



DR. JÖRN GÜNTHER RARE BOOKS AG

Medieval Manuscripts and Miniatures



Dr. Jörn Günther Rare Books, Basel. Press Release - April 23, 2026

Living with Nature

Living with Nature, the latest exhibition presented by Dr. Jörn Günther Rare Books in the historic center of Basel, explores the ever-present dialogue between humans and their natural environment. An exclusive display of artworks covering almost a millennium of manuscript production, shows how humans coexisted, negotiated, struggled, exploited, and sought harmony with nature.

Taking place at the same time as Art Basel Week (June 15 - 20) and located close to Marktplatz, this exhibition is the perfect opportunity for visitors of the fair to experience museum-quality manuscripts up close - many of them are on display in Switzerland for the first time. This exhibition is accessible by appointment only and guided tour slots can be booked **online**.

The exhibition presents a large variety of manuscripts on medical, scientific and religious subjects, as well as richly illuminated Books of Hours, whose pages are inhabited by fantastic beasts, hard-working peasants, luscious plants, and astronomical diagrams.

Living with Nature challenges the belief that we are separate—from both the natural world and the history of the people who came before us.

Highlights of the Display

Arator, *Historia Apostolica*. **Physiologus**, in the *Dicta Chrysostomi* form. Williram von Ebersberg, *Expositio in Cantica Canticorum*. Decorated Manuscript in Latin on vellum. Germany, Erfurt, Saint-Peter's Abbey, c. 1150-1180. c. 175 x 132 mm.



The *Physiologus*, and other works, Germany, Erfurt, c. 1150-1180, fol. 65r. Unicorn caught by a virgin.

When medieval people observed the world around them, they saw it as a universe created and populated by God, with each aspect imbued with a divinely assigned meaning. The perception of animals, plants and even imaginary beasts was strongly influenced by the fundamental text of the **Physiologus**. The creatures shown in this collection of stories about nature and its inhabitants, are seen through a moralising lens: some of them represented Christ, while others stood for original sin and the threat posed by the devil.



Croÿ-Arenberg Hours, Flanders, Ghent c. 1510-1520, fol. 6v and 7r, Calendar pages for May.

The 'Croÿ-Arenberg Hours'. Book of Hours for the use of Sarum (Salisbury). Manuscript in Latin on vellum, illuminated by the Master of Sir George Talbot and a collaborator, the Master of the Older Prayerbook of Emperor Maximilian, the Master of the David Scenes in the Grimani Breviary and artist from the circle of the Master of James IV of Scotland. Flanders, Ghent or Bruges, c. 1508-20. 211 x 153/156 mm.

Books of Hours are prayerbooks that were widely used for private devotion and quiet, meditative contemplation in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The prayers and liturgical readings in these books were accompanied by a calendar that gave the reader an overview of important feasts and saint days, illustrated by depictions of the zodiac signs and the labors of each month. The calendar pages of one of the finest achievements of Flemish manuscript illumination, the **Croÿ-Arenberg Hours**, evoke a picture of a life in sync with the seasons: the labors of the month shown in its stunningly illustrated borders take the observer through the yearly cycle and its rituals. This Book of Hours was made in Flanders between 1510 and 1520 for an elusive patron at the royal court of the Tudors and illuminated by some of the most popular artists of their time.

About us

Dr. Jörn Günther Rare Books is the world leading specialist dealer of manuscripts and miniatures from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Dr. Günther has accumulated 40 years of experience with medieval manuscripts, opening his first Antiquarian book store in Hamburg in 1990. Institutional clients include the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Museum of Korea, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the Musée du Louvre.

Questions or interview requests? Please contact Elisabeth Wingerter (ew@guenther-rarebooks.com, +41 61 275 75 62).

Practical Information

June 15 - 20, 2026 - Art Basel Week



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By appointment only.

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Croÿ-Arenberg Hours, Flanders, Ghent c. 1510-1520.

Images and Captions



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Arator, *Historia Apostolica. Physiologus*, in the *Dicta Chrysostomi* form. Williram von Ebersberg, *Expositio in Cantica Canticorum*. Decorated Manuscript in Latin on vellum. Germany, Erfurt, Saint-Peter's Abbey, c. 1150-1180, c. 175 x 132 mm.

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The 'Croÿ-Arenberg Hours'.

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