

11-5-2021

Books with Looks

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Fusillo, Isabella, "Books with Looks" (2021). *University Libraries Blog Archive*. 421.
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FRIDAY NOVEMBER 5, 2021

Books with Looks

By Isabella Fusillo

There are pretty rare books, and there are pretty, rare books. This past month, I have been focused on the latter. Drawing from the rare-books collection in the University of Dayton archives, I chose to examine about 20 — with publication dates ranging from 1623 to 1952 — based purely on their cover art, illustrations or calligraphy. The contents vary widely; one tends to think that beautiful covers and illustrations are only featured in works of literature, but that isn't the case.

ART IN NONFICTION

The Practical House Carpenter by William Pain (one of my personal favorites) contains intricate and elegant diagrams of arches, roofs, columns, staircases, ceilings, bookcases, gateways and fireplaces, as well as floor plans for entire estates and churches. Architectural pattern books like this one were popular in the 19th century; Pain's provided amateur architects and carpenters with charts, tables and diagrams, complete with dimensions and other measurements necessary to replicate the designs.

The Illustrated Natural History Vol. I: Mammalia by the Rev. J.G. Wood contains engravings by the Brothers Dalziel, a wood engraving business in London founded by George Dalziel, whose brothers Edward, John and Thomas and sister Margaret later joined the firm. What interested me about this book, other than the detailed engravings, was that the author was a member of the clergy. Wood was what is known as a parson-naturalist, a member of the clergy that engages in scientific study of the natural world.

AN OLD STORY; A NEW (TYPE)FACE

The story of *Aucassin and Nicolette*, beautifully illustrated by Vojtěch Preissig in this 1931 edition, has an interesting history. The author, though anonymous, is credited with

PREVIOUS
POST

Native
American
Heritage
Resources:
History,
Images,
Language, Arts

Technology
has made
documents,
images, music,
art and
languages
more
accessible for
the study of
Native
American
culture and
history.

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NEXT POST

Start Trying to
Make Roesch
Happen

Inspired by the
movie *Mean
Girls* (because
we're a *cool*
library), we'll
have a lineup

writing the only example of a *chantefable* — a story told in alternating verse and prose — that exists today. The book caught my eye because of its colorful and patterned book jacket. When I started doing a more in-depth look at the illustrations, I found that Preissig was a renowned typographer, printmaker, designer, illustrator, painter and teacher. He was born in Svetec, Austria-Hungary (now the Czech Republic), and after studying in Prague from 1892 to 1898, he moved to the United States to work as an art instructor at Columbia University and other institutions. In 1912, Preissig created the Preissig Antiqua typeface, which became popular throughout the Czech Republic and in Europe.

Preissig moved back to Austria-Hungary in 1930. While in America, he designed U.S. armed forces recruitment posters directed at Czech immigrants during World War I. Later, back in Europe, Preissig worked as a graphic designer for one of the most popular Czech revolutionary magazines, *V boj*. For his work, he was arrested by German authorities in 1940 and died in the Dachau concentration camp. The original manuscript of *Aucassin and Nicolette* dates to the late 12th century or early 13th century in France, but Preissig chose to illustrate the story as if it took place in his own time. The book was printed in Czechoslovakia in 1931 and appears to use Preissig Antiqua.

'BEOWULF' IN PICTURES

UD's collection also includes a 1952 rendition — No. 52 out of 1,500 copies made — of another medieval work, the epic poem *Beowulf*, translated by Ellery Leonard and illustrated by Lynd Ward. Ward was an American expressionist famous for his wood engravings, though he also worked in watercolor, brush and ink, lithography and mezzotint. In collaboration with his wife, May McNeer, Ward illustrated over 100 children's books and was an illustrator for the Heritage Limited Editions Club, the group responsible for this copy of *Beowulf*. Ward's most notable contribution to the art world, however, was the

of services and resources to make finals week *groot* for University of Dayton students.

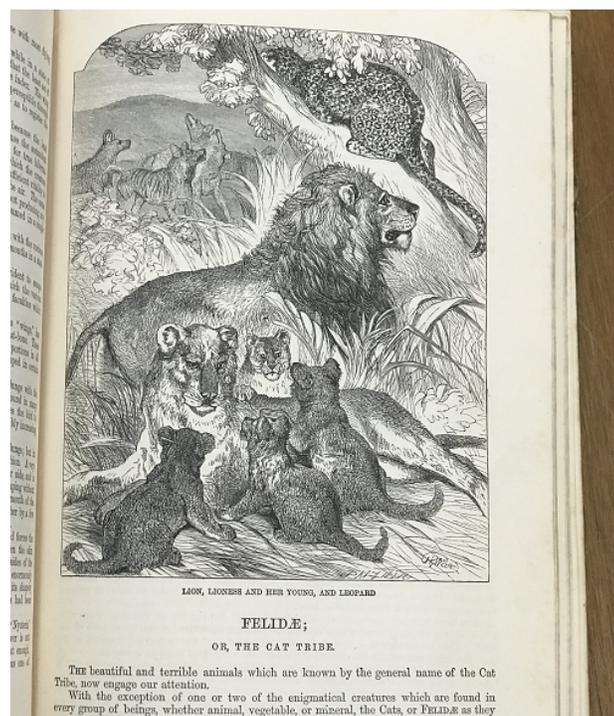
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wordless novel, which inspired the development of the graphic novels we have today. These wordless novels told stories entirely through art. Ward's preferred medium for illustrating his wordless novels was wood engraving. Ward would carve the image into a block of wood, apply ink to the surface, and press the block onto paper, thus leaving an image in ink. The images in *Beowulf*, however, are hand-drawn lithographs.

COME SEE FOR YOURSELF

Though these books and their authors have rich histories, the books' art and artists take the stories, instructions and information to a richer aesthetic and a higher level of understanding. To see these and other pretty, rare books, make an appointment by emailing archives@udayton.edu.

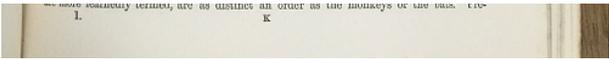
— *Isabella Fusillo is a senior history major from Lima, Ohio. She has been a student employee of the University Archives and Special Collections since January. Her favorite book of all time is The Book Thief by Markus Zusak.*



Natural History, Illustrated

1/5

Wood engravings by the Brothers Dalziel illustrate this informative work by parson-naturalist J.G. Wood.



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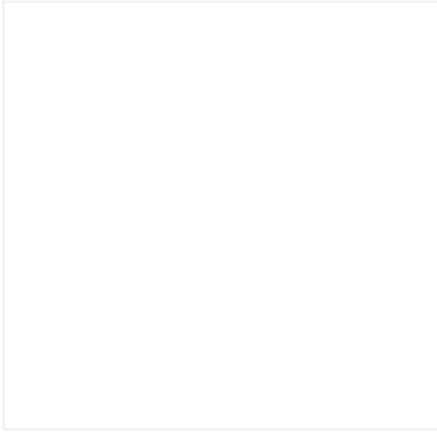
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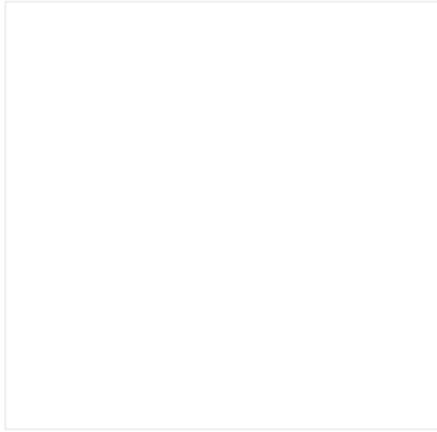
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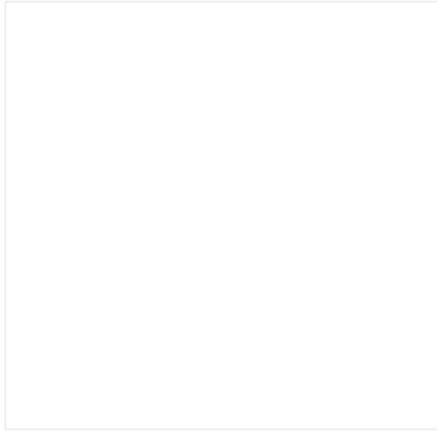
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Synonymic spring



A Brief History of Holy Cards



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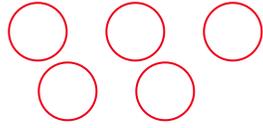
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