


Page-Turners

Medieval and Early Modern Illustration

resenting illustrated narratives and decorated pages, this exhibition investigates different functions of images as well as the interplay between text and image in Medieval and Renaissance books and prints. Although these objects are displayed as separate pieces, it is important to remember that each example is a fragment of a larger work of art. Representing Western and Middle-Eastern cultures, the selected objects include leaves from illuminated manuscripts, folios from early printed books, and broadsheets, all of which highlight the importance of the image across time and place. Some of these works were widespread because of the reproducibility of their media, while others may have only been seen by a select audience. Some illustrations accompany dramatic stories of intrigue or violence, while others serve as didactic guides to assist viewers in understanding complex narratives or abstract ideas. By concentrating on a reader's experience of each object, this exhibition considers how words and pictures reinforce ideas reciprocally and how words and pictures tell stories differently.

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Anonymous artist (German or French, sixteenth century)

Plan of the Heavens

From *Opera Vergiliana (The Works of Vergil)*, 1517

Published by Jacques Sacon (French, 1472–1530)

Lyon

Hand-colored woodcut on paper

Gift of Joseph Fischer in honor of Professor Saul Weinberg (77.103)

These illustrations appeared in a compendium of Vergil's extant works published in 1517 by Jacques Sacon in Lyon. Sacon reused woodblocks from a previous book edited by Sebastian Brant and published in 1502 in Strasbourg by Johann Grüninger. Their 1502 publication was the first ever printed and illustrated edition of Vergil's works.

The *Plan of the Heavens* is similar to those often found in philosophical and scientific texts during this period. The diagram is geocentric, meaning that the earth is envisioned at the center of the universe. This image condenses complex information that is difficult to explain with text alone.



Anonymous artist (German or French, sixteenth century)

Scene from the Aeneid

From *Opera Vergiliana (The Works of Vergil)*, 1517

Published by Jacques Sacon (French, 1472–1530)

Lyon

Woodcut on paper

Gift of Joseph Fischer in honor of Professor Saul Weinberg (77.98)

This *Scene from the Aeneid* depicts the author Vergil at the far left of the composition; he is seated at a lectern and holds a book, perhaps his own collected works. Other labeled figures include Bacchus, the Roman god of wine, in a carriage drawn by four animals; Silenus, the oenophilic and often intoxicated companion to Bacchus, riding a donkey in the foreground; and a satyr playing bagpipes to a drummer's accompaniment. These classical characters appear in medieval or early modern costumes, conflating past and present for contemporary viewers.



Anonymous artist (German or French, sixteenth century)

Sibyl Points Out Illustrious Romans to Aeneas

During His Visit to the Underworld

From *Opera Vergiliana (The Works of Vergil)*, 1517

Published by Jacques Sacon (1472-1530)

Lyon

Hand-colored woodcut on paper

Gift of Joseph Fischer in honor of Professor Saul Weinberg (77.108)

This illustration depicts a scene from Book VI of the *Aeneid*, one of the epic's most famous passages. The Sibyl (center) points out various Roman figures to Aeneas, who has recently reunited with his father, Anchises. Other labeled figures include Romulus (upper left) and Julius Caesar (lower right). These classical characters appear in medieval or early modern costumes, conflating past and present for contemporary viewers.

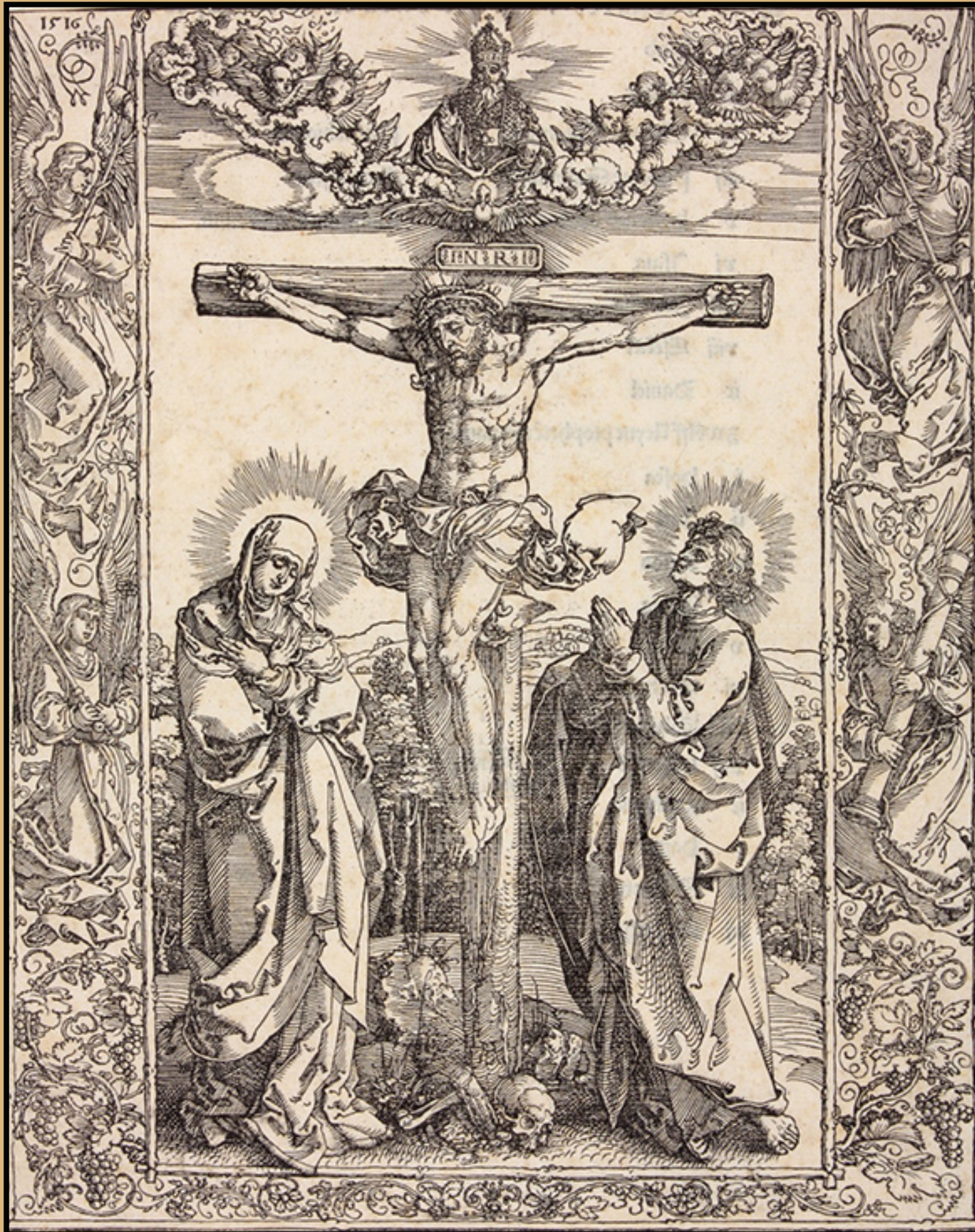


Attributed to the Masters of the Dark Eyes
(Netherlandish, active ca. 1494–1514)
The Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus
From a *Book of Hours*, ca. 1514
Ink, tempera, and gold paint on parchment
Gift of William A. Scott (2009.638)

Saint Erasmus was an early Christian martyr persecuted under the Roman emperor Diocletian (r. 284–305). According to legend, Diocletian ordered Erasmus disemboweled, and the miniature graphically shows the saint's entrails being wound around a windlass. The illumination has been attributed to the Masters of the Dark Eyes, so named because of the artists' or workshop's distinctive style of heavily filling in pupils and painting dark shadows around eyes.

Prayers petitioning saints for intercession, called suffrages, often followed prayers to the Virgin in books of hours. The number of suffrages and the choice of saints depended on regional interests and preferences of patrons. Saint Erasmus was popular in northern France and the Netherlands during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He was often invoked by sailors and, appropriately, people suffering from intestinal disorders.

This leaf comes from a book of hours made for a Dutch woman, Katherine van Wassenauer (d. 1538), wife of Joos van Cruiningen (d. 1543), perhaps on the occasion of their marriage on June 17, 1514. Before her marriage, Katherine had been a nun at a convent near Leiden and was accustomed to making hourly devotions in Latin.



Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471–1528)
Crucifixion with the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist
 From *Das Alte Testament (The Old Testament)*, 1524
 Translated by Martin Luther (German, 1483–1546)
 Published by Friedrich Peypus (German, 1485–1535)
 Nuremberg
 Woodcut on laid paper
 Gilbreath-McLorn Museum Fund (2002.16)

Albrecht Dürer of Nuremberg was the most innovative and influential printmaker of the German Renaissance. Later in his life he witnessed the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Although he was sympathetic with the ideas of many reformers, he died in 1528 without expressing a commitment to either Catholicism or Protestantism.

This woodcut, dated 1516 in the upper left corner of the print, originally appeared in the *Eichstätt Missal*, a guidebook for the mass, printed by Hieronymus Hölzel in Nuremberg in 1517. Like many sixteenth-century woodcuts, this image was reused in another book, Martin Luther's translation of the Old Testament, published by Friedrich Peypus in Nuremberg in 1524. An irony is that Jesus Christ is not a figure of the Old Testament, yet his crucifixion is included in this edition. Either Luther or Peypus may have chosen this illustration as a reminder to Christian readers that Christ and his sacrifice were solutions to the problem of Original Sin introduced in the Hebrew Bible.



Anonymous artist (French, early sixteenth century)

Saint Luke the Evangelist

From a *Book of Hours*, 1525

Published by Pierre Vidoue (French, ca. 1490–1543)

Paris

Ink and pigments on vellum

Gilbreath-McLorn Museum Fund (2003.4)

A book of hours was a devotional text used to remind the user of prayers to be said during different seasons of the liturgical calendar and at different times of the day. This page from a book of hours originally introduced lessons on the Gospel of Luke.

The folio demonstrates not only the continuing taste for manuscript illumination even after the development of moveable type, but also the enduring utility of illustrations for marking different sections of books of hours. Spaces for the miniature, headings, and initials were left blank and later hand-painted, like this image of Saint Luke, who is readily identifiable by his attribute, the ox.



Anonymous artist (Persian, sixteenth century)
 Page from *Gulistan (Rose Garden)*
 Written by Saadi of Shiraz (Persian, 1201-1291/92)
 Sixteenth century
 Ink and tempera on paper
 Gift of Dr. Edzard Baumann (72.288)

This Persian miniature illustrates a parable from *Gulistan (Rose Garden)*, a collection of tales compiled and written by the poet Saadi of Shiraz. The Farsi calligraphy on this folio paraphrases from the fourth story in the fifth chapter, which uses a series of complex metaphors to caution the reader about the pitfalls of being distracted by love. A translation of the text at the top of the page reads as follows:

If a bird falls in a trap by accident, gold and dust will look the same in the bird's eyes.

After falling into the trap, all the advice from the bird's friends will seem nothing more than useless noise.

The moral, then, is that one should be careful not to fall into the "trap" of obsessive ardor for someone.

At the right margin, the text quotes from later in the story:

If I am going to lose my head, it does not matter whether the enemy uses the sword or the axe.

The Museum is grateful to a refugee from Afghanistan for their assistance with interpreting this text.

Gilbreath-McLorn Museum Fund (2017.8)

Under torture, Fawkes eventually revealed the names of his co-conspirators, including Robert Catesby, Thomas Percy, John and Christopher Wright, Robert and Thomas Wintour, and Thomas Bates, all identified on this broadsheet. Convicted, Fawkes and his co-conspirators were executed on January 30 and 31, 1606. The date on the engraved plate, February 1606, reveals the surprisingly fast pace at which this news was disseminated to international audiences. The information presented here is not accurate, however, as the eight plotters identified on the top half of the broadsheet are not the same individuals who were executed in late January.





Wolfgang Killian (German, 1581–1662)
Daniel's Interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream, 1623
Engraving on paper
Gilbreath-McLorn Museum Fund (2013.4)

This work, composed of several smaller conjoined sheets of paper, depicts the interpretation of the dream of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar by the prophet Daniel in the second chapter of the eponymous book of the Old Testament. A citation for the verse that begins Daniel’s interpretation is indicated on the print: “Danielus 2.v.31.” This image overlaid with text encapsulates Daniel’s complex explanation of the king’s vision, which is also provided in four columns of text at the bottom.

Daniel describes the monumental statue that the king saw in his dream, its head made of gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and fired clay. As the king gazed upon this awesome sculpture, a vast rock, not cut by human hands, fell and crushed the statue to pieces, which were then swept away by the wind. That rock formed a mountain that filled the whole earth (2:31–35). In Daniel’s metaphorical reading of this vision (2:36–45), the golden head represents Nebuchadnezzar, “the king of kings,” and the layers of different materials signify kingdoms that would follow Babylon. All of these will be destroyed by the falling rock, representing the kingdom of heaven that will endure for eternity.

This print reflects a seventeenth-century European perspective on the history foretold by Daniel, as the rulers listed on the history of the statue include famous Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Byzantine leaders, as well as the Holy Roman Emperors, from Charlemagne to Ferdinand II, the contemporary Holy Roman Emperor.



Anonymous artist (Persian, seventeenth century)

Illustration from the *Shahnama*

Written by Abu'l Qasim Firdausi Tusi (Persian, 935–1020)

Ink, washes, and gold on paper

Gift of Mrs. D. David McLorn (76.205)

These two Persian miniatures illustrate an episode of the *Shahnama*, or *Book of Kings*, the epic poem by Abu'l Qasim Firdausi Tusi, often called simply Firdausi. Completed around the year 1010, the *Shahnama* is comprised of around 50,000 rhyming couplets and is among the longest epics in world literature. It tells the history of ancient kings of Persia, or Iran, and their three successive dynasties: the Pishdadiyans, the Kayanids, and the Sasanians, the last dynasty to rule Persia before the dawn of Islam. This image may illustrate a scene from the life of Siyavash, a hero and pivotal figure of the epic.



Anonymous artist (Persian, seventeenth century)

Illustration from the *Shahnama* (*Book of Kings*)

Seventeenth century

Written by Abu'l Qasim Firdausi Tusi (Persian, 935–1020)

Ink, washes, and gold on paper

Gift of Mrs. D. David McLorn (76.206)



Anonymous artist (Persian, nineteenth century?)
Hunting Procession with Falcon, nineteenth century(?)
 Tempera and ink on paper
 Museum purchase (69.5)

Although this page from a Persian manuscript may date to as late as the nineteenth century, the text and image refer to traditions that are centuries old. This miniature depicts a hunting procession of men, horses, and a camel, all led by a falconer. Hunting with a falcon was the purview of the noble and elite classes in Middle Eastern, Asian, and European cultures during the medieval and early modern periods. In this image, higher ranking men ride horses, while two grooms escort steeds. The importance of the falconer above all the other figures is indicated by the placement of his face and the bird at the center of the page, his position at the peak of the triangular composition, along with the decorative saddle and feather on his horse.

According to a legend told in the eleventh-century epic poem the *Shahnama* (see the previous Persian works shown here), the mythical ancient king Tahmurat was the first human to train animals such as falcons and dogs to aid in hunting. A nineteenth-century treatise on the art and sport of falconry, called *Bāz-nāma-yi Nāṣirī* by Taymur Mirza, refers to older texts on this subject that have been lost to time. In 2010 UNESCO added falconry to its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.