned, and it’s not painted over any text. The palette of the leafy
forms within the initial, moreover, matches that of the border. The style of the initial
is quite distinctive and hopefully other works by him can be identified. Certainly,
there were other leaves from the same manuscript marking the other major divisions
of the Psalter.
Female Saint (Mary Magdalen?) holding an ointment jar, in an initial “S” of Salvum me fac... (Psalm 68)
Leaf from a Choir Psalter, in Latin, from the same manuscript as the Male Saint
Central Italy, 14th-century or later
Vellum, 472 x 333 mm, 1 col., 15 lines, text box 310 x 220 mm

Provenance: James Rawlings Herbert Boone (died 1983) of Baltimore; his sale,
New York, Sotheby’s, New York, 16 September 1988, lot 558 (as Italy, fifteenth
century, with later additions)

The initial introduces Psalm 68, one of the major divisions of the Psalter, and to
which a man in the border points with his dagger. Here the distinctive and unusual
style of the initial must have appeared strange to the cataloger, but space was left for
it and it’s not painted over any part of the text, which correctly relates to the initial.
The palette of the leafy forms within the initial, moreover, matches that of the bor-
der. Millard Meiss once told me how fascinating it would be to do an exhibition of
works that looked like fakes but were real.
The Story of the Icon of Berytus, two scenes in an initial “N” of “Nos autem glori- ari...”
Cutting from a Gradual, in Latin
Italy, 19th-20th-century
Vellum, 245 x 310 mm, 5 lines of text with 5 staves of 4 red lines with square notation, back blank

Provenance: Cornelius J. Hauck (1893-1967), Cincinnati; Cincinnati Historical Society Library at the Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal; Hauck’s “History of the Book Collection” was sold at Christie’s, New York, 27 June 2006, lot 140.

At first glance the large initial, border decoration, and text appear to be from a fourteenth-century Italian Choir Book. The unusual subject depicts two episodes from the story of the Icon of Berytus (i.e. Beirut). The icon depicted the Crucifixion, was left behind by a Christian when he left Beirut and preserved by a Jew. The Jew was subsequently accused of being a clandestine Christian (top scene) and proved his innocence by piercing the icon with his spear (bottom). When the image miraculously began to bleed the Jewish community was converted, repenting even its “sinful” hostility to images. Another version gave authenticity to the icon by claiming that Nicodemus painted it! The initial “N” begins the Introit for the Mass of Maundy or Holy Thursday, which celebrates the institution of the Eucharist at the last supper. The text fittingly reads “But it behooves us to glory in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” Curiously, the upper scene includes a supper table and the bottom scene also includes a man holding a spear with a sponge. Even more astonishing is the Hebrew text visible at the bottom of the cutting, revealing that the reused vellum was originally a Ketubah celebrating a Jewish marriage that took place in 5472 Anno Mundi (1711-1712 CE) on the banks of the Tiber in Rome! Did the forger have an agenda?

Bibliography: Two early sixteenth-century Bolognese panels with the same subject were sold at Sotheby’s Milan on 29 May 2007, lot 163. For the Icon of Berytus see Hans Belting, Likeness and Presence, A History of the Image Before the Era of Art, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, p.305.
It would have been difficult to identify convincingly the unusual subject of the miniature were it not for the discovery that it copies one in the Borso d’Este Bible (fol. 70r), where accompanying text refers to Ezekiel’s prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem. In the Bible, however the subject is differently framed. Sprega, however, could vary framing devices, add flowers, and make other changes in his copies. The source for the subject on the back is not the Borso d’Este Bible and shows that Sprega could make up a subject in the style of the Bible.

A group of seven leaves with similar double-sided miniatures attributed to Sprega and partly based on the Borso d’Este Bible was sold at Sotheby’s, London, 8 July 2008, lot 8. They went to Boyd Mackus, who sold two of them before selling the remaining five to Justin Croft. A fifteenth-century Missal with three miniatures in the same style was at Bonhams, New York, 9 December 2010, lot 6083 (at the sale it was announced that the miniatures were later).
Assumption of the Virgin
Ernesto Sprega? after Girolamo da Cremona (Siena, Cod. 28.12, fol. 49r) Rome/Siena, 19th-century
Vellum, 240 x 217 mm

Provenance: Acquired 1990s

Given the fame of the Choir Books in the Cathedral of Siena, there were probably numerous copies made of celebrated miniatures in the cathedral’s Piccolomini Library. Girolamo da Cremona (active ca. 1450-1483) worked on the Borso D’Este Bible before going to Siena, where he contributed, over a ten-year period, to 16 of their 29 Choir Books. In 1476 he left for Venice, where he died about 1483. Ernesto Sprega (1829-1911), who helped restore Raphael’s frescoes at the Vatican, was commissioned by London’s Arundel Society to make three “colored drawings” after historiated initials by Liberale da Verona in the Siena Choir Books; in 1866 they were sold to the Victoria and Albert Museum. The present initial, after Girolamo da Cremona’s Assumption of about 1472-74 (Siena, Cod.28.12, fol. 49r), may be by him as well.

Annunciation, in Mannerist style, with jewels, pearls in borders
Vellum, 150 x 108 mm, recto blank.
Italy?, 19th-century

Provenance: Gift of H. P. Kraus, 1997

The Annunciation and some border details (cameos, pearls, gems) recall features of late fifteenth and sixteenth-century Italian illumination, and the considerably wider border on the left side indicates the leaf was a verso. There is no evidence, however, that the leaf was ever part of a codex, suggesting a nineteenth-century origin, when the art of illumination was again practiced, copied, and collected.
Two leaves from a 15th-century Spanish? liturgical manuscript with enhanced historiated borders, in Latin
Vellum: Left leaf (37): 215 x 160 mm, staves of 4 lines with square notation; right leaf (38) 220 x 156 mm, 1 col., 18 lines. Text from Office of the Dead (bottom image)


Although the two miniatures were framed as if they represent the opening of a book, with verso facing recto, the texts are not continuous: the left leaf contains rubrics for the blessing of water and the cross, followed by a procession in preparation for the Mass, while the right contains psalms and antiphons for the Office of the Dead. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, the leaves were embellished with border decorations, including an emperor holding a cross-surmounted orb. The text was also enriched with gold rulings and gold-filled red and blue initials.
Icilio Federico Joni (1866-1946)

Set of Book Covers imitating the Sienese Tavolette di Biccherna
Icilio Federico Joni (1866-1946), Siena
Panels, each 378 x 250 mm

Provenance: New York Street Fair, 1980s?

Federico Joni was regarded as the prince of Sienese forgers and was known for his imitations of Sienese panels and the Tavolette di Biccherna, the painted book covers commissioned by the Biccherna for financial records. The Biccherna was the magistrate of Finance for Siena. These covers, however, were never attached, and according to Joni’s autobiography, were sold as originals by dealers. The ‘missing’ contents are identified by an inscription on the front cover: INVENTARIO DELLA PRESSIOSA COSA DI MESSMINO CONFALONIO. There are numerous coats-of-arms on both covers.

Joni, a contemporary of the Spanish Forger, was never prosecuted. Indeed, in order to obtain export licenses for his paintings he had to show they were not genuine. Created as modern imitations, they were resold as originals. Bernard Berenson was fooled at first, sought out Joni, and bought and sold his works. Joseph Duveen attempted to suppress Joni’s autobiography, buying and destroying copies. Joni was given an exhibition in Siena in 2004 (Complesso museale di Santa Maria della Scala, Palazzo Squarcialupi, June 18 - October 3, 2004) with a catalog by Gianni Mazzoni.

Set of Book Covers imitating the Sienese Tavolette di Biccherna
Icilio Federico Joni (1866-1946), Siena
Siena Panels, each 275 x 205 mm, attached by limp leather spine


The Tavolette di Biccherna were commissioned by the office of the Biccherna from 1257 on and the painted covers sometimes depicted scenes from daily life. Here, however, the front cover has a portrait of Alberto Aringhieri (born 1447, appointed 10 August 1480 Superintendent of the Works at Siena Cathedral, fled to Rome 1506, date of death unknown). He wears the ecclesiastical garb of a Knight of Rhodes. The portrait copies Pinturicchio’s (1504) in the Chapel of John the Baptist in Siena Cathedral. In the background is the harbor of Rhodes and the inscription RHODI. The arms of Siena are on the lower left. The back cover contains coats-of-arms and an inscription: ALBERTO ARINGHIERI ALL’ISOLA DI RODI SIENA ANNO DOMINI MCCCCLXXXVII. The significance of the date is not clear, but in that year Pandolfo Petrucci became the despotic ruler of Siena until 1512.

Coronation of the Virgin and the Lord’s Prayer (fols. 25v-26)
Book of Hours excerpts, in Latin
Georgio de Dolori for Charlotte Musgrave, dated 24 April 1834, London
Vellum, 26 fols., 153 x 112 mm, 14-18 lines, text box varies, 5 large and 2 small miniatures, 12 calendar illustrations (zodiacal), 1 historiated initial, 18 historiated or decorated borders.
Binding: contemporaneous crimson straight-grain morocco with Musgrave arms


According to the title page the Missale Romanum was written and decorated by Georgio de Dolori for the use of Charlotte Musgrave. Was this Georgio actually Sir George Musgrave, Bart., who married Charlotte on 4 July 1827? Musgrave (1798-1883) held many positions as a clergyman and published many books on France, his favorite country. Although he refers to the manuscript as a Missal, it is actually a collection of excerpts from a Book of Hours. The illuminated pages reflect different styles, and most of the texts are incomplete. The text below the Coronation of the Virgin correctly begins the hour of Compline, but it does not continue on the right, which is the Lord’s Prayer. Nevertheless, the book is an early testimony to the growing interest in the practice of illumination, coming well in advance of John Bradley’s influential Manual of Illumination, which went through seven editions in 1860, the year of its issue.
Devotional Manuscript, in French, France, 19th-century
Vellum, 47 leaves, 185 x 130 mm. 21 lines, text box, 120 x 75 mm, initials in a gold heart with green leaves begin the text on every folio.
Binding: contemporaneous brown leather

Provenance: Swann Galleries, New York, Sale 1628, 10 June 1993, lot 312.

Rubrics indicate that most of the devotions are for Jesus, God, or the Virgin Mary. They don’t seem to appear in any discernible order and are in an archaizing script. The text on the verso of the last leaf records the council that Cardinal Pierre de Foix convened on 7 September 1457 in Avignon. The purpose was to promote the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as declared at the Council of Basel. Anyone teaching contrary views would be excommunicated. The record, however, is not to be taken as contemporaneous, for the manuscript is clearly a pastiche.
Bishop, in the initial “E” of Exaudi nos domine... (Psalm 68:17)
Leaf from a Gradual, in Latin
Vellum, 410 x 282 mm, 5 staves of 4 red lines with square notation, text box, 320 x 235 mm

Provenance: B&S Gventer, S. Egremont, MA, 1994

According to Bruce Gventer the Gradual had 31 historiated initials before it was broken up by the dealer from whom he bought some of the leaves. The present leaf was one of the best, and as in the others, the interiors of the pen-work initials were painted later. The bishop appears to look at the rubric concerning the blessing of ashes on Ash Wednesday. It is not clear why the bishop has a halo, but protocol does require that the officiating priest wear a cope of purple color over his alb and stole. Two other leaves were sold at auction, one at Swann, Sale 2410, 12 April 2016, lot 10 (with an initial showing a haloed king with a scepter), and another on eBay, 5 Sept. 2018 (as fifteenth-century Parisian, with an initial described as St. Peter’s Snake Dragon – but the haloed cleric is actually holding a censer!). Buyers beware, as other leaves from the manuscript will eventually appear on the market.
As the rubric indicates, the leaf contains psalm 22 (“The Lord is My Shepherd”) for Feria Quinta (Thursday). The border and the imbibing man on a winged monster arouse suspicion, however, for the verso (Feria Quinta - Friday) has no border, indicating none was originally planned. Clearly the forger saw no need for doing two borders when only one could be shown. The addition is also spurious because the style of ivy border – French fifteenth century – is far earlier than the date of the script.
Hawking and Pruning: calendar scenes added to the borders of two leaves from a 15th-century French Book of Hours, in Latin Vellum, 160 x 115 mm, 18 lines, text box, 94 x 54 mm


Although the two leaves were mounted to suggest the opening of a book (verso faces recto), the calendrical images are out of sequence, for hawking is a May activity whereas pruning is associated with March. Moreover, the scenes belong in a calendar and not in the Office of the Dead: the text above the hawking scene includes the first lesson (lectio prima) of the office and that above the pruning scene the sixth lesson (lectio sexta). The scenes are clearly modern additions meant to enhance the value of what otherwise be unillustrated leaves.
Elaborate border of branches with flowers, berries, and a peacock against a gold background
Verso of a vellum leaf from a Breviary, in Latin, 343 x 258 mm (text box 210 x 164 mm), 2 cols., 30 lines. (The border of the recto has flowers set against a pale-yellow background, and penwork extenders of large initials are not painted over as on the verso.)


The border decoration has very close parallels with works by the Doheny Master, especially the privately owned Doheny Hours of 1528 (reproduced by Myra D. Orth, Renaissance Manuscripts: The Sixteenth Century, London/Turnhout, 2015, 1, col. pl. 22, figs. 112, 112a). The Doheny Hours, illuminated in Paris, was last sold at Sotheby’s, New York, 21 April 1998, lot 39.

The spurious nature of the sixteenth-century French style border is indicated by its variance with the script, which is earlier in date, and that the penwork extension of the initial “H” of the first lesson has been painted over, whereas the initial “C” for lesson III shows that penwork extenders were part of the original program – which did not have elaborate borders. Such elaborate borders for ferial lessons, moreover, would have been highly unlikely. The forger, however, correctly assumed that such embellished leaves would fetch a much higher price than unaltered originals.

(A second, similarly decorated, leaf from the same Breviary was also part of lot 141. It was purchased and sold by dealer Bruce Gventer. The recto contained lessons VIII, IX; the verso lessons I, II for feria VI. Here the recto border has the gold background, and the verso, the pale yellow one.)
Christ before Herod
Simon Bening or shop, Bruges, 16th-century, with a painted frame added after 1846 by Caleb William Wing (1801-1875), London.
Vellum sheet (110 x 92 mm) on which miniature (70 x 50 mm) is set, text on verso

Provenance: John Boykett Jarman (1782-26 February 1864); possibly in one of the groups of miniatures in the Jarman sale, Sotheby’s, London, 13 June 1864; Alan Gradon Thomas (1911-1992), London, 1984.

The miniature and the Wing frame are closely related to a series of 29 tiny miniatures formerly in the collection of Esther Rosenbaum and sold at Sotheby’s, London, 25 April 1983, lot 214. The series, attributed to Simon Bening or workshop, are about the same size and mounted on new sheets of vellum. The original manuscript was damaged in a flood in 1846. Wing cut out the tiny miniatures, mounted them on vellum sheets, and painted Gothic style frames around them. The sheets were then bound for Jarman into a small volume. (The series was resold by Reiss & Son, Königstein im Taunus, Auktion 62, 15 October 1996, lot 18.) Jarman not only did restorations but could also paint new miniatures. The present leaf, and one in the collection of Scott Schwartz, however, were not part of lot 18, but acquired from Alan Thomas. They may have been part of the manuscript but excluded from the set of 29 because they duplicated subjects. The iconography follows Luke 23:8-12. When Pilate learned Jesus was from Galilee, he sent him to Herod, as Galilee was under his jurisdiction. Herod was pleased, hoping he might witness a miracle. Herod mocked Jesus, clad him in a bright robe and sent him back to Pilate, and the two enemies became friends.
Religious and Secular Hierarchies
Belgium (?), nineteenth or twentieth century pastiche
Vellum cutting laid down on a panel, 180 x 177 mm


One of the most convincing methods of forgery detection is to identify sources and showing how the forger changed or misunderstood them. In this case the miniature is derived from the opening miniature of Petrus Alamire’s luxurious choir book made about 1511 for Archduke Charles (later Charles V) preserved in Malines (Archives de la Ville, fol. 1). The Ghent-Bruges miniature depicts homage to the enthroned Archduke: above the throne is the archducal crown and the double-headed eagle with the arms of Austria in the center. Seated before Charles are five seated siblings. Three men standing on the far left represent the clergy (pope, cardinal, bishop), while a corresponding group on the right represent the secular hierarchy (nobility, army, peasantry). All but the pope have one arm raised in a pledge of allegiance.

In the forgery, however, God the Father has replaced the double-eagle, the throne is empty, the siblings have become angels, and the pope now raises his hand as well.

The original inscriptions have been repeated:
Above the throne: SUB UMBRA ALARUM TUARUM PROTEGE NOS (Protect us beneath the shadow of your wings). Psalm 16.8 and motto of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, his maternal grandparents.
Above the clergy: DOMINE, REFUGIAM FACTUS ES NOBIS A GENERATIONEM IN GENERATIONEM (Lord, thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation). Psalm 89.1
Above the secular group: RESPICE DOMINE IN SERVOS TUOS ET IN OPERA TUA DIRIGE FILIOS EORUM (Lord, look upon thy servants and upon their works and direct their children): Psalm 89.16.

Baptism of Christ with two border roundels (Moses striking the Rock, Pharaoh’s Daughter Finding Moses on the Nile), and borders with sea creatures Flemish, 16th-century or later
Vellum, 115 x 90 mm., verso blank

Provenance: Holtkott Collection (ink stamp on verso); Swann Galleries, New York, Sale 2030, 24 January 2005, lot 116, not sold; purchased after sale, 2005

In this remarkable Baptism of Christ aquatic images and borders thematically - and ingeniously - unify the page. In one roundel Moses strikes the rock, producing life-saving water for the encampment, in the other pharaoh’s daughter finds the infant Moses in the waters of the Nile. In the borders fish and turtles swim amidst the plants. But there are details that arouse suspicion: the miniature is a recto, but there is no text on the verso, and the pyramids of Giza in the background of the finding of Moses suggest a late date.
Annunciation
Germano Prosdocimi
Venice, 19th-century
Vellum, 228 x 167 mm, mounted on board

Provenance: Christie’s East, New York, sale 7759, 27 Sept 1995, lot 146A.

In the sale catalogue the leaf was ascribed to Alberto Prosdocimi (9 Sept. 1852 - 1925), who was born in Venice, where he attended the Accademia. He painted scenic views of architecture, portraits, and miniatures. He was especially known for his copies of miniatures in the celebrated Grimani Breviary, a masterpiece of Flemish illumination by Gerard Horenbout, Alexander and Simon Bening, and others preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (Ms. lat. I, 99 = 2138) in Venice. The manuscript was purchased by Cardinal Domenico Grimani (1461-1530) in 1520. The miniature, however, is signed “G. Prosdocimi,” who also made copies of the Grimani Breviary. He was specifically praised for the superiority and faithfulness of his brush by Léon Curmer, who used them to prepare the chromolithographs published in his Les Évangiles des dimanches et fêtes de l’année (Paris, 1864).

This Annunciation is after the Annunciation on fol. 530v, and the same size, but the colors are not identical. Here the flowers and birds in the border are set against a pale green background, but in the original the background is pink, the flowers in the border are violet, but in the manuscript they alternate with white blossoms. The colors of the angels hovering above the Annunciation are also not the same and thus could not be mistaken for the original. Prosdocimi signed the miniature at the bottom right of the wooden plinth supporting the Virgin’s architectural enclosure, but it’s difficult to see.
Man Receiving Extreme Unction
Germano or Alberto Prosdocimi (1852-1925)
Venice, 2nd half of 19th or early 20th-century
Vellum, 250 x 190 mm; miniature, 225 x 163 mm


Germano and Alberto Prosdocimi (1852-1925) were two Venetian artists who were famous for their copies made after miniatures in the Grimani Breviary, the celebrated Flemish manuscript preserved in Venice, their hometown. The manuscript, illuminated by Simon Bening and others, was purchased by Cardinal Domenico Grimani in 1520. In this miniature, after fol.449v, a man receives the last rites, while above him an angel and a devil fight over his soul. At the foot of the bed are two servants with a pyx containing the Eucharist. Women mourn in the foreground while doctors converse in the background. On the left heirs count money. At the top are heaven and hell; at the bottom, the Battle of the Three Living and the Three Dead. Although these copies are regarded as facsimiles, some details are not precisely rendered, or omitted: there should be coins on the table counted by the heirs.
Saint Peter
Germano or Alberto Prosdocimi (1852-1925)
Venice, 2nd half of 19th or early 20th-century
Vellum, 255 x 190 mm, miniature, 227 x 165 mm


In the Grimani Breviary, St. Peter and Paul (fols. 602v-603r) are facing miniatures and preface the offices dedicated to them. Prosdocimi copied both of them. St. Peter is shown as the first pope in the nave of a large church with an organ mounted on one side. Within an elaborate Gothic frame are two events from his life: his miraculous raising of Tabitha at Joppa (Acts.9) and his journey to Caesarea at the invitation of Cornelius the centurion (Acts.10). In the copy grass has been added in the marginal scenes. The St. Peter has lost its frame, but it may have matched those on nos. 52, 54).
Saint Paul
Germano or Alberto Prosdocimi (1852-1925)
Venice, 2nd half of 19th or early 20th-century
Vellum, 255 x 190 mm: miniature, 228 x 168 mm


This St. Paul is a copy of the miniature in the famous Grimani Breviary (fol. 603r), and is the second of the two miniatures forming a frontispiece for the offices of Sts. Peter and Paul. St. Paul, holding the instrument of his martyrdom and a book, stands in a landscape. His conversion on the road to Damascus is shown in the background, while in the lower brown grisaille border he is led to his martyrdom: on the right he is beheaded. There are also some differences from the original; The tree to the right of Paul, for example, is much leafier than the original, where branches are less obscured by leaves. A label written in French and attached to the back of the frame states that the miniature is one of six copies made by G. Prosmodici in 1863. The frame was supplied by Stassart Dorure Encadrement, 28 rue St. Lazare, Paris, who also framed no. 52. No. 53 has lost its frame, but it may well have been by the same framer.
David Penitent
probably Caleb William Wing (1801 -1875)
London, 19th-century
Vellum, 175 x 120 mm; verso blank


The London-based Wing was well known as a facsimilist and restorer who worked for John Boykett Jarman, the collector and dealer whose manuscripts suffered severe water damage. In addition to his restorations he also produced a large number of miniatures he added to codices or sold separately. The style of the present leaf, and especially the strap-work border, are very much based on the mid-sixteenth-century works by the Masters of the Getty Epistles and Henri II.

The leaf, along with other miniatures (both originals and copies), autograph letters, and prints, was part of a deluxe three-volume extra-illustrated copy of Thomas Frognall Dibdin’s Bibliomania, or Book-Madness, a Bibliographical Romance, illustrated with cuts, New and improved Edition, London, Henry G. Bohn, 1842. This special copy, on pink paper, originally belonged to Bohn himself. Additional supplied titles are dated “1882,” when the extra illustrations were added.

Joan of Arc, while tending her father’s sheep, heard voices and had mystical visions, leading her to a pious life. Sometimes the voices took visible form in which she recognized Saints Michael, Catherine, or Margaret. Further, she felt God’s command to become the savior of France, and convinced the future Charles VII to allow her to defeat the English at Orleans, giving rise to her nickname, “The Maid of Orleans.” She witnessed the coronation of Charles VII, the rightful king, at Reims on 18 July 1429, where he received the sacred/divine oil of kingship. In the miniature the visionary Joan is shown as a peasant, holding a staff and a lamb. She is flanked by Saints Margaret (with a dragon), Catherine (wheel) and Michael (scales), while behind her a monument is inscribed with her nickname in German (DIE JUNGFRAU VON ORLEANS). Above, the infant Jesus, holding an orb, blesses two flanking French rulers, Louis IX (Saint) and possibly Louis I (The Pious), a further reference to divine kingship.

The miniature was removed from a three-volume extra-illustrated copy of Dibdin’s *Bibliomania*. Since some of the other miniatures added to the set were by Caleb William Wing, is it possible that he was responsible for this one as well.
Nativity
Probably by Sister Marie Madeleine Kerger (1876-1959) Abbey of Maredret, Belgium, ca. 1920
Vellum, 126 x 96 mm (miniature 95 x 72 mm), after Morgan manuscript MS M.72, fol. 8v (Ghent, ca.1270-80)


I had long been fascinated by a small Nuptial Mass in the Morgan Library’s collection (MS M.658) illuminated in Gothic style in 1914-15 by nuns of the Abbey of Maredret in Belgium. It was finished by Sister Marie Madeleine Kerger. I used it in the Spanish Forger exhibition to show it was not intended to be a forgery, as it was painted on new vellum, and included a medieval archer shooting at zeppelins. It was purchased by J. P. Morgan through Sir Frederic George Kenyon, Director of the British Museum in 1921, and given by him to the Morgan. Thus, when Maggs offered this Nativity, presumably sent as a Christmas card inscribed “Affectueux souhais de Noel, Cecile de Hemptinne” to Lady and Sir Frederic Kenyon about 1920, I immediately bought it. Dame Cecile was the abbess at Maredret. The Nativity was a brilliant copy of the Morgan’s MS M.72, fol. 8v, a Psalter made in Ghent about 1270-80. But there were other compelling connections as well, for Belle da Costa Greene had sent the nuns a copy of M. R. James’s Catalogue of Manuscripts from the Libraries of William Morris, Richard Bennett... London, 1906, which just happened to have an actual size color reproduction of fol. 8v, the source for the copy! Kenyon did much to promote the work of the nuns, and in a letter to Charles Wilson Dysson Perrins of 6 January 1921 he praised the work of Sister Kerger, Maredret’s principal artist, and probable illuminator of the Nativity.

Genuine manuscript with added miniatures

Courtly Couple in a Tent Enjoying Wine (fol. 120)
Muhammad ibn Khawand Shah ibn Mahmud Mirkhwand (d. 904/1498). Rawzat al-Safa (History of the Mongols and Tartars down to Timur, Vol. 5), in Persian; Arabic, Persian, and Turkish poetry is written diagonally in many margins.

Late 17th-18th-century, with an ‘ünvan with mauve flowers on vine scrolls on a gold background and larger orange flowers on a navy background mounted over the top of the text on fol. 1v, and 5 miniatures painted over text in the 20th century. Paper, 214 fols., 350 x 240 mm, 1 col., 25 lines, (text box 230 x 140 mm Binding: modern russet morocco in Islamic style.

Provenance: ownership stamps on fols. 1, 214v; Swann Galleries, New York, sale 1525, 22 March 1990, lot 97.

In order to fetch a higher price for this unillustrated manuscript, five large miniatures in an archaizing style were added, all by the same hand. As usual in paper manuscripts, the miniatures were painted over the text. The manuscript was apparently damaged, lacking folios at the beginning and end, making it necessary to mount an ‘ünvan at the top of the text on fol. 1v and supply a new binding. The miniature, of course, shows no sign of wear.
Erotic leaves painted over manuscript pages

Nocturnal Emissions: Two Men Orgasming on a Woman
Erotica Master
India (?), early 1980s
Paper, 240 x 166 mm: miniature (140 x 106 mm) painted over Persian text. Text on verso: 1 col., 26 lines, text box 175 x 108 mm.

Provenance: Manhattan Galleries, New York, 12 August 1982, lot 276 (as “antique Persian”).

During the 1980s such miniatures appeared in several New York auctions, suggesting their recent date, as forgers do not hang on to their works. Since it is impossible to scrape text from a paper leaf, the forger simply painted over it. Here parts of the text are visible beyond the left frame. The forger must have felt that the imaginative subject matter would also have an exotic appeal. The artist was aware of the tradition of representing men with a darker skin color than women. Two deer in the background seem aware of the scene. I have dubbed the maker the Erotica Master.
Double Bestiality
Erotica Master
India (?), early 1980s
Paper, 240 x 166 mm: miniature (143 x 105 mm) painted over Persian text from the same manuscript as above and by the same artist. Text on verso: 1 col., 26 lines, text box 173 x 108 mm.


The two deer who were merely onlookers in the previous miniature have now become principal participants. There is a wine flask on the ground and the man sniffs a drug. The horse that drove the couple to the secluded spot, however, cannot witness the events.
Unequal Pair of Lovers
Erotica Master
India (?), early 1980s
Paper, 210 x 153 mm: miniature (122 x 90 mm) painted over Persian text. Text on verso: 1 col., 15 lines, text box 155 x 95 mm.

Provenance: Tepper Galleries, New York, 24 January 1987, lot 734 (1 of 2)

Here an old man wearing a turban enjoys a young woman as another, perhaps a procurer, watches from behind some bushes. The original leaf was unillustrated, and bits of text extend beyond the gold frame. The original text, as seen on the verso, was not framed.
Four-armed Parvati’s Union with a Man
Erotica Master
India (?), early 1980s
Paper, 230 x 150 mm: miniature (123 x 88 mm) painted over text from the same manuscript as the Unequal Pair of Lovers: Text on verso: 1 col., 15 lines, text box 168 x 93 mm.

Provenance: Tepper Galleries, New York, 24 January 1987, lot 734 (2 of 2)

Parvati is the Hindu goddess of love, fertility and devotion. In her hands she holds symbols of her qualities and manifestations: an axe, sword, pink lotus, and spear. In the Puranas her union with her husband Shiva symbolizes the union of a male and female in “ecstasy and sexual bliss,” suggesting the subject might be Shiva and Parvati. Was the moon purposely included in the nocturnal sky because she was also its deity?
The Angel Appearing to Joachim
Marantonio Raimondi’s forgery of Dürer’s Angel Appearing to Joachim ca. 1506, part of his woodcut Life of the Virgin.
Venice, ca. 1506
Engraving, 290 x 208 mm

Provenance: Palladium Artis, Old Prints and Books, Leipzig, acquired 2017

The subject is based on the apocryphal Gospel of James and repeated in Voragine’s Golden Legend. According to the story Joachim had been married to Anna without issue for twenty years, causing him to be shamed and take up abode with shepherds. An angel subsequently appeared to him announcing that Anna would have a daughter, that she should be named Mary, and that she would give birth to Jesus. When Dürer (1471-1528) became aware that Raimondi (ca. 1480-ca. 1532) was selling his forged works as originals—they also included the “AD” monogram—he took legal action in Venice in 1506. The lawsuit was the first of its kind. The results were not entirely satisfying: the “AD” monogram had to be removed, but they could be sold as copies. Consequently Dürer, in the preface to the 1511 edition of the Life of the Virgin, warned the pilferers of his works that Emperor Maximilian said that nobody throughout the imperial dominion would be allowed to sell or print fictitious imitations of the works. The present work, which includes the “AD,” is not without problems. It was supposedly made from the original sixteenth-century plate in the nineteenth century, making it a re-strike.
God the Father, in an initial “V,” holding an open book with letters “OELKLE,” and a tennis racquet
Scott Schwartz, New York, 2000
Parchment paper, 100 x 98 mm

Provenance: Gift of Scott Schwartz, 14 January 2000

Scott Schwartz, collector and illuminator, and a dear and close friend for many years, created this cutting in honor of my Morgan exhibition, “Sacred Song: Illuminated Choir Books,” held in 2000. It is neither forgery nor copy, but was inspired by the work of Don Silvestro dei Gherarducci, the fourteenth-century Florentine illuminator active at Santa Maria degli Angeli. Compare, for example, Morgan MS M.478.5, a cutting which was part of the exhibition. Above and below the “OE” Scott playfully added a “W” and an “M,” not a possibly expected Alpha and Omega. The tennis racket, inscribed “PRO MODEL,” is a reference to my love of tennis. The letter “S” on its hilt presumably refers to the maker.
Prayer in Honor of the Virgin Mary and the Lord, in Greek
Egypt, Coptic?, 19th to 20th century
Leaf (coarse animal hide), 295 x 445 mm, 1 col., 16 lines.

Provenance: Parke-Bernet Galleries (Coptic Manuscripts sale), New
York, 10 April 1956, lot 4, to Emil Offenbacher for Cornelius J.
Hauck (his bookplate on back of mat), to the Cincinnati Historical
Society Library, Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal;
acquired with the Coptic Music manuscript, 2008

Typed translation of the prayer attached to back of mat:

“Blessed mother, behold the world and universe forever and ever. Child Lord, hearken, come behold the heavenly archangels and the blessed dove. The kingdom of the Lord has destroyed the demon to begin the blessed temple of the world. Lord master, Lord of the world, blessed Lord child of Egypt, hear, hearken, behold the shepherds, praise, sing, hail Gabriel, Lord Gabriel, sound the trumpet, voice praise, behold the King Father, Lord of the world, this is the Lord’s day, voice, sing praise, your shepherds call upon and invoke Lord mighty, reveal the miracle, sound the trumpets, sing, voice praises, the miracle is revealed, this is the Lord’s day. Lord master, look and observe, the Lord of the world, Lord mighty in heaven, blessed child of the kingdom of heaven welcome. Archangels, angels, shepherds, behold the kingdom of heaven forever andover. Hearken blessed mother, behold the miracle, the Lord child, King of Egypt, praise, sing, voice praise, Lord Gabriel.”

The leaf was stored with the Coptic Music manuscript, and there are offsets of several orange circles, but they do not match up with any in the Music manuscript.