

Book of Kells Presentation Case



Mystical testimony to early Christendom

Once the storms of the mass migrations had quietened down, Irish monks took to spread the Christian faith all over Europe by their dedicated mission during the 5th, 6th and 7th centuries. The age-old Irish-Celtic culture began to fuse with the impressions gathered by the monks during their extended dangerous travels. At that time, also known as *The Time of Scholars and Saints*, the Irish monasteries were influential cultural and spiritual centres in Europe. At the height of Irish monasticism its most valuable work was created, the *Book of Kells*.

A masterpiece created 1200 years ago

The *Book of Kells* is thought to be the ingenious work of a number of unknown gifted artists living in the monastery of Iona around the year 800. It is first mentioned in an account of a theft in the church of Kells in 1007, which describes the book as "the great Gospel Book of Columcille, the holiest relic of the western world". Soon after that the manuscript was found buried at Kells. And it would remain there until, during the reign of Cromwell, it was brought to Dublin for reasons of safety. Around the year 1661 Henry Jones, bishop of Meath, donated it to the library of Trinity College in Dublin where it is kept to this day.

The pinnacle of early medieval bookmaking

There are very few other works which radiate a similar symbolic power and magic as this magnificent Gospel Book. Its mysticism lies in its rich and complex decoration. The impression of the holiness of the text is enhanced by its decorative apparatus which seems truly supernatural.

The *Book of Kells* contains mainly the Four Gospels, however, other texts were also included in the book: at the beginning, the canonical tables containing the concordance compiled by Eusebius of Caesarea and a number of property deeds relating to the monastery of Kells. The Latin text was written in proud insular semi-uncial which like its splendid illuminations, constitute a masterpiece of Irish artistic creation.

The *Book of Kells* must have been made in a scriptorium that was familiar with even the most sophisticated tricks of the trade in manuscript production, since only the most profound technical know-how combined with excellent knowledge on contemporary and historic art could create such a wealth of symbolic and mystical illustrations.

Unique wealth of ornament and colour

The *Book of Kells* contains diverse miniatures of the early Middle Ages which are among the most beautiful ever made. All but two of the 680 pages of the manuscript are decorated with a truly unbelievable variety of symbolic and mystical paintings which have drawn the attention of viewers over the centuries.

12 original facsimile leaves in a precious presentation case

International acclaim

Produced several years ago, the perfect facsimile edition of the *Book of Kells* has met international acclaim. Given the enormous significance of this manuscript, Faksimile Verlag Luzern has now decided to convey the fascination of the incomparable *Book of Kells* to a wider public and present the 12 finest pages as original facsimile sheets.

A journey through the Book of Kells

The *Book of Kells*, probably the most fascinating medieval manuscript in the world, surprises the viewer with countless mystical facets. This is most clearly evidenced in twelve specially selected original facsimile sheets from the *Book of Kells* which allow everyone to experience the unbelievable world of the early Middle Ages.

The sheets are presented in precious passe-partouts of museum quality. The sumptuous miniature pages of the manuscript may thus be used as wall decoration, a personal gallery allowing a visual journey through the *Book of Kells*. Each facsimile sheet contains, of course, a comprehensive description of the miniatures to present them in all detail.

Introducing a manuscript

A richly illustrated 24-page scholarly brochure introduces the *Book of Kells* in all its fascination. The articles are based on the findings of the scholarly commentary volume accompanying the facsimile edition and guide the reader through the stunning world of the *Book of Kells*.

A contribution by Umberto Eco

The animated preface and epilogue taken from the facsimile edition are written by Umberto Eco who claims that he himself has been fascinated by the *Book of Kells* from a very early age.

The presentation case

The twelve original facsimile sheets with comprehensive descriptions of the miniatures and a scholarly brochure come in a precious presentation case measuring 51 x 41 cm.

12 original facsimile sheets in a presentation case

The significance of the *Book of Kells* lies in its unique wealth of ornament and colour. The work is densely populated with human figures, animals, plants and ornaments forming either full-page paintings or filling the space between the lines. The symbols of the four evangelists are present in a number of plates. Countless animals, such as cats, dragons or birds, are to be found between the individual passages of text. They frequently appear as humorist and symbolic decoration. Others are part of the filigree initial decoration. Many animal symbols are interlaced, making letters fuse into pictures and pictures into letters.

Although viewers of the *Book of Kells* are first attracted by the full-page miniatures, it is its small but lavishly numerous and individualistic decorations that lend the manuscript its magnificent appearance.

A museum of the early Middle Ages

We now offer you the twelve finest pages from the *Book of Kells* in the format of 33 x 25 cm, in a sumptuous presentation case. Our aim is to provide an insight into the astonishing wealth and richness of mysterious miniatures and ornament in one of the most famous manuscripts of the early Middle Ages. For the first time, it is possible to hang miniature pages from the *Book of Kells* on the wall, framed in precious passe-partouts of museum quality, to enjoy the luminous colours of Irish illumination and to admire the *Book of Kells* as though wandering through a museum.