

Exhibition description

Bull's head and mermaid. Medieval watermarks.

This exhibition is dedicated to a special treasure within the framework of paper history research: watermarks. A variety of watermark motives was used since the later Middle Ages in paper produced in Europe. Watermarks offer useful and decisive information as for the quality of paper. Yet also the time of paper manufacturing and the place of paper production can be deduced from watermarks. Hence, the study of watermarks became an important instrument for dating medieval manuscripts.

In connection with work on the Bernstein project (<http://www.bernstein.oeaw.ac.at>), which is financed by the European Commission, the State Archives of Baden-Württemberg (Stuttgart, Germany) and the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Vienna, Austria) present a concise and profound introduction to watermarks through their touring exhibition. As regards content, paper history in general and techniques of paper manufacturing in the Middle Ages are considered. Moreover, the watermarks are analyzed against the background of medieval symbolism. The importance of watermarks for paleography is underlined in a particular chapter. Since the State Archives of Baden-Württemberg has one of the largest watermark collections in safekeeping (Gerhard Piccard, 1909–1989) there is also a focus on watermark collectors and watermark collections in Europe. Establishing the connection between the Middle Ages and the present, the digital presentation of watermarks through several European databases is also a chief subject of the exhibition. A catalogue with detailed scientific information serves to deepen the various aspects shown through the exhibition.

Exhibition website

http://www.landesarchiv-bw.de/sixcms/detail.php?template=hp_artikel&id=15098&id2=8448&sprache=den

Contact

Peter Rückert
Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg
Konrad-Adenauer-Str. 4
D-70173 Stuttgart
Tel.: +(49) 711 212 4326 (direkt)
Fax +(49) 711 212 4360
peter.rueckert@la-bw.de
<http://www.landesarchiv-bw.de>

Organization

- Joint exhibition of the State Archives of Baden-Württemberg (responsible for the exhibition: Dr. Peter Rückert) and the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Commission for the study of writing and books (Dr. Alois Haidinger)
- Conceived as a traveling exhibition; initially in German language, with programmed translations in Italian and English
- Planning: Stuttgart (Hauptstaatsarchiv: December 2006 – January 2007) and Vienna (Schottenstift: from February 2007 on), then Fabriano (Museo della Carta et della Filligrana, July – September 2007).

Technical data

1. Surface: c. 150 sq. m
2. Furniture
 - c. 8 poster panels (part 1,35 m, part 1,00 m wide)
 - c. 15 sq. m showcase surface
 - 2 computers with Internet connection
3. Exhibited items
 - papermaking making implements (sieves)

- watermark reproduction (radiographies, rubbings, handdrawings)
- books with paper displaying watermarks
- explanatory posters (text, images, graphics, maps)
- historical documents of paper studies (catalogues of watermarks, biographies of famous scholars of watermarks)
- Internet access to online watermark catalogues and other paper studies resources

3. Catalogue

- currently in German, Italian translation in works, English translation under consideration
- Volume: c. 64 pages, c. 30 images (color & bw)
- Content was provided by participants from Stuttgart and Vienna
- Coordination / Editing: Peter Rückert, Stuttgart

Catalog content

1. Introduction – What is a watermark? Who is studying watermarks? Naming watermark types.
2. Papermaking in the Middle Ages – History of paper. How was paper done?)
3. The world in watermarks – What types of watermarks did exist in the Middle Ages. What do they mean?
4. Watermarks and the study of manuscripts – geographical distribution of some watermark types. Famous examples of dating by watermarks.
5. Collectors of watermarks and their collections – Briquet, Piccard, and others.
6. Watermarks in digital reproductions (Piccard, WZMA, WILC)