

# Hoefnagel's world of miniatures in the Book of Finest Scripts



## **Virtuoso - creative - unique**

The J. Paul Getty Museum bought it for its precious collections where it now attracts thousands of art lovers every year: the "Book of Finest Scripts", officially called "Mira calligraphiae monumenta" Ms. 20 (86. MB. 527), an unusual illuminated manuscript which once set the standards as far as realism and imaginativeness were concerned.

The work was completed in the late 16th century and constitutes one of the last monuments in the tradition of medieval book painting, not only because it displays the desire for personal expression - at a time when printed books started to flood the market - but also because it announces a new art form called still life painting.

Georg Bocskey, one of the noblest scribes of the Renaissance, laid out the pages around 1561-62 on behalf of the Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand I. The courts of Vienna and Prague were centres of art at the time. 30 years later, the very last great Flemish illustrator, Joris Hoefnagel, further increased its value with his talent as a painter. He was hired by Rudolph II, Ferdinand's grandson.

Bocskey stylises scripts into a form of art in their own right. What his pen magically forms from letters is a source of endless inspiration for anyone interested in calligraphy. Bocskey's book of handwriting, enriched with an alphabet of decorated capitals and minuscules designed by the artist himself, is a compilation of European scribal art achievement. The then recent art of still life painting has also matured to perfection in this book.

Microscopically clear, illusionistic pictures show flowers, insects and other small animals so remarkably real that one could imagine them crawling across the pages. The zoological and botanical names written in Latin and German make this book a most interesting reference work for determining both flora and fauna.

Discover page after page, reproduced in colour and in the original format, shining with extraordinary luminosity.