

A Book of Falconry for Frederick II

The “Vienna Moamyn”

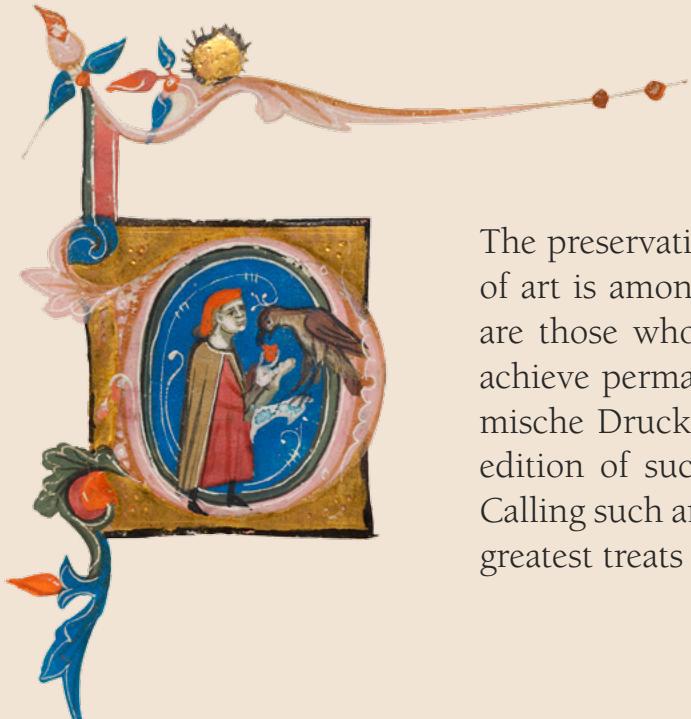


A masterpiece of natural history on the
art of hunting with birds and dogs



ADEVA

~ Seit 1949 ~



The preservation of memory for future generations in great works of art is among the earliest ambitions in human history. But rare are those who create things that remain over the centuries and achieve permanent fame due to their outstanding quality. Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt proudly presents the facsimile edition of such a medieval masterpiece, the “Vienna Moamyn”. Calling such an outstanding treasure your own is surely among the greatest treats you can find for yourself.

54

folios with 101 masterly composed colourful genre scenes on the art of falconry – the “Vienna Moamyn” is a unique bibliophile treasure from the late medieval period that really deserves to be discovered.

FREDERICK II, THE MASTER OF WESTERN FALCONRY LITERATURE

With his famous treatise on falconry “De arte venandi cum avibus” (“On the Art of Hunting with Birds”), Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (1194-1250) wrote a groundbreaking work about falconry in order to

preserve a more than two-thousand-year-old cultural technique from the Central Asian and Arabian realms for the Western world. Based on Arabic sources and his own intensive observations and studies about the anatomy, life, and learning patterns of birds of prey, he compiled a monumental treatise, which in its factual and systematic presentation is unmatched in the 13th century and still highly significant for falconry today.

the keeping of hounds, which deals with all aspects of hunting with birds and dogs. Book 1 provides in-depth knowledge about birds of prey and the difficult process of training them, while Books 2 and 3 are dedicated to various avian diseases and proven healing methods. Books 4 and 5 deal with the correct husbandry and care of hounds.

THE CONTENTS OF THE “MOAMYN”

Written in Latin, the “Moamyn” is a five-volume treatise on falconry and

Fol. 13v: The falconer points to the falcon's chest with a stick; illustration for the chapter on an illness inside the body of the animal (ventositas).



Fol. 31v:
An elegant female falconer, the only one in the manuscript, gives medicine to a falcon. The golden ground behind the initial shows ornamental punching.

The “Vienna Moamyn”

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Collections of Arms and Armour



Fol. 31v: An example of the minute instructions to the artist.



Fol. 1r: Miniature introducing the prologue: a teacher translates and explains the contents of the Book on Falconry to his pupils.

THE “VIENNA MOAMYN” – A LAVISHLY ILLUSTRATED LUXURY MANUSCRIPT

Out of the 27 surviving Latin manuscripts of the “Moamyn”, only two have been illustrated throughout: the older one – with a longer text – was written in the late 13th century in Central or Southern Italy and decorated on behalf of a high-ranking patron as a luxury volume.

The layout of the 54 folios arranges the text of the “Vienna Moamyn” in a single column; it is written in a regular, dark-brown script with red rubrics and decorated with 101 his-



toriated initials. The letters introducing the individual textual sections extend over 4 to 10 lines and are set within gold-grounded near-square-shaped panels that are framed with a black outline. From the corners of this frame emanate elegantly curling scrolls that extend into the blank parchment margin and end in floral or leafy forms. The bodies of the letters themselves carry charming little scenes in shining body colours, that

directly refer to the contents of the chapter in question.

The artist used an amazing range of expression to meet the challenge of illustrating the scientific text. In the more than 80 scenes in Books 2 and 3, no two depictions are the same – although the falconer and his birds are the only protagonists to be seen. In the last two volumes, hounds were added to enrich the iconographic program. The naturalistic reproduction of their habitus and behaviour, the

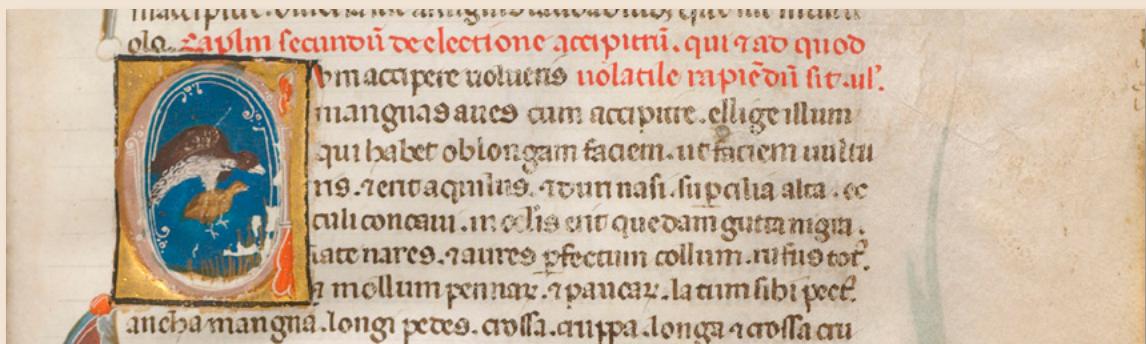


illustration of the emotional relationship between the falconer and his birds, and the perfect insertion of the scenes in the letter bodies bear testimony to the great talent of the illuminator who turned each of these little pictures into a work of art in its own right.

A special feature worth mentioning are the notes in the margins of the miniatures, in the Italian language. Rather than being later additions, these annotations served as exact instruc-

tions for the artist about the contents of the scenes intended for those parts of the initials that the scribe had left blank for him. A similar number of painting instructions is hardly found in any other medieval manuscript. This makes the "Vienna Moamyn" an outstanding object of research into the relationship between picture and text.

Fol. 44v: Books 4 and 5 deal with hounds, although the illuminator's initials still depict falcons; the hounds were added at a later stage by a different hand.



Fol. 3r: The hawk and its prey: the trained predator catches a small bird in his flight, although falconers mostly preferred bigger birds of prey such as geese and Eurasian cranes.



Fol. 7v.: The falcon's moulting chamber. During the annual moult in late spring, the birds renew their flying feathers, a process for which falconers keep them in a moult chamber especially designed for this purpose. The "Vienna Moamyn" shows a very rare depiction of this cage.

AN ARABIAN BOOK OF FALCONRY FOR FREDERICK II
 No other medieval ruler practised falconry with the same enthusiasm as the King of Sicily. However, for Frederick falconry was more than a mere pastime but rather a discipline in its own right, to which he increasingly turned toward the end of his life. He wrote "De arte venandi cum avibus" in the last decade of his life, and in 1240 called the philosopher and physician Theodore of Antioch from the Middle East to his royal court in Sicily to do a Latin translation from another significant Arabic work on falconry: "Liber Moamin falconarii de scientia venandi per aves et quadrupedes" (The Book of Falconer Moamyn on the Art of Hunting With Birds and Quadrupeds).

The volume was probably compiled from two Oriental hunting treatises edited in the 8th and 9th centuries: from the Falcon Book of al-Gitrif and for the main portion from a four-book treatise dedicated to



Fol. 1v: Emperor Frederick II flying falcons. "De arte venandi cum avibus"

the caliph al-Mutawakkil. The Arabic original of this latter version was written between 847 and 861 for the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad and is only preserved in fragments. Its author Muhammad Abdallāh al-Bāzyār (Mohamed, son of Abdallah the Falconer) is also known to have published astronomic works. In the Latin version of the newly compiled treatise his name is no longer mentioned. Authorship is now attributed to "the falconer Moamyn"

who is only traceable in the Western tradition. Frederick II is known to have personally revised the translation of the "Moamyn" during the siege of Faenza in 1240. The volume interested him since he was just preparing his monumental "De arte venandi cum avibus". The pictures in the "Vienna Moamyn" are a spectacular addition to his own treatise, in that they depict the curing of ill falcons, a topic that the royal work leaves aside.



THE ORIGINAL

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Collections of Arms and Armour, K 4984

Manuscript datable to the late 13th century, Central or Southern Italy

54 folios containing 101 initials historiated with figural scenes. The decoration is executed in body colours on a golden ground.

Format: 154 x 220 mm

Binding: Renaissance binding from the mid-15th century, green patterned velvet over wooden boards, 2 metal clasps.



The Original Cover

Regular edition limited to*

381

Hand-numbered copies (1-381)

THE FACSIMILE EDITION

The facsimile edition of the "Vienna Moamyn" is published as Vol. CXXIII of the "Codices Selecti" series and reproduces the manuscript in the original format and colours, in its most minute details.

Luxury edition: In the luxury edition, all 101 initials and all gilded parts are reproduced using 23 carat gold and partly chiselled. Replica of the original binding in green patterned velvet, clasps faithful to the original, book block hand-sewn onto 4 raised bands. Hand-sewn head- and tailbands. The facsimile comes in a boxed set together with the commentary volume.

Regular edition: All gilded parts are reproduced using faithfully coloured foil gold and chiselling. Replica of the original binding in green patterned velvet, book block thread-stitched by hand, hand-sewn head- and tailbands. The facsimile edition is preserved in a slipcase.

The **commentary volume** to go with the facsimile edition is authored by Baudouin Van de Abeele. The world-renowned expert for medieval hunting treatises is professor of medieval sciences at the Université catholique de Louvain, head of the Centre d'études sur le Moyen Age et la Renaissance (UCL), and editor of the series *Bibliotheca cynegetica* (Droz).

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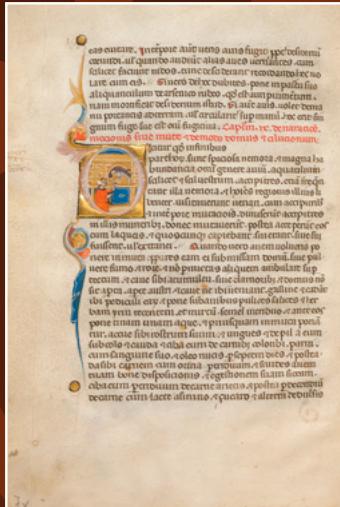
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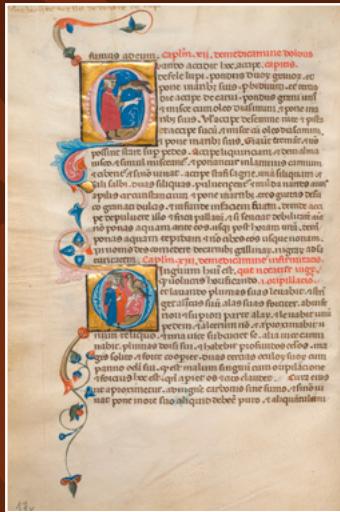
Fol. 7v

The falcon's moult chamber. During the annual moult in late spring, the birds renew their flying feathers, a process for which falconers keep them in a moult chamber especially designed for this purpose. The "Vienna Moamyn" shows a very rare depiction of this cage.



Fol. 17v

The falconer treats his bird for headache. In the margins is an instruction for the illuminator in Italian: homo medicante ucello de dolore de capo. Several similar instructions have survived in this manuscript.



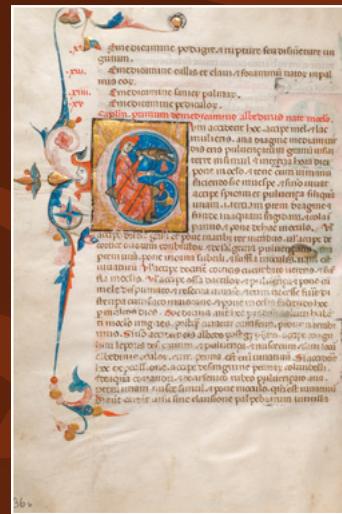
Fol. 31v

An elegant female falconer, the only one in the manuscript, gives medicine to a falcon. The golden ground behind the initial shows ornamental tooling.



Fol. 36v

The falconer curing an eye disease. Miniature from the beginning of Book 3.



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