

APOCALYPSE THEN
MEDIEVAL ILLUMINATIONS FROM THE MORGAN

****Press Preview: Thursday, March 22, 2007, 9 a.m. until noon****

New York, NY, January 20, 2007—The Apocalypse, or the Book of Revelation, is not only the last book of the New Testament, but its most difficult, puzzling, and terrifying. It provided challenges to its medieval illustrators and was the source for a number of popular images, such as Christ in Majesty, the Adoration of the Lamb, and the Madonna of the Apocalypse. It also contributed to the widespread use of the Evangelists' symbols: Matthew as the angel, Mark as the lion, Luke as the ox, and John as the eagle.

In a new exhibition entitled *Apocalypse Then: Medieval Illuminations from the Morgan*, the Book of Revelation, in all of its complexity, is seen through the eyes of some of the greatest medieval illuminators. Drawn entirely from the Morgan's renowned collections, the show celebrates the completion of a facsimile of the Morgan's "Las Huelgas" Apocalypse and also includes examples from Spanish, French, Flemish, and Russian traditions. The exhibition will be on view from March 23 through June 17, 2007.



Devil Chained in the Abyss and the Dragon (detail), Beatus of Liébana, "Las Huelgas" Apocalypse, Spain, 1220, The Pierpont Morgan Library, purchased by Pierpont Morgan, 1910; ms. n.429 (fol. 135).

The "Las Huelgas" Apocalypse, by the monk Beatus of Liébana, is the largest and latest (1220) of a five-hundred-year series of medieval illuminated commentaries on the Apocalypse. The series is considered Spain's most important contribution to medieval manuscript illumination. Visitors to the exhibition will have the rare opportunity to view fifty of the "Las Huelgas" miniatures because

the manuscript was disbound for the preparation of the facsimile; the leaves will be displayed in the original order.

The exhibition also includes one of the earliest surviving illuminated manuscripts of the Spanish tradition. It was both written and illuminated by Maius about 945 in the famous tower scriptorium of the monastery of San Salvador de Tabara. It is the most important Spanish illuminated manuscript in the United States.

The Anglo-Norman Apocalypse cycle originated during the second quarter of thirteenth century and is represented by a manuscript that was made in London ca. 1250. Owned by the Morgan, it is considered by scholars to be among the earliest examples of this tradition.

Also on view is an independent French cycle created for the great bibliophile, Jean Duc de Berry ca. 1415. It was illustrated by an anonymous artist who is named the Master of the Berry Apocalypse, after this manuscript. Two Flemish examples from the second half of the fifteenth century are included in the exhibition. One was made for either Philip the Good or Charles the Bold, dukes of Burgundy, who used the same coat of arms. It is painted in a crystalline and realistic style, whereas the other Flemish example made about 1475 for Margaret of York, wife of Charles the Bold, is notable for its more atmospheric and visionary style.

A large group of Apocalypse manuscripts was produced in Russia from the sixteenth to the very early twentieth centuries, some having cycles of seventy-two miniatures. Two profusely illustrated examples, in Old Slavonic, will be on display. One dates from the eighteenth century; the other was one of the last produced.

Apocalypse Then: Medieval Illuminations from the Morgan is sponsored by Melvin R. Seiden. *Apocalypse Then* was organized by William M. Voelkle, Curator and Department Head of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts.

The Morgan Library & Museum

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, The Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors of the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, musical and performing arts venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. Nearly a century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its newly renovated campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, the Morgan reaffirms its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

General Information

The Morgan Library & Museum

225 Madison Avenue, at 36th Street, New York, NY 10016-3405

212.685.0008 www.themorgan.org

Hours

Tuesday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; extended Friday hours, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; closed Monday, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day.

Admission

\$12 for adults; \$8 for students, seniors (65 and over) and children (under 16); free to Members and children 12 and under accompanied by an adult. Admission is free on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission to the McKim rooms is without charge during the following times: Tuesday, 3 to 5 p.m.; Friday, 7 to 9 p.m.; Sunday, 4 to 6 p.m. Admission is not required to visit the Morgan Shop.

Press contacts

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