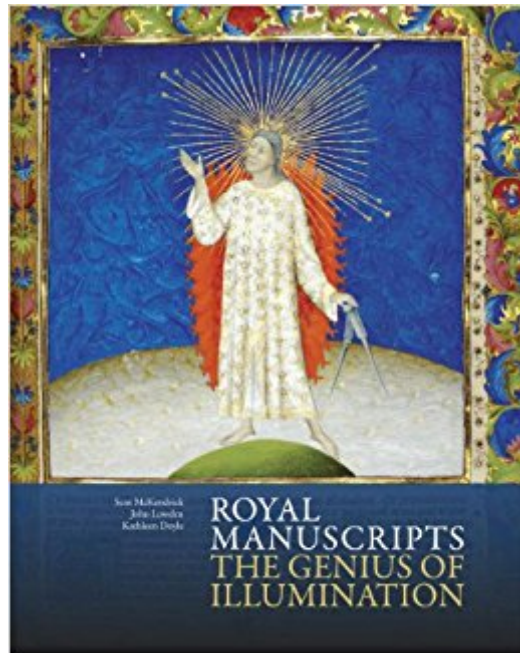




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Royal Manuscripts: The Genius Of Illumination



Synopsis

Illuminated manuscripts collected by successive kings and queens of England form the heart of a unique and visually stunning collection held by the British Library. A key figure in the formation of this collection was King Edward IV (1461–83), who commissioned a number of luxury manuscripts decorated with his arms. Subsequent monarchs added to this library, which was given to the nation by George II in 1757. Over 150 examples from this exceptional collection are presented in this catalog, which accompanies a major British Library exhibition of the same name. These manuscripts contain paintings produced by some of the finest artists of the Middle Ages. Highlights include the Book of Hours, made for Henry VIII's great grandmother, Margaret Beauchamp; Henry VIII's Psalter, commissioned and annotated by the king himself; maps of an itinerary from London to Apulia and to the Holy Land; and the Shrewsbury book, presented to Margaret of Anjou on her marriage to Henry VI in 1445. The catalog features full-page illustrations from each manuscript included in the exhibition, as well as three illustrated essays which explore the wider history and context of this unique collection. Written by the curators of the exhibition, along with contributions from several experts in the field, Royal Manuscripts will be a much-heralded event for scholars and collectors seeking to better understand the lives and aspirations of those for whom these stunning artifacts were made.

Book Information

Hardcover: 448 pages

Publisher: British Library Publishing (November 1, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0712358161

ISBN-13: 978-0712358163

Product Dimensions: 9 x 1.3 x 11.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,478,978 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #88 in Books > Arts &

Photography > Other Media > Illuminations #292 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Ancient &

Medieval Literature > Medieval #895 in Books > Arts & Photography > Other Media > Calligraphy

Customer Reviews

Sumptuous and highly readable, this catalogue by McKendrick, Lowden, and Doyle for a recent British Library exhibition is beautifully produced and richly illustrated with numerous color plates, as

befits its regal matter. . . . Recommended.â • (J. Oliver Choice)

Scot McKendrick is head of history and classics at the British Library. He is the author of numerous publications on medieval and earlier manuscripts, including *In a Monastery Library*, *Flemish Illuminated Manuscripts*, and *Illuminating the Renaissance*. John Lowden is professor of art history at the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. His numerous publications include *The Making of the Bibles Moralis* and *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*. Kathleen Doyle is curator of illuminated manuscripts at the British Library. Her previous publications include *Bible Manuscripts*.

A wonderful book to browse at leisure. The illustrations and text of such are thoughtful and helpful. The full page reproductions are of good colour. I had hoped to see more in the way of progressive detail of the individual books from which the exhibition was derived. Alas, this is not the case. This being so, then the book is valuable as a catalogue with 'tasters' of the content. If it is a catalogue the reader wants, then the 25th Anniversary Edition of the Taschen book on *Illuminated Manuscripts* offers better value, with more pages for half the price. I much prefer the publisher Brazillier and the more complete texts such as *Tres Riche Heures*.

This is a beautiful book for both those like myself who enjoy researching book and manuscript art, but also for those who want a stunning coffee-table book. It's a great overview of the Royal manuscripts dating from the 8th century through to Henry VIII in the 16th century, with wonderful snippets of information.

This catalog is a selection of illuminated manuscripts sourced principally from the gift to the British nation by George II in 1757 and held in the British Library. There are nearly 2000 manuscripts in this collection. Together with 9000 books donated from the same source these volumes form the "Old Royal Library". In the exhibition 111 volumes have been chosen with an additional 37 being sourced from other collections in the British Library. Entry 1 is an Insular Gospel Book (1st half of the 8th Century) and the last, *Motets for Henry VIII*, is dated at 1516. Many of the manuscripts are of European origin. The manuscripts on display are generally of exceptional quality and in a very good state of preservation. Each is given a full page illustration and the color reproduction is of a high standard with good definition of the gold. This is a soft cover catalog and possibly slightly overpriced (\$45). A highly recommended issue for enthusiasts of illustrated manuscripts nonetheless.

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