



Royal Manuscripts: The Genius of Illumination

Scott McKendrick

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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.

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