

THE VIENNA MODEL BOOK



BRILLIANT VIRTUOSITY FROM AROUND 1400

Acorn tablets and a stamped leather case – a precious frame for a magnificent work of art – this is a truly extraordinary piece, not least due to its outer appearance: a total of 14 small acorn tablets lie protected in a valuable, dark stamped leather case. Each of the tablets is set with four fine, detailed drawings that are placed in small frames. The tablets were originally arranged in a fanfold, and the valuable leather case had been designed to protect the valuable contents, with a strap that probably served to carry it around as a bag.

The purpose of this unique piece of art still remains a matter of speculation.

Was it a model collection for an itinerant artist, who was just as familiar with Bohemian as with French and Italian art, or was it destined for a patron – a gift of thanks or an incentive for the patron to commission more art in order to secure the artist's livelihood? We do not know.

ELABORATE PORTRAITS AND MYTHICAL CREATURES

All 56 drawings show the entire brilliance of the artist, 39 present magnificent and extremely individualistic portraits reminiscent of the quality of Duerer (two of which have been added at a later stage, during the second quarter of the 15th century), 16 are depictions of animals and mythical creatures and an almost Expressionist looking skull.

One particularly fascinating feature is the only full-length drawing of a spider which, like all the other depictions of this virtuoso artist, brilliantly emphasises the small pictorial motif against a totally alienating greenish-grey ground. A wide array of different head types underlines the link with sacral/Christian themes – such as Mary Mother of God, the angel of the Annunciation, the Infant Christ, the Crucified or

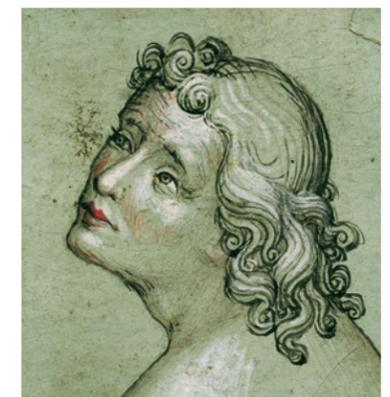


the Apostles – and the profane world of the court. And between all the spaceless heads and busts the viewer discerns a charming young boy looking into a water basin: it must be Narcissus who due to the beauty of his own reflection was definitely a widely used motif in 15th-century painting.

The whole universe of the outstanding “Soft Style” had been especially designed to evoke astonishment amongst viewers and to promote the skills of their creator – today just as well as 600 years ago. The Vienna Model Book is a late testimony to what is now commonly referred to as the King Wenceslas School, and in this capacity it is the sum of what Bohemian art has brought forth since the period of Emperor Charles IV and Peter Parler. At the same time it constitutes a link to later paintings of the 15th century.

A MEDIEVAL ARTIST AND ILLUMINATOR PRESENTING HIS SKILLS

This wonderful masterpiece so unique in its kind is now being made accessible to the public in the form of a faithful



and genuine facsimile edition. The edition provides a selected circle of collectors with the opportunity to experience a great work of art in a small format, well before the Vienna Model Book returns to form one of the main attractions at the reopening of the Kunstkammer in the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna at the end of 2012.

THE FINE ART FACSIMILE EDITION

The original: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Kunstkammer, KK5003/5004

56 pen drawings created on greenish paper, heightened in white and red and mounted on foldable wooden tablets (each 9.5 cm in height and 9 cm in width), true-to-the-original replica of the richly blind-tooled leather case.

Commentary volume in English by Maria Theisen (Vienna) and Eberhard König (Berlin)

Limited edition: 800 numbered copies worldwide