

The Making of the Human Story: A Millennium in Image and Word

Spanning nearly a millennium of human expression, this extraordinary and eclectic collection offers a profound and visually stunning journey through the evolution of the printed word, visual storytelling, and human history as it traces the evolution of art, print, faith, science, nation-building and our very understanding of what it means to be human. From luminous medieval illuminated manuscript pages and milestones of horticultural illustration to seminal books and maps, including several books that are among only a small number of surviving copies, the archive brings together works that shaped how societies saw their world - and themselves.

A cornerstone of the collection is an extraordinary survey of the illustrated Bible across four centuries, capturing the birth and evolution of printed visual storytelling. At its heart sit two of the rarest: nearly complete copies of the 500-year-old Jode Thesaurus (arguably the first “picture Bible”) and the Visscher Royal bound in its original Swart King James Version – both among only a small number of surviving copies. These are joined by the Hondt, Sheits and a first-edition Mame Dore, representing each of the milestone picture Bibles from the 1500’s to the 1800’s. A series of 17th and 18th century German Bibles show how these images were miniaturized and incorporated into illustrated Bibles. A 1657 Van Sichem, one of the most richly illustrated Bibles of its age, is joined by a profusely illustrated 1576 Bevilacqua Louvain showcasing the evolution from woodcut to copperplate engravings.

From the spiritual to the historical, the collection houses some of the foundational records of Estonia’s history, language and identity in print. Most notably, it contains a complete copy of the 1584 Russow, the oldest surviving printed book of Estonian history, along with the first and second editions of the Estonian Bible, among the oldest surviving complete books in the Estonian language. It includes some of the earliest known maps of Estonia, including the famous Ortelius triump and a gilded Mercator and pivotal texts spanning the next several centuries including Arndt & Gruber’s 1747 Chronik, Wraxall’s 1776 travelogue, Kirby’s 1895 Hero of Esthonia, and the celebrated 1923 visual record, Eesti.

From scripture and history to the intellectual and symbolic worlds of Renaissance Europe and the following centuries, the collection extends from an early Roman Ritual preserving the exorcism rite in its original printed form to a trio of exquisitely illustrated emblem books, including a second edition of the foundational Emblemata of Andrea Alciato - works that fused image and text into layered moral and philosophical allegories. Joining them are works including one of the surviving fifth editions of Milton’s Paradise Lost.

One of the earliest surviving promotional pamphlets on the Venus Fly Trap and its famous illustration anchors a visual journey through the most significant milestones of botanical and horticultural illustration. Comprised primarily of individual prints selected from the genre’s monumental works, including Besler, Redoute, Curtis and others, this set of prints stands testament to the intersection of art, science, and history. Two offer a unique link to American history: two botanical prints from Philip Miller's Gardeners Dictionary printed on 'Pro Patria'

watermarked paper - the same paper Thomas Jefferson used to draft the Declaration of Independence.

Across the Atlantic, the collection captures the birth and crucible of the United States in real time. Contemporary book printings of the United States Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and early presidential addresses appear alongside foundational narratives such as David Ramsay's *The History of the American Revolution* - the first comprehensive account of the Revolution written by an American and the 1797 *Constitutions of the Sixteen States*, featuring an early printing for newly admitted Tennessee. Visceral moments of conflict are preserved in a small set of original newspapers announcing the first shots of the War of 1812 and the morning Washington D.C. burned, leading up to Harper's 1868 *Pictorial History of the Great Rebellion*, one of the earliest illustrated chronicles of the Civil War, along with Leslie's *Centennial*, celebrating its anniversary. Finally, a series of some of the earliest Declaration of Independence broadside printings, including the Stone and two of the rarest Huntingtons, created around the nation's 50th anniversary, capture the early era of newfound fascination with the nation's founding documents.

Finally, the geographical and technological transformation of America are captured through a unique series of maps, including the 1763 book printing of the Kitchner map, a 1923 USGS printing of the legendary Mitchell Map - the map that made America, and a 1935 State Department reprint of the Disturnell Map of Mexico - the map that added the Western half of the new nation. A 1905 Bell Telephone map traces the dawn of the American telecommunications network.

These are joined by a number of other representatives in the history of the printed word, including early examples of the dictionary, thesaurus and leaves from each of the milestones of printmaking, including examples of the first Roman and italic typefaces.

Together, the more than 200 items in the collection capture a sweeping narrative of how knowledge, belief, identity, science, history and power have been recorded, visualized, and transmitted across the last thousand years, between image and text, local history and global transformation, and the earliest printed pages to the modern world they helped to create.