"A VISUAL TIMELINE" FOR A HEAVENLY CRAFT.


The Seven Perspectives range from manuscript illumination to woodblock cutting and from iconography to bibliography. There are three unstated foci of the symposium, each treated in two papers: the relationship between illustrations in manuscripts and early printed books; woodcuts by Benedetto Bordon; and the influence of block-cutting on the stylistic evolution of woodcuts. The book is heavily weighted towards the morning session, including the full text of the three papers presented in it, but only third-person summaries are included of the four papers presented in the afternoon. Like the main catalogue, this companion book boasts high production values and generous illustrations. Black-and-white woodcuts are reproduced in full colour, capturing the tonal variances of their supports; woodblocks, which are notoriously difficult to photograph, are successfully pictured.

The opening paper, 'The Woodcuts and Woodblocks of Albrecht Dürer: Inspiration, Standardization, and Reformation of an Art', by Richard S. Field, argues that the technical advances that can be charted in the surviving blocks for Dürer's woodcuts are greater than the usual division of labour between a woodcut designer and a blockcutter would allow. He claims that the innovations in the cutting of the blocks are so immense that Dürer 'must have played more than a passive rôle in their execution', even if that rôle was indirect (p. 35). Based on a detailed examination of woodblocks, his argument is supported by a useful series of facing reproductions of blocks and prints made from them. In the following text, 'Woodcuts in Classical Texts Printed in Venice, 1490–1520, and the Role of Benedetto Bordon as a Designer', Lilian Armstrong convincingly draws on visual evidence to suggest that Bordon, who is known primarily as a miniaturist, was also a designer of woodcuts of many classical texts in Venice during this period. Taken with her essay in the exhibition catalogue, which attributes a large number of Venetian liturgical books from around 1500 to Bordon, her
research identifies Bordon as an important and prolific woodcut designer with several learned specialties. Peter Stallybrass’s fascinating essay, ‘Image against Text: On Not Reading Genesis’, examines the iconographical problems of the clothing of Adam and Eve at the moment of expulsion in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century woodcuts in illustrations from across Europe. Tracking the depiction of Adam and Eve covering their nudity with single fig leaves, bunches of fig leaves, girdles, or nothing at all, he finds that the confusion may stem from translations of Genesis 3:7 and 3:21, given in the King James Version as ‘they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons’ and ‘did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them’, respectively. He identifies two surprising inconsistencies: there is no textural basis for the two most commonly represented modes of clothing at the expulsion, Adam and Eve using single fig leaves or being nude, and there are practically no images corresponding to the biblical description of Adam and Eve clad in fur. Stallybrass suggests that the narrative compromises required to condense the story to a single image could be partially to blame for the iconographic inconsistency.

The papers of the afternoon session spanned a similar range of topics. In ‘Benedetto Bordon and Venetian Ducal’, Helena Szépe reveals that illuminations on official Venetian manuscripts are linked to similar woodcuts through both the miniaturist/woodcut designer and the sponsoring patron. In ‘The Woodcuts in Breydenbach’s Peregriatio and the Limits of Fifteenth-Century Empiricism’, Eric Marshall White explores the significance of the few but poignant lapses of accuracy in the illustrations designed by Erhard Reuwich while on pilgrimage. White has discovered that the fold-out view of Jerusalem, famous for its factuality, contains idealized ‘corrections’ to Islamic sites: among others, the Dome of the Rock is labelled as the ‘Temple of Solomon’. Jeffrey E Hamburger debunks the assumption that there was a one-way transmission of influence from old technology (manuscripts) to new (printed books) at the dawn of the press. In his paper, ‘From Print to Manuscript: The Interaction of Incunabula and Illumination after the Invention of Printing’, he examines a manuscript whose text and images are modelled on an early printed illustrated book. The final contribution, ‘The Woodcut in Ferrara in the Late Fifteenth

232. Anonymous Artist, reversed copy of position 1 of I Modi, engraving, c. 133 x 183 mm (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España).
Century, by [Daniel de Simone], functions as the first step of an important study of the style of Ferrarese woodcut and the increasing importance (and skills) of the woodcutter in the late fifteenth century.

Employing various approaches, the papers printed or synopsized in this book highlight the interdisciplinarity of the study of early woodcuts and form a useful and amply illustrated guide to current research on the first centuries of the woodcut in Europe. The summarized afternoon papers seem as fascinating and rich as the morning papers, and it is a shame they were not included in full. L. ELIZABETH UPPER

233. Anonymous Artist, Erotic Nursery Scene, engraving, c. 133 x 183 mm (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España).