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**THE MORGAN TO PRESENT FINEST INDIVIDUAL ILLUMINATED
PAGES FROM ITS RENOWNED MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE
COLLECTIONS BEGINNING JUNE 19**

*MANY LAVISHLY ILLUSTRATED EXAMPLES ON VIEW
FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER*

**** Press Preview: Thursday, June 18, 2009, 10 a.m. until noon ****
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New York, NY, April 15, 2009—Famous for its medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, The Morgan Library & Museum also holds a notable collection of single illuminated pages. Extracted from full texts, these works were acquired because they include some of the most spectacular examples of medieval painting, often with intricate designs brightened by burnished gold. From June 19 through September 13, 2009, in an exhibition entitled *Pages of Gold: Medieval Illuminations from the Morgan*, fifty of the Morgan’s finest single leaves—many of which were acquired by Pierpont Morgan and twelve of which are being displayed for the first time—are on view.



The centerpiece of the exhibition is the finest leaf from the celebrated Winchester Bible, arguably the most lavish English Bible of its time. Made in Winchester during the last quarter of the twelfth century, it contains vivid scenes from the lives of Samuel and David and was the last leaf acquired by Mr. Morgan. Also included in the show are works of Italian, French, Flemish, German, Hungarian, and Spanish origin.

“*Pages of Gold* offers a new take on one of the core strengths of the Morgan, its unrivaled holding of illuminated manuscripts,” said William M. Griswold, the Morgan’s director. “While no longer in their original context within a book, seeing individual pages mounted and framed allows one to focus on the

Scenes from the Life of David, leaf from the Winchester Bible, illuminated by the Master of the Morgan Leaf. England, Winchester, Cathedral Priory of St. Swithin, ca. 1160-80. Purchased by Pierpont Morgan, 1912; MS M. 619v.

quality of each illumination as a small painting. It is also fascinating, given the broad geographical range of the show, to see the stylistic differences that distinguish one region or period from another.”

Although miniatures and illuminated initials were occasionally removed from manuscripts, they were not collected systematically before the nineteenth century. A pivotal turning point was when Luigi Celotti, an Italian abbot turned dealer, acquired looted choir books from the Sistine Chapel in 1798. Celotti cut out their miniatures and decorated borders to avoid transporting the large and heavy volumes to England, where the miniatures, as well the montages he made from the decorated borders, were sold at a landmark sale held at Christie’s auction house in London in 1825.

One of Celotti’s best preserved and most spectacular montages, on view for the first time, opens the exhibition. Fragments of the composite leaf originally came from a book commissioned by Pope Clement VII (r. 1523–34) or his cousin Pope Leo X (r. 1513–21) for use in the Sistine Chapel. The page comprises five separate panels. Two vertical side panels include classical decoration, medallions with figures of evangelists, a pope, and a bishop and the emblem of Clement VII. At the center of the montage is a miniature by Vincenzo Raimondi of the Birth of John the Baptist, depicting Elizabeth handing her swaddled newborn to a woman, while Zachariah writes the name of his son on a scroll.



Pope Clement vii Asperging the Congregation Before Mass, composite leaf with miniature by Vincenzo Raimondi. Italy, Rome, ca. 1523. MS M. 1134.

Notable examples from the collection of William Young Ottley, an art historian and early collector of single leaves, include works excised from the twelfth-century Eadwine Psalter from Canterbury. The two double-sided leaves each contain seventy-seven small miniatures depicting scenes from the lives of Moses, Joshua, Saul, David, and Christ. Ottley cataloged the 1825 Celotti London sale at Christie’s, and his own collection of single leaves was sold as “illuminated miniature paintings” at Sotheby’s in 1838.

Pages from a richly decorated book made for Hungarian royalty (ca. 1325–35) are also on view. Each of its leaves originally contained four distinct scenes, but they were cut and mounted individually during the seventeenth century. The exhibition includes several leaves in which the scenes have been reunited as well as the book in which the cut pages were mounted.

Among the Italian works is a group of cut initials and leaves from a set of choir books illuminated in Florence by Silvestro dei Gherarducci during the 1390s. The initials included illustrations of prophets within the letters and were particularly popular because they contain heavily burnished gold.

In addition to leaves from Northern Europe—notably France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Bohemia—there are two Spanish choir book leaves on view that are over three feet tall. They were likely illuminated in Castile for a convent in the early sixteenth century.

The Spanish section ends with examples by the infamous Spanish Forger. Active in Paris during the early twentieth century but never identified, the Spanish Forger was named by the Morgan's first director, Belle da Costa Greene, for a work that was thought to be of medieval Spanish origin. Recognizing the growing turn-of-the-century interest in collecting single leaves, the Spanish Forger created over 240 of them for an unsuspecting public. His work is notable for its distinct style and charm and is now collected in its own right.

Pages of Gold: Medieval Illuminations from the Morgan is organized by William M. Voelkle, curator and department head of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, The Morgan Library & Museum.

This exhibition is made possible through the generosity of T. Robert Burke and Katherine States Burke, Melvin R. Seiden, and an anonymous donor.



This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Public Programs

On Friday, June 19, 7 PM, Roger S. Wieck, Curator, Department of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, in an illustrated lecture, will trace the history of collecting individual folios sliced from medieval illuminated manuscripts, a phenomenon that encompasses fifteenth-century piety, the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival, and twenty-first-century eBay.

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. 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 Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. The Morgan closes at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve.

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 is not required to visit the Morgan Shop.

Upcoming Exhibitions

Celebrating Puccini

September 15, 2009, through January 10, 2010

William Blake’s World: “A New Haven Is Begun”

September 11, 2009, through January 24, 2010

Watteau to David: Eighteenth-Century French Drawings

October 2, 2009 through January 3, 2010

Jane Austen

November 2009 through March 2010