

The Art of the Book: Manuscripts and Early Printing, 1000–1650 (2003) and *The Art of the Book: Illustration and Design, 1650 to the Present* (2006), both edited by Joan Stack. Color plates, paperback, \$5.95 each.

Review by Gail Leggio

Published by the Museum of Art and Archaeology and University Libraries at the University of Missouri-Columbia, these modest, attractive exhibition catalogues make a wonderful introduction to the history of text-and-illustration. The works, drawn from university collections with some important private loans, also testify to what a remarkable resource regional collections can be. While they lack the star power of premier repositories such as the Morgan Library and Museum in New York City, they serve an important educational function and often feature works of real beauty. The catalogue texts, mostly keyed to explaining the cultural context and art historical facts we need to understand individual objects, are smart and succinct. The first volume enters the story of the book at the year 1000. There were fine examples of manuscript illustration before that date, of course, such as the Utrecht Psalter and works produced by the scriptorium at the Carolingian court. But the millennial year had spawned a flurry of apocalyptic anxieties, and its passing uneventfully made way for a flowering of the arts. The medieval arts reached their apothe-

osis in two very different forms, in the grandeur of the cathedral and in the intimate pictorial-verbal space of the illustrated manuscript. Those manuscripts could be as large as an elephant-folio-size Mass book on a church lectern or as tiny as a sumptuously decorated palm-size prayer book, but they were all laboriously handmade. Printing represented a seismic shift, promoting the widespread dissemination of images and ideas, along with the



James Caldwell (British 1739–1819), *Indian Reed* (detail), 1804, from *The Temple of Flora* MUSEUM OF ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

Anonymous (French, early sixteenth century), *St. Luke*, from a Book of Hours
LENT BY WILLIAM SCOTT

Protestant Reformation. Early printed books look crude in comparison to hand-painted manuscripts, but the medium would soon develop its own aesthetic. The second volume from the University of Missouri-Columbia wisely concentrates on three main areas in publishing history from 1650 to the present: empirical books documenting discoveries in natural history and geography, as well as architectural studies that established the general notion of historical styles; literary books, encompassing the rise of the novel and the popularity of poetry, accompanied by a golden age of illustration; and the modern artist's book, a return to the concept of the book as a precious objet d'art.

In manuscripts the relationship between text and image is an ever-shifting dynamic. A leaf from an anonymous French psalter (c. 1200–10) is all text, except for a flourish of gargoyle doodles at the foot of the page, but initial letters are exuberantly coiled and enriched with gold, while decorative motifs in blue and red mark off the verse divisions of the psalm. A leaf from *Le Roman de la Rose* (fourteenth century), the most popular vernacular poem of the middle ages and one of the principal texts of courtly love, has two framed narrative scenes embedded in the text. The winged, crowned figure of Amor appears in both. An image of St. Luke the Evangelist, from an early sixteenth century Book of Hours, shows the Gospel-writer at his desk, accompanied by his totem ox. That pictorial vignette is set in text, the text itself within a wide margin with brushed gold bands, blue foliage and flowers. Printed books are initially of more historical than aesthetic interest, but new mediums—notably engraving—quickly open up visual possibilities. Among the important works included are a leaf from the Gutenberg Bible (1454–55); an edition of Francesco



Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1545), a classic of Renaissance neoplatonism; anatomical studies by Andreas Vesalius (1555); Andrea Palladio's *Quattro libri dell' architettura* (1570) and Sir Isaac Newton's *The Mathematical Principles of Natural History* (English translation by Andrew Motte, 1729). Many works can be appreciated for both their importance to intellectual history and their beauty: Giovanni Battista Piranesi's engraving of Ionic capitals (1835–37); Robert Thornton's *The Temple of Flora* (1799–1807), with its outsized, colorful botanical specimens; John James Audubon's *Birds of America* (1829). (The Audubon legacy is being reinvented today by the watercolorist Walton Ford, whose stunning paintings were featured in "Tigers of Wrath," a winter exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.)

Some artists took to the mediums of book art—engraving, etching, lithograph—with passion, and there are examples here of some of the greatest: an 1516 woodcut *Crucifixion* by Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach's *Christ before Caiaphas* (c. 1540), William Blake's visionary vortex of line in his engraving *Job's Evil Dream* (1821–26), John Flaxman's spare, neoclassical drawings for the tragedies of Aeschyles (c. 1793), Aubrey Beardsley's art nouveau graphic powerhouse *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1893). The twentieth century is less well represented, although a Rockwell Kent lithograph for *Beowulf* (1931) has a muscular art deco force and Henri's Matisse's 1935 etchings for James Joyce's *Ulysses* are lovely, if not particularly illustrative. But this is, overall, a solid production, with lively context provided by associate curator Joan Stack and other university staff members. In a world where we are bombarded by mostly disposable words and images, the pleasures of these carefully crafted objects are especially to be prized.