

FEDERICO DA MONTEFELTRO AND HIS LIBRARY
AT THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM

****PRESS PREVIEW: Thursday, June 7, 2007, 10 a.m. until noon****

New York, NY, April 20, 2007—One of the great libraries of Renaissance Italy and the private study of Federico da Montefeltro (1422–1482), Duke of Urbino, is the subject of a fascinating exhibition on view at The Morgan Library & Museum from June 8 through September 30, 2007. *Federico da Montefeltro and His Library* coincides with the three-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the transfer of the Montefeltro library from Urbino to the Vatican Apostolic Library.

During his reign, Federico da Montefeltro helped transform Urbino from a small Renaissance state to a thriving economic and cultural center. The duke was later dubbed “the light of Italy,” and his palace became a gathering place for architects, painters, and writers who benefited from his patronage. As his magnificent library demonstrates, Montefeltro’s intellectual interests were encyclopedic and included theology, geography, poetry, history, and astrology.

“Federico da Montefeltro was one of the great Renaissance patrons of the arts,” said Charles E. Pierce, Jr., Director of The Morgan Library & Museum. “It is appropriate that we hold this remarkable exhibition at the Morgan, which was founded by one of the great American cultural patrons, Pierpont Morgan, a man who was very much attracted to the arts of the Renaissance as well.”



Justus of Ghent/Pedro Berruguete, *Double Portrait of Federico da Montefeltro and His Son Guidobaldo*, Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino.

The Duke of Urbino

Federico da Montefeltro, the illegitimate son of Count Guidantonio (1404–1443), assumed his father's title in 1444, when his tyrannical half-brother, Oddantonio, was assassinated by the disgruntled citizens of Urbino.

Despite his illegitimate status, Federico received the education of a prince. In the elite school founded by the humanist scholar Vittorino da Feltre (1397–1446), he studied the works of the classical Latin authors, which would later constitute an important part of his library. Federico learned to appreciate the crucial role of humanist learning and culture and later commissioned many humanist scholars, such as Giovanni Santi (Raphael's father; [1435–1494]) and Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421–1498), to write biographies celebrating his deeds.

The Duke of Urbino was a man of arms and letters. He was an excellent commander and an expert in military technology, employing the best Italian engineers and architects. For over thirty years, Federico fought as a feared *condottiere*, or mercenary captain, and remained virtually undefeated. By offering his military services to the highest bidder, he was slowly able to amass a large fortune. Using the best artists and writers of the time, he elevated himself to the status of a great patron of the arts.

The Exhibition

Federico da Montefeltro and His Library is installed in the Morgan's Clare Eddy Thaw Gallery, a 20 x 20 x 20 foot cube designed by architect Renzo Piano and inspired by Renaissance chambers he encountered in Italy. The exhibition re-creates Montefeltro's *studiolo* through the installation of artifacts from the original library and through digital reproductions of its inlaid wood-paneled walls and its twenty-eight portraits of illustrious philosophers, popes, saints, and poets.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is the celebrated portrait of Federico and his son, Guidobaldo. The painting, by Justus of Ghent or Pedro Berruguete, is preserved in the ducal palace in Urbino. It famously captures the duke's left profile, which was favored in portraits since he had lost his right eye in a mock joust. The portrait celebrates Montefeltro as the visual paradigm of the man equally adept in letters and arms. He is depicted in full armor while reading a manuscript, which the guest curator, Marcello Simonetta identified based on its binding and size as S. Gregory the Great's *Commentary on the Book of Job*.

An imposing eagle-shaped lectern used by the duke, as well as several lavishly illuminated codices once housed in the Urbino library and now in the Vatican Library are also be on display. Among them is a Gospels regarded as one of the great examples of Renaissance manuscript illumination. Also included are lavishly decorated manuscripts containing works by Pope Sixtus IV (1414–1484), Virgil's *Aeneid*, Bracciolini's Florentine history, and Berlinghieri's world atlas. The horoscope of 1475 from the Beinecke Library at Yale University reveals the duke's interest in astrology, while a coded letter of 1478 documents his secretive military participation in an attempted coup against the Medici in Florence.

Dr. Marcello Simonetta, Professor of Italian and Medieval Studies at Wesleyan University, is the guest curator of the exhibition in collaboration with William M. Voelkle, Curator and Department Head of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts at The Morgan Library & Museum.

A catalogue, entitled *Federico da Montefeltro and His Library*, edited by Dr. Simonetta with an introduction by Jonathan J. G. Alexander, accompanies the show. The catalogue is published by Y. Press in collaboration with the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

After its showing at the Morgan, the exhibition will travel to the ducal palace in Urbino, commemorating the three-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the Vatican's acquisition of the Montefeltro library.

This exhibition is organized and made possible by the Foundation for Italian Art and Culture.

The Morgan will present a half-day symposium in conjunction with *Federico da Montefeltro and His Library* on **Saturday, June 9, 2007**, at 2 p.m. Called *The Montefeltro Library and the Urbino Renaissance*, Marcello Simonetta, guest curator of the exhibition, will provide an overview followed by illustrated lectures by distinguished scholars on Piero della Francesca, Raphael, and Castiglione. This event is cosponsored by the Italian Cultural Institute of New York.

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 in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, musical 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 reaffirmed 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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