

Sam Fogg
presents
Wonders of the Medieval World
at
Richard L. Feigen & Co.
New York, January 2014

Sam Fogg is pleased to present an exhibition of Wonders of the Medieval World at **Richard L. Feigen & Co.**, 34 East 69th Street, New York, from **Wednesday 22nd January to Monday 17th March 2014**

This is the third time London based dealer Sam Fogg will collaborate with Richard L. Feigen & Co., following successful exhibitions of medieval art held in 2009 and 2011/12. Wonders of the Medieval World will showcase exceptional examples of the wide range of art forms created throughout Europe in the middle ages, including sculpture, paintings, stained glass, metalwork, and illuminated manuscripts.

One object in a category of its own, and on display for the first time in recent history, is a **large astronomical calendar from the abbey of San Zeno in Verona** (Fig. 1). Made around 1455 and composed of rotating discs of wood and painted parchment, it allows for the simultaneous display of various cycles of time, from the phases of the moon and signs of the Zodiac to feast days of individual Saints. This unique instrument would have been mounted on the wall of the cloister of San Zeno and played the role of a basic clock telling the hours of the day to the monks of the abbey. It also acted as a kind of medieval computer, where the juxtaposition of astronomy and religion allowed the church authorities to plan their year. This object reminds the modern viewer of medieval sensibilities about time, where important dates of the Christian ecclesiastical year such as Easter were decided according to the dates of the full moon. Created specifically for and in isolation at the Benedictine abbey of San Zeno, which had an illustrious history of astronomical scholarship, it is the only surviving scientific instrument of its kind, using early Renaissance imagery to convey late medieval ideas of time.

Other highlights in the exhibition include **an English alabaster altarpiece** created for a private chapel in Northern Spain (Fig. 2). This beautiful group of sculptures of the Virgin and Child with four female Saints is remarkably rare, not only in that it survives in almost complete form, but also because it is one of only very few such pieces with an assured provenance and a known patron. Its documented history is such that it can be confidently dated to the years immediately preceding 1461, the year the chapel in Oviedo in which it was placed was consecrated.

Aquamanilia are among the most iconic sculptures to survive from the medieval world, and this exhibition will include a very large example in the form of a gilt bronze lion (Fig. 3). An aquamanile, from the Latin words ‘aqua’ and ‘manus’ literally ‘water’ and ‘hand’, was used as a water vessel for washing hands in both liturgical and domestic settings. This stately animal proudly bears the coat of arms of a family probably from Lower Saxony in Germany and suggests its high status secular usage.

A **Spanish painting by Nicolás Solana** is a large and beautifully preserved masterpiece of early 15th century Aragonese painting (Fig. 4). Three scenes from the Passion of Christ are conveyed in vibrant colours and filled with minute details that become all the more poignant when reminded that this is in fact only a fragment of a monumental altarpiece. Details such as punchwork decoration that defines

the armour of the soldiers arresting Christ, or the scowl of the dog that sits at the feet of Pontius Pilate will delight the modern viewer.

From a Paris church destroyed in the French Revolution is a **stained glass window depicting the Adoration of the Magi** (Fig. 5). This beautiful window, nearly 2 m tall, was created in c. 1530, nearly destroyed with the church during the revolution in 1789, but was salvaged in 1793 by a local museum director named Alexandre Lenoir. While in Italy and much of Europe artists of the High Renaissance period typically worked on panel paintings and frescoes, in France, the best artists worked in stained glass. 16th century Paris was the centre of stained glass production and innovation but very little of this fragile material survives. Lenoir recognised the beauty and importance of the windows of the Temple Church and in so doing provides us with a glimpse of the art of this period. The artist responsible for the stained glass windows was Jean Chastellain (d. 1541/2), a master glazier who directed the most important Parisian stained glass workshop in the reign of King Francis I (1515-1547). Chastellain's technical ability was unsurpassed, as suggested in the astonishing variety of drapery depicted in this window, where the richness of colour and array of textures belies the humility of the subject of Christ's birth in a manger.

On a much smaller scale at only 9 cm high, but not to be missed, is the **Imhof prayerbook**, a jewel of an illuminated manuscript painted in Antwerp in 1511 by Simon Bening (1483–1561) (Fig. 6). In his lifetime, Bening was described as 'the greatest master in the art of illumination in all of Europe' and he has retained that position among modern critics. This manuscript, its original red velvet binding retaining an elaborate German silver clasp, is his earliest dateable work. It was created for Hans Imhof, a merchant banker from Nuremberg who was a great patron of the arts, counting Dürer among his friends. Small enough to be carried by its owner, this prayerbook is bountifully decorated, with 11 full-page paintings, 30 smaller miniatures and 28 borders depicting charming subjects such as playing children and dancing peasants. Though diminutive in size, this manuscript captures the spirit of the medieval world in its depiction of everyday life, its reflection of the privacy and piety of medieval worship, and in the superlative quality of its painting.

Event:	Wonders of the Medieval World
Dates:	Wednesday 22 nd January to Monday 17 th March 2014
Venue:	Richard L. Feigen & Co., 34 East 69th Street, New York, NY 10065, USA
Opening hours:	Monday to Friday, 10am - 6pm; Saturday 25 th Jan and 1 st Feb, 11am - 5pm
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