

## THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM EXPLORES THE MEDIEVAL WORLD'S FASCINATING APPROACH TO THE PASSAGE OF TIME IN A NEW EXHIBITION

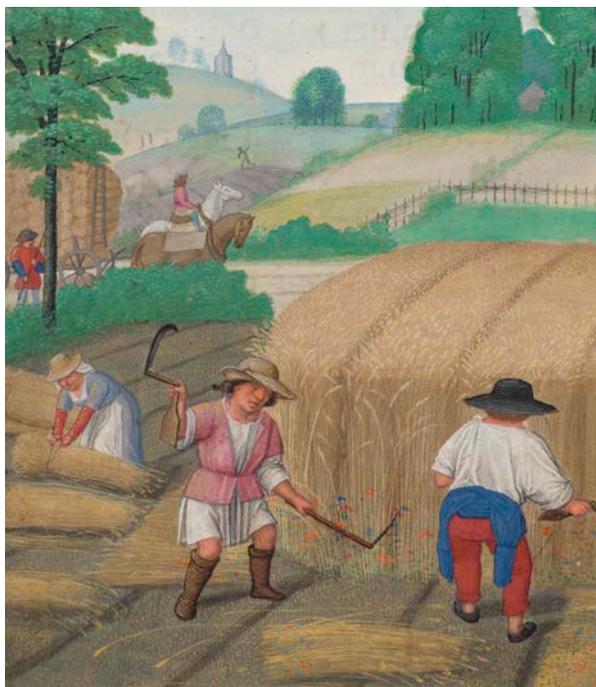
*Now and Forever: The Art of Medieval Time*  
January 26 through April 29, 2018

**Press Preview:** Thursday, January 25, 10:00 – 11:30 am  
**RSVP:** [media@themorgan.org](mailto:media@themorgan.org)

**New York, NY, December 19, 2017** — Before the appearance of the clock in the West around the year 1300, medieval ideas about time were simultaneously simple and complex. Time was both finite for routine daily activities and unending for the afterlife; the day was divided into a fixed set of hours, whereas the year was made up of two overlapping systems of annual holy feasts. Perhaps unexpectedly, many of these concepts continue to influence the way we understand time, seasons, and holidays into the twenty-first century.

Drawing upon the Morgan's rich collection of illuminated manuscripts, *Now and Forever: The Art of Medieval Time* explores how people in the Middle Ages told time, conceptualized history, and conceived of the afterlife. It brings

together more than fifty-five calendars, Bibles, chronicles, histories, and a sixty-foot genealogical scroll. They include depictions of monthly labors, the marking of holy days and periods, and fantastical illustrations of the hereafter. The exhibition opens January 26 and continues through April 29.



*August: Reaping Wheat*, from the Da Costa Hours, Belgium, Ghent, ca. 1515, illuminated by Simon Bening. The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.399, fol. 9v, purchased by Pierpont Morgan, 1910. Image courtesy of Akademische Druck- u. Verlaasanstalt. Graz/Austria.

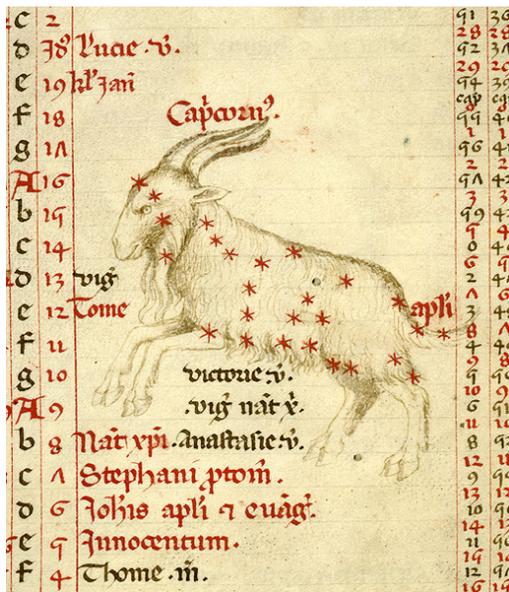
“Artists of the medieval period could render the most common of daily activities with transcendent beauty, while also creating a strange, often frightening, afterlife,” said Colin B. Bailey, director of the Morgan Library & Museum. “Their work mirrored the era’s intricate mix of temporal, spiritual, and ancient methods for recording the passage of time. The elaborate prayer books, calendars, and other items in the exhibition provide a rich visual history of a world at once familiar and foreign, from the seasonal work of farmers that would not look unusual in today’s almanacs, to apocalyptic visions of eternity that make Hollywood’s futuristic films appear tame.”

## The Exhibition

The show is divided into five sections focusing on the medieval calendar, liturgical time, historical time, the hereafter (“time after time”), and the San Zeno Astrolabe.

### I. The Medieval Calendar

Medieval calendars told time in two ways: through the ancient Roman calendar that Julius Caesar had reformed in 45 B.C. and by the feast (usually a saint’s day) celebrated on the day. They appear odd to modern eyes because they lack our sequential numbering; all medieval calendars were perpetual. But they also contained much useful data. Golden Numbers tracking the year’s new moons and Dominical Letters (A through G) tracking Sundays were both used to determine the date of Easter. Calendars also noted each month’s unlucky days and added astronomical information such as the beginning of the summer’s Dog Days.



Detail from the liturgical calendar for Ravenna, in Latin, Milan (?), Italy, 1386, illustrated by a follower of Giovannino de’ Grassi, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.355, fols. 8v–9, purchased by Pierpont Morgan, 1909. Photography by Graham Haber, 2017.

In the Calendar of Ravenna, each month was gorgeously illustrated by its zodiacal sign—the constellation with its composite stars. Not simply aesthetically pleasing, this calendar also tracked the positions of the sun and the moon.

In addition to the signs of the zodiac, calendars often depicted the labors of each month—for instance, August was dedicated to reaping wheat. By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, this sole secular element within prayer books was given more focus. In fact, illuminator Simon Bening painted the labors on the folios of the Da Costa Hours as large full-page illustrations.

## II. Liturgical Time

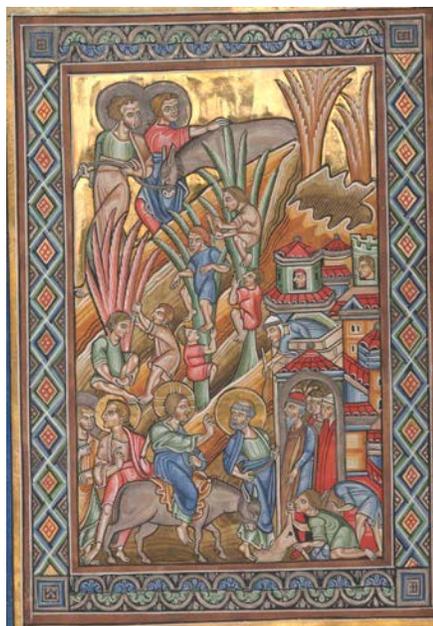
During this period, Europeans used the canonical hours to tell daily time. The medieval day was marked by eight hours, which the Church sanctified with prayer. The day began in the middle of the night (*matins* and *lauds*) and proceeded through the course of the day (beginning at sunrise with *prime*). The day ended in the evening (*compline*). The prayers became synonymous with the particular times they were recited. Books of Hours enabled laypeople to imitate the clergy and pray throughout the course of the day. A jewel-like Book of Hours illuminated by French Renaissance artist Jean Fouquet will be open to the Visitation, a scene marking the nighttime hour of *lauds*.

Two overlapping systems were used to structure the year: the *temporale* and the *sanctorale*. The *temporale* consisted largely of feasts celebrating events from the life of Christ. Some feasts had fixed dates, like Christmas; others were movable, like Easter. Feasts of the *sanctorale* were generally saints' days, commemorating the days upon which the saints died and entered heaven.

Remnants of medieval timekeeping survive today. The medieval vigil, the commencement of an important feast on the evening before, has become today's eve, such as Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve. In *The Berthold Sacramentary*, a miniature marks Palm Sunday, when the inhabitants of Jerusalem laid cloaks and palms in Christ's path as he entered the city. Distributing blessed palms on Palm Sunday is a medieval practice that continues to this day. Christmas, Valentine's Day, and St. Patrick's Day all come from the medieval way of keeping time as well.

## III. Historical Time

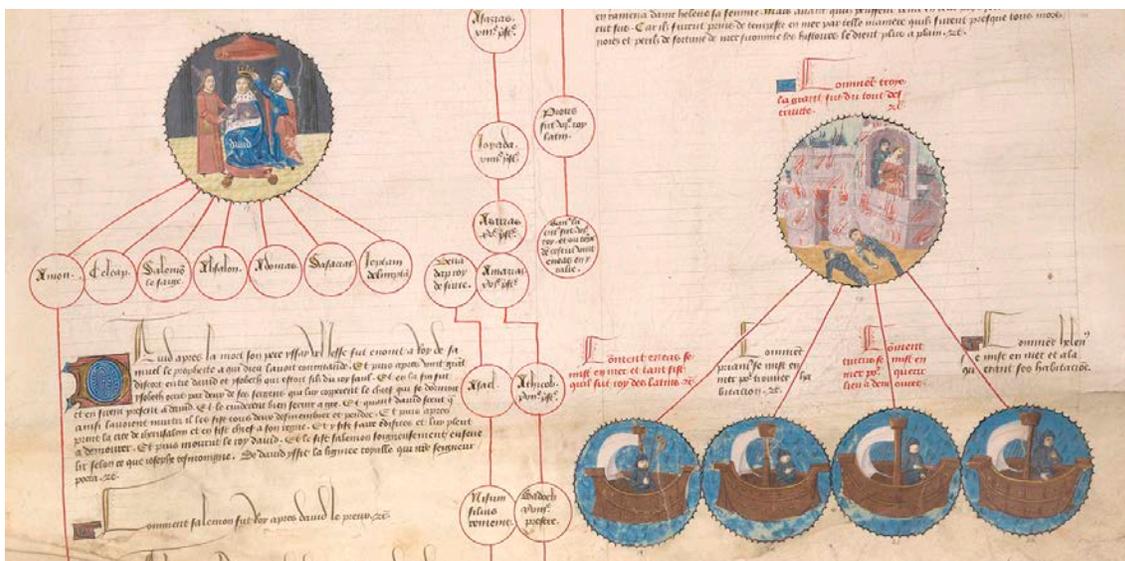
In the Middle Ages, the Bible was both the word of God and the early history of man. It was believed that the Hebrew Bible (the Christians' Old Testament) chronicled actual ancient



**Top:** Canonical Hour of Lauds (Visitation), "Hours of Antoine Raguier and Jean Robertet," France, Tours, ca. 1460–65, and Bourges, ca. 1465–70, illuminated for Antoine Raguier by Jean Fouquet and completed for Jean Robertet by Jean Colombe, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.834, fol. 40, purchased with the assistance of the Fellows, 1950. Photography by Graham Haber, 2017. **Bottom:** Entry in Jerusalem, "Berthold Sacramentary," Germany, Weingarten, 1215–17, illuminated for Abbot Berthold of Weingarten by the Master of the Berthold Sacramentary, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.710, fol. 37v, purchased by J. P. Morgan, Jr., 1926. Photography by Graham Haber, 2017.

events, even if they had occurred long ago. The New Testament related the life and death of Christ and mentioned at times historic figures with known dates. In the sixth century, a new system of dating events was devised: years were described as A.D. or *Anno Domini* (In the Year of Our Lord), based on the presumed birthdate of Christ.

According to medieval tradition, ancient Troy marked the start of European civil history. When the city fell, the defeated but heroic Trojans sailed off and founded such major European cities as Rome, Paris, and London. The medieval belief that Troy itself was founded by descendants of Noah provided a seamless link between the people and events chronicled in the Bible and the Trojans, the forebears for all of Europe.



Coronation of David; Fall of Troy; Aeneas, Priam, Turcius, and Helenus Set Sail for Europe, from the *Chronique anonyme universelle*, detail from section 11, Northern France, 1473–83, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.1157, Melvin R. Seiden Collection, 2007. Photography by Graham Haber, 2016.

An anonymous compiler covered the six thousand years of history that began with Adam and Eve and concluded with fifteenth-century France as the world’s superpower in a sixty-foot scroll, the centerpiece of the exhibition. With sixty-six miniatures, it is the most fully illustrated copy of this universal chronicle known to exist. Outlining the history of the world from Creation to the reign of King Louis XI of France, it depicts five lines of descent: 1) the popes; 2) the Holy Roman Emperors; and 3) the kings of France, England, and the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.

#### IV. Time after Time

Obsessed with the “Four Last Things” (death, judgment, heaven, and hell), people in the Middle Ages believed that time on earth was but a fleeting moment compared to the endlessness of the hereafter. Of those lucky enough to merit heaven, only martyrs or the truly holy might get there immediately after death. The rest detoured through purgatory, a place of temporary punishment, which could mean, however, thousands of years.

Punishment in hell was imagined to be painful and fiery. In *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, the entrance of hell was depicted as a gaping lion’s mouth opening its batlike lips tipped with talons. Through it, demons cast damned souls. Meanwhile, burning towers heat cauldrons into which mutilated bodies are pitched.

The Apocalypse dominated the imagination of what the end of time held in store for humanity. Illustrators of medieval manuscripts portrayed the Beast of the Apocalypse as having seven heads with ten horns and the body of a leopard with bear’s feet, which would make war on the faithful on earth. A False Prophet would order the people of the earth to worship this beast--and also cause great wonders, such as drawing fire from heaven.



Hell, “Hours of Catherine of Cleves,” in Latin, The Netherlands, Utrecht, ca. 1440, illuminated for Catherine of Cleves, duchess of Guelders, by the Master of Catherine of Cleves, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.917/945, III, fol. 168v. Purchased on the Belle da Costa Greene Fund and through the generosity of the Fellows, 1963 and 1970. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2017.



Two miniatures from the “Burckhardt-Wildt Apocalypse,” France, Metz, 1290s, illuminated possibly for Eleanor Plantagenet, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.1071.1r (left) and MS M.1071.2v (right) , gift of Mr. and Mrs. H. P. Kraus, 1985. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2017.

## V. San Zeno Astrolabe

For hundreds of years, an astrolabe hung in the Benedictine abbey of San Zeno in Verona. This extraordinary movable calendar is the only object of its type to survive from the Middle Ages—and is the only loan to the show. For every day of the year, the astrolabe's three dials were rotated by hand to give a wide-ranging set of information: the date in Arabic numerals, the date according to the ancient Roman calendar, the feast to be celebrated, the zodiacal constellation, the hours of darkness and light, and the age of the moon. In doing so, it helped monks organize their devotional lives.



San Zeno Astrolabe, Italy, Verona, ca. 1455, illuminated for the Abbey of San Zeno by an anonymous Lombard artist, courtesy of Michael Stone, Map & Atlas Museum of La Jolla

## Publication

*Now and Forever* is accompanied by the book, *The Medieval Calendar: Locating Time in the Middle Ages*, which examines vigils, octaves, Egyptian Days, and other fascinating mysteries of medieval calendars. It is lushly illustrated with over sixty color plates.

Author: Roger Weick

Publisher: The Morgan Library & Museum and Scala Arts Publishers, 2017  
98 pages.

## Public Programs

### **CONCERT**      **Songs from *A Book of Days*** **Eve Beglarian**

Integrating words, music, photography, and video, contemporary composer Eve Beglarian presents “Songs from A Book of Days,” inspired by medieval manuscripts and writers through the ages. Featuring Eve Beglarian, vocals and electronics, Tony Arnold, Eli Berman, Jeffrey Gavett, vocals, Thomas Feng, piano, and Al Cerulo, percussion. Concert is held in conjunction with *Now and Forever: The Art of Medieval Time*.

**Friday, April 13, 7:30 pm\***

**Tickets:** \$35; \$25 for members.

*\*The exhibition Now and Forever: The Art of Medieval Time will be open at 6:30 pm for concert attendees.*

### **DISCUSSION**      **Whatever happened to the Ides of March?** **Roger S. Weick and Alexander Jones**

The Middle Ages inherited Roman time keeping, but what did they do with it? Roger S. Wieck, Melvin R. Seiden Curator and Department Head of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts and curator of *Now and Forever: The Art of Medieval Time*, and Alexander Jones, Leon Levy Director of the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, discuss and illustrate Roman time and how it evolved in the medieval era.

**Thursday, March 29th at 6:30 pm\***

**Tickets:** \$15; 10 for members; free for students with a valid ID.

*\*The exhibition Now and Forever: The Art of Medieval Time will open at 5:30 pm for program attendees.*

**GALLERY  
TALKS**

***Now and Forever: The Art of Medieval Time***

Roger S. Wieck, Melvin R. Seiden Curator and Department Head, Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts

**Friday, February 9, 6 PM**

**Friday, April 13, 1 PM**

**ADULT  
WORKSHOP**

**What's Your Sign?  
Family Calendar Design**

Inspired by our exhibition, *Now and Forever: The Art of Medieval Time*, families will explore the symbolism of birth months through astrological, botanical, and classical elements. Participants will use medieval techniques to mix their own paint, and then create a family-specific calendar collage of symbols.

**Saturday, February 10, 11 AM–1 PM**

**Tickets:** \$20; \$15 for members.

*Each ticket is valid for one child and up to two adults; Program consists of a thirty minute exhibition experience followed by a ninety minute art-making activity. Materials included. Appropriate for ages 6–14.*

**Organization and Sponsorship**

*Now and Forever: The Art of Medieval Time* is organized by the Morgan Library & Museum, New York. The curator of the exhibition is Roger S. Wieck, Melvin R. Seiden Curator and Department Head.

The exhibition is made possible with generous support from Barbro and Bernard Osher, the Janine Luke and Melvin R. Seiden Fund for Exhibitions and Publications, the Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw Charitable Trust, and the Andrew W. Mellon Research and Publications Fund.

The programs of the Morgan Library & Museum are made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.



**Council on  
the Arts**

**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, music venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. 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, and the 2010 refurbishment of the original library, 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.

**The Morgan Library & Museum**

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