EXHIBITION EXPLORES THE LIFE OF CHRIST THROUGH THE WRITINGS OF THE EVANGELISTS IN ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS

The Gospels in Medieval Manuscript Illumination
At the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Center, October 31, 2006-January 7, 2007

LOS ANGELES—In the Bible, the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) offer a powerful account of the life of Jesus Christ and provide the foundation for Christianity. Representing the core teachings of Christian beliefs, they were considered of paramount importance. The Gospels in Medieval Manuscript Illumination, at the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Center, October 31, 2006-January 7, 2007, explores the forms of decoration associated with these books in the Middle Ages: portraits of the four Evangelists, illustrations of the life of Christ, and the ornamentation of canon tables (indexes that often appeared at the beginning of Gospel books).

The exhibition includes splendid examples from the Getty Museum's collection of medieval manuscripts; a Greek New Testament dated 1133, an exquisite Paleologan Gospel book from about 1290, as well as Armenian Gospels and a Bible. The exhibition complements the Premiere Presentation Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai.

The four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were of vital importance in telling the story of the life of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and savior of mankind. They were often gathered together in a separate volume and were among the most richly decorated and luxurious of all manuscripts produced during the Middle Ages. At the time, few people could
read, so most churchgoers relied on public readings in church to hear the message of the Gospels (which literally means "good news").

Gospel lectionaries, which contain readings from the Gospels arranged according to their usage during the church year, were employed in religious services and were often lavishly decorated with gold and silver leaf.

Canon tables are indexes that list passages where the same events appear in different Gospels. They often preceded the text in Gospel books and were sumptuously ornamented with the columns of numbers in canon tables neatly arranged within painted architectural structures. The exhibition contains an intricately decorated example from an Armenian Gospel book, the earliest known work of T'oros Roslin, the greatest master of medieval Armenian book illumination.

The writers of the four Gospels, the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were revered as saints in the Middle Ages. Each author was usually represented surrounded by writing tools (inks, pens, and parchment) or accompanied by a symbol traditionally associated with him. Saint Matthew often appears with his traditional symbol, the winged man, or angel. Saint Mark is usually shown with a lion, Saint Luke with an ox, and Saint John an eagle.

_The Gospels in Medieval Manuscript Illumination_ is curated by Georgi Parpulov, a former intern in the Department of Manuscripts at the J. Paul Getty Museum, now in the Department of Medieval Art at The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland.

**OF RELATED INTEREST**

All events are free unless otherwise noted. For reservations and information, please call 310-440-7300 or visit [www.getty.edu](http://www.getty.edu).

**TALKS**

**Curator’s Gallery Talks**

Christine Sciacca, assistant curator, Department of Manuscripts, the J. Paul Getty Museum, leads one-hour gallery talks on the exhibition. Meet under the stairs in the Museum Entrance Hall.

Tuesday, November 28, 2:30 p.m. and Thursday, December 14, 2:30 p.m.

Museum Galleries, Getty Center

**RELATED PUBLICATIONS**

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Note to editors: Images available on request

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