Illuminated Manuscript Collection MSS.2015.01.20


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**Contributing Institution:** SJSU Special Collections & Archives

**Title:** Illuminated Manuscript Collection

**Identifier/Call Number:** MSS.2015.01.20

**Physical Description:** 7 prints

**Date (inclusive):** 1315 - c. 19th or 20th century

**Abstract:** The Illuminated Manuscript Collection consists of six color illuminated manuscripts and one color informational guide. This collection is arranged in one series: Series I: Illuminated Manuscripts, 1315 - c. 19th or 20th century.

**Physical Location:** Vault 1, Drawer 04-06

**Language of Material:** Latin, Farsi, English

**Conditions Governing Access**
The collection is open for research.

**Conditions Governing Use**
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**Preferred Citation**
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**Biographical / Historical**
The word "manuscript" comes from the Latin words "manus" (hand) and "scriptus," from scribere (to write). Today the word "manuscript" is used to describe any hand written text. The word "illumination" derives from the Latin verb "illuminare" (to adorn), which refers to hand-painted decorations on the manuscript. Many colors were used to decorate manuscripts, such as silver, gold, and other precious metals. Illuminations also decorate letters, borders, and figurative scenes, which is known as a miniature. Although paper was abundant in Europe by the fourteenth century, manuscripts were typically written on vellum. Vellum is a high-quality type of parchment made from specially prepared skins of calves, sheep, or goats. Vellum continued to be used for many years in Europe for its texture, translucency, and for its durability. The text of a manuscript was typically written in ink made from an extract of gallnuts mixed with iron sulfate and gum Arabic. When this ink was applied to vellum, its iron content oxidized and the ink changed to a brownish color. Miniatures were often painted with a variety of precious colors, such as vermilion and ultramarine blue. Vermilion was produced from combining mercury and sulfur. Ultramarine blue was made by crushing lapis lazuli and is considered to be as expensive as gold. Sometimes miniatures were decorated with gold leaf by applying it in thin sheets. However, in the later Middle Ages, artists tended to substitute gold leaf with gold paint. Traditionally, illuminations were devoted to religious works and were produced in monasteries, particularly in the "scriptorium," which was the center for scholarly studies and copying of texts. Later, as book illumination became more valued, lay artists were hired to collaborate with monastic scribes. With the rise of universities in the twelfth century, scribes and illuminators became professional laymen who made their living by producing fine manuscripts for noblemen, for the new middle class, and for the emerging universities in cities such as Paris, Bologna, and Padua. Moreover, some religious communities also began to copy manuscripts on a commercial basis.

**Scope and Contents**
The Illuminated Manuscript Collection consists of six color illuminated manuscripts and one color informational guide.

**Arrangement**
This collection is arranged in one series; Series I: Illuminated Manuscripts, 1315 - c. 19th or 20th century.

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**SERIES I: Illuminated Manuscripts 1315 - c. 19th or 20th century**

**Physical Description:** 1 flat file drawer

**Scope and Contents**
This series consists of six color illuminated manuscripts and one color informational guide.

**Languages represented:** Latin, Farsi, English

**Arrangement**
This series is arranged chronologically by date.
Drawer 04-06


Folder 1: *Peur Natus Est*, 1315
Material Specific Details: Germany, Wurtzburg Missal (with Gothic)

Folder 2: Leaflet from Gutenberg-Museum in Mainz, Germany, 1452-1455
Folder 3: Writings of Saint Jerome Benedictine, France, 1475
Material Specific Details: Manuscripts Hieronymus, Saint c. 340-420

Folder 4: Book of Hours, N. France, 1480
Material Specific Details: Panel painted on gold leaf

Folder 5: Medieval Score, 1485
Folder 6: Persian Manuscript Depicting Polo Players, c. 19th or 20th century in the style of the 17th century Safavid miniatures

Material Specific Details: The text is Farsi from c. 100 years ago. The most likely source: The Martyrdom of Imam Abbas. The text on the front refers to the death of Imam Hossein (third Shi’a Imam who was the grandson of the Prophet and was killed ruthlessly at Kerbela). Top: کی ینیبب ییارحص یدیسر اجنادب نوچ تساجک رد توهرب مرخ و زبس نآ فرط کی و هایگ یب و هایس وا فرط . Partial bottom: دنیا دخترک میسیت زیا و نسیا زواج دیا زریخت را ملیق گی دنیورد سوا بازیجا را سیب .

English translation: Top: “The desert is a place where once you get there, on one side of it there is darkness and no plants and on the other side you’ll see greens and plants. Bottom: the pen is ashamed and is unable to write because of the hardship and injustice that the people had to go through. Bottom left: “That which befell the household (ahle beyt) at the hands of the ruthless ones.....” The image is of polo players, which is in a number of Persian manuscripts. To name a few, these include the “Shahnama,” Nizami’s “Khusro and Shirin,” and the 17th century manuscript about Safavid polo playing (“Guy o Chogun”). There is text (Farsi) on the back of the manuscript and translates to the following: “...[From] reliable [sources] it is recounted that after the setting of the sun of the anointed one, and after the passing of Mohammad, the Chosen one (May God’s blessing be upon him) Abubakr, the cursed, with the assistance of the enemies of the true faith, impertinently stepped up on the Prophet’s pulpit. One day, that essence of the book of ignorance was sitting in the mosque and suddenly a youth entered through the door and said, “Who is it that reposes on the seat of the Prophet’s law and has opened the door of audience on the seekers of the abode of faith?” Abubakr said, “It is I!” They told him [the youth] “Why did you not address him as the leader of the faithful?” That youth replied, “The leader of the faithful is one who possesses many meritorious attributes, and I know that among these attributes is not waywardness from the Faith; and I have heard that you worshipped idols for forty years, after which you converted to Islam’ and the Quran that was revealed to the prophet contains this verse, ‘Say do not ask for any rewards other than love in nearness to me.’ If you are indeed the Caliph, it becomes necessary that, God forbid, your prophet has ignored the purport of this verse, for bestowing that love to one’s kin and giving the Caliphate to one’s own is not right. Far be it from the Prophet to act in contradiction to what has been revealed by God. Therefore, the Caliphate is not yours. Abubakr said, “Consent of the majority has priority over the Caliphate.” The youth said, “If you are sincere in your claim, bring about a miracle. I have an important matter; if you resolve it, you are the leader of the faithful.” He [Abubakr] said, “What matter is that?” The youth said, “I had a father who was a Jew and an enemy of the Prophet, but I was enamored of the prophet of God. I was with my father and mother, and I exhorted them against enmity, and for this reason they were displeased with me. My father had great wealth, which upon his death, he did not bequeath to me. Now that you are the successor of God’s Prophet, I want you to inform me of the whereabouts of that wealth.” Abubakr replied, “This is something, of which no one but the Lord is capable.” The youth said, “You are lying! Whoever is the heir of the Prophet of God and the Caliph of God’s messenger must know. Was your prophet false?” Abubakr said, “God forbid! Our prophet was true, and the word of God was revealed to him.” The youth said, “If this is so, the Prophet’s heir must also be true and be aware of all that is hidden. You are ignorant and stupid, and you futilely repose in the place of the pure ones.” He said this and exited the mosque. Abuzar who was present there took the youth’s hand and said, “Come, so that I take you to the heir of the Prophet of God and the true Caliph who possesses all knowledge. Then he took the youth to the presence of the leader of the faithful [Ali], and as the youth glanced the sun-like beauty of His Holiness he said, “O leader of the faithful, I have a problem.” “What problem is that?”, asked His Holiness. The youth recounted his narrative to the resolvers of all problems until he reached the part in which he asked, “Where is my father’s wealth and where is buried. Inform me of this.” Then the great scion gave him a written note and said, “Go to the lands of Yemen and ask of the denizens thereof that....”

Language of Material: Farsi
Folder 7: "What is an Illuminated Manuscript?"

Material Specific Details: No Date