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MANUSCRIPTS (by location)

15th c.

Libro d'ore di Lorenzo de' Medici.

[Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ash. 1874]
 Modena, 2004. 10.1 x 15.3 cm. 2 vols, 472, 295.

In the 1492 inventory, following the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, mention is made of 5 books "libriccini delli offitii, di donna", or small Books of Hours. The description, "for a woman", suggests something both small, precious and jewel-like, with pages designed to be turned by a delicate female hand. The codex Ashburnam 18874 fits this description perfectly. Scarcely bigger than a modern postcard, 10 x 15 cm, it is strikingly bound in pure silk velvet, with clasps and frames in filigree silver-gilt, embossed on each board with a large lapis lazuli and 4 pink quartz stones. Everything about this MS suggests an elevated provenance: from the opulent binding to the harmonious calligraphy and the exquisite series of miniatures attributed to Francesco Rosselli, engraver, illuminator, cartographer and painter, who, together with Francesco di Antonio del Chierico, was the greatest exponent of the Florentine school. There are 9 full-page illuminations, with each picture surrounded by elaborate floral decorations enriched with festoons and garlands. But each of the 233 folios of the MS features at least one element, either a capital letter or a frieze, positioned to enhance the page according to the strict canons of the bookmaker's art. Commentary edited by Franca Arduini. Limited edition of 980 copies, bound in pure silk velvet, decorated in silver-gilt with lapis lazuli and pink quartz.



c.1402-1412

Libro d'ore Visconti.

[Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, B.R. 397 & L.F. 22]
 Modena, 2003. 20 x 27 cm. 2 vols, 302, 334 pp; 2 vols, 560 pp (commentary).

Described as a Offiziolo Visconti (or the Libro d'Ore Visconti) this Book of Hours is in 2 opulent tomes with miniatures painted at different times by two very different artists. The first, Giovannino de' Grassi, worked with assistants on the first pages for Gian Galeazzo Visconti. This work was interrupted by the death of the duke in 1402. When Gian Galeazzo's son, Filippo Maria, became duke in 1412 the decoration of the MS was continued by Belbello da Pavia. In the closing years of the 14th century under Gian Galeazzo, Pavia and Milan became two of the leading European centers for the production of illuminated manuscripts. At that time the Lombard school produced a series of splendid illustrated books devoted to plants, animals, medicine and the seasons. While the scribe who wrote the text of the prayer book signed his name, Frate Amadeo, the miniaturists according to the custom of the time, remained anonymous and only external evidence points to the hand Giovannino de' Grassi as the author of the illustrations in the first part of the book. The other great miniaturist Belbello da Pavia was responsible for the remaining miniatures. Many of these belong to the early stage of Belbello's artistic development, which evolved from a compact style, rich in detail and elaboration into the less cluttered more boldly colored style evident in the Mantuan Missal. Commentary by Milvia Bollati, Adriana Di Domenico & Giordana Mariani Canova. Limited edition of 500 copies, bound in red velvet over wood, with clasps and bands in silver.



1503

Libro d'ore di Bonaparte Ghislieri.

[London, British Library, Yates Thompson ms. 29]
Modena, 2007. 14.5 x 20.7 cm. 274 pp + commentary.

This highly sophisticated Book of Hours was produced in 1503 at the behest of Bonaparte Ghislieri, a member of an important Bolognese family. In commissioning this codex Ghislieri wanted to bring together several of the most famous artists of the period, each one of whom was called upon to create a full-page miniature. The intention was to offer the best miniature anthology that the Bologna school of illumination could produce in those years. Thus we see a succession of works by the likes of Amico Aspertini with his Adoration of the Shepherds, Perugino with his Saint Sebastian, Costa with King David and his Lyre, Francia with his Saint Jerome and, probably, Matteo da Milano, to whom the Annunciation is attributed. The admirable decoration forming the borders of the miniatures should also be mentioned, abounding in classical references, with several clear borrowings from the decoration of the Domus Aurea. Bologna was also the home of the scribe, Pierantonio Sallando, who taught grammar at the University of Bologna and was to become a famous professor of writing. The codex passed from the Ghislieris to the Albani family of Urbino, where it is documented in the 18th century; the following century it reached England, where it was purchased by Henry Yates Thompson in 1897. Since 1941 it has been kept in the British Library. Limited numbered edition of 980 copies, bound in kidskin featuring gold embossing applied dry and corner guards and clasps in solid silver.

€ 8800



c.1450

La divina commedia di Alfonso d'Aragona.

[London, British Library, Yates Thompson ms. 36]
Modena, 2006. 25.7 x 37 cm. 2 vols, 396, 340 pp.

Richly decorated with over 100 splendid miniatures and featuring illuminated initial letters at the beginning of each canticle, this Codex was produced in Tuscany around the middle of the 15th century at the request of an illustrious client, the king of Naples, Alfonso of Aragon, known as the Magnanimous. The king, an enlightened patron and sensitive humanist, in an effort to affirm the predominance of his kingdom over the other Italian states, transformed Naples into a lively artistic and cultural center. A sophisticated bibliophile, he looked upon manuscripts as precious treasures and, having accumulated an extensive library in Spain, wanted to augment it in Naples with Italian, Latin and Greek texts, obtaining precious miniature codices through the good offices of the scholarly Guiniforte Barzizza. The sumptuous collection of miniatures in the Divine Comedy is the work of two different artists, although the assignment to decorate the three canticles was probably given to a single artist, identified as the Siennese, Lorenzo di Pietro, known as il Vecchietta. It was this first illuminator who decorated all the capital letters and the scenes of Hell and Purgatory, executed between 1442 and 1450. The decoration of Paradise, has been attributed to another Siennese, Giovanni di Paolo, an artist immersed in a dream-like, spiritual dimension which he translated in his miniatures into unreal, fairy-tale atmospheres sharing three common characteristics: the structure of the universe, represented by the azure brightness of the sky and the celestial spheres, usually blazing with gold; the all-consuming loveliness of the countryside, inspired by the beauty of the Tuscan landscape to the south of Sienna and frequently clearly recognizable; and the unifying presence in the majority of the miniatures of the coupled figures of Dante and Beatrice. Limited edition of 750 copies, bound in silk velvet over wood boards and featuring decorations, gilded silver and enamel work.
€ 8750



15th c.

La bibbia di Borso d'Este.

[Modena, Bibl. Estense Univ., lat. 422 & 423]

Modena, 1998. 28 x 40 cm. 2 vols, 1212 pp; 2 vols, 851 pp (commentary).

The Bible made for Borso d'Este, duke of Ferrara, between 1455 and 1461 is a masterpiece of Italian renaissance miniaturist work. For the first time in this codex book illustration reflects the new language of the Renaissance, giving a more rational interpretation to the fantastic elaborations of late-gothic art. The most celebrated artists of the period worked on the bible, to create a work of enduring beauty, ensuring the legacy of the splendid Este court and the munificence of Duke Borso. The miniaturists, the most noted being Taddeo Crivelli and Franco dei Russi, painted each page both recto and verso, illustrating episodes from the Old and New Testaments. Biblical events are reinterpreted in the elegant spirit of the Este court reflected in the costume, refined style and aristocratic bearing of the figures. The formal language bears witness to the advances in perspective which originated in Tuscany combined with the meticulous realistic attention to detail typical of Flemish painting. The Bible is also rich in both colored and gold decorative elements, with friezes inhabited by mythological and zoomorphic creatures, painted white sculptures and Este emblems. These combine to create an extraordinary gallery of renaissance art, alone of all its kind. Commentary by Vincenzo Cappelletti, Ernesto Milano, Gianni Venturi, Gianfranco Ravasi, Federica Toniolo, & Mariani Canova. Limited edition 750 copies, bound in crimson velvet over wood, with silver-gilt medallions on the front plate, two silver-gilt straps and clasps.



14th c.

Historia plantarum.

[Rome, Bibl. Casanatense, ms. 459]

Modena, 2001. 32 x 46 cm. 590 pp + commentary.

This precious MS, an encyclopedia of the natural sciences, describes plants, minerals, and animals with particular reference to their medicinal and therapeutic properties. The codex dates from the late 14th century and was produced at the court of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, who presented it to Wenceslas IV, king of Bohemia and Germany. The contents of the *Historia Plantarum* are arranged alphabetically. The opening page of each section is richly decorated with architectural motifs, especially gothic pinnacles, interwoven with curious ramage dotted with gold. The initials often enclose a half-bust of a doctor or man of letters. The 295 folios include more than 500 illustrations of plants, and reflect a detailed and impressive knowledge of plants in Italy in the late middle ages. In addition to the botanical illustrations there are more than 80 of animals from which healing substances can be obtained, and more than 30 of mineral derivatives. Other sections of the text are illustrated with scenes and figures reflecting diverse aspects of daily life. Such a rich and complex codex required the work of a number of miniaturists who had to be carefully monitored and coordinated. As early as 1912, Pietro Toesca attributed the codex to Lombard workmanship, to the circle of Giovannino de' Grassi, indicating the varied quality of the illustrations. Among the many marvellous illustrations in the *Historia Plantarum*, outstanding are the quality and decorative exuberance of the 24 frontispieces accompanying every letter of the alphabet. The imaginative richness and variety of the decorative motifs applied with a delicacy of color and execution give these miniatures a distinct and quite unmistakable quality. Commentary edited by Vera Segre, with digital translation of the texts. Limited edition of 750 copies, bound in green velvet over wood, with metal trimmed clasps and bosses of burnished brass on front and back boards.



1477-
1478

La bibbia di Federico da Montefeltro.

[Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Urb. lat. 1-2]
Modena, 2004. 44.2 x 59.6 cm. 2 vols, 1104 pp; 2 vols, 1108 pp (commentary).

This large Bible in 2 tomes, in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana since 1657, does not conform to the usual idea of an illuminated codex. It measures 44,2 x 59,6 cm, and the number of folios, 241 in the first tome and 311 in the second, makes it particularly weighty, even hard to move, appropriate more to a permanent display lectern than for daily perusal. Furthermore the 35 large miniatures decorating the beginning of each book appear more like paintings framed in a precious vellum passepartout than miniatures, "miniature" usually suggesting something extremely small, often only explored successfully with the help of a magnifying glass. This is not the case with the Urbino Bible, in which every detail is pleasingly arranged on a page 4 times larger than a standard modern sheet with some of the miniatures 15 cm high and 26 cm wide. More than a book this Bible serves as a monumental tribute to Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, who created one of the most vital centers of renaissance culture in Urbino. The Bible, one of the finest codices in Federico's library, was written by Ugo Comminelli of Mézières and decorated in Florence in the space of 2 years (1477-1478) by Francesco di Antonio del Chierico, a miniaturist then at the height of his fame. Other celebrated artists of the day, Attavante, Francesco Rosselli and probably Davide Ghirlandaio, brother of the better known Domenico, worked with Francesco to illustrate the Bible. The work of these artists as presented in the Bible's miniatures offers a valuable insight into the rich figurative patrimony of the Florentine Quattrocento. Limited edition of 500 numbered copies, bound in red velvet over wood, embroidered in colored and gold thread on front plate; bosses in solid silver on front and back boards and two bands and clasps in silver. € 28000



15th c.

Il libro delle sorti di Lorenzo Spirito Gualtieri.

[Venice, Bibl. Naz. Marciana, it. IX, 87 [=6226])
Modena, 2007. 17,4 x 24.4 cm. 2 vols, 128, 283 pp.

For centuries man has wondered about his own destiny, asking, what would become of me? where may I turn to find an answer that would reliably help me to confront my fate? To answer these questions Lorenzo Spirito Gualtieri, born in Perugia (1426-1496) created and wrote a society game for the delight of a noble family from Perugia, probably the Braccio da Montone. "Il libro delle sorti", the fortune book, comprehends the questions and answers that most frequently haunted men at that time: happiness, marriage, the birth of son, the time of death, the outcome of a war or success in business. The MS, now at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana di Venezia, has become very popular and already there have been dozens of editions published in Italy and elsewhere. "Il libro delle sorti", finished by the author in 1482, has 5 sections: route of fortune, monarchs, astrological signs, celestial spheres and prophets; each section was illustrated in the first decade of the 16th century by painters from Umbria who were in the circle of Pietro Perugino and the young Raffaello. A splendid paraphernalia of miniatures, with touches of gold, which represent a synthesis of figure painting in mid-Italy at that time. Limited edition of 980 copies with wooden clamshell box. € 4800

