

**SONY VIDEO SYSTEM EDUCATES MUSEUM VISITORS
ON THE ART OF "ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS"
AND PROTECTS RARE BOOKS FROM DESTRUCTIVE HANDLING**

Summary

The J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California has an important collection of illuminated Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts. Browsing by visitors would destroy the fragile pages. The solution: An interactive video system that enables visitors to browse through high-resolution color video images of the pages while getting a tutorial on how the books were made.

Background

"Before the invention of the printing press, all books were made by hand. The parchment, or writing surface, was prepared by hand and the books were written, decorated, and bound by hand," explains Dr. Thomas Kren, Curator of Manuscripts at the J. Paul Getty Museum and Project Director. "The practice of decorating -- or illuminating -- manuscripts is one of the great artistic traditions of the Middle Ages. The art of manuscript illumination flourished in centers throughout Europe as early as the sixth century A.D. until the end of the sixteenth century."

Allowing thousands of visitors to physically turn the pages of these rare books would soon result in their

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destruction. And keeping them in a climate-controlled glass display case means visitors can only examine the pages to which the books are already opened.

The Solution

The Museum hired Interactive Production Associates, a Santa Monica-based producer of interactive video, to work with Dr. Kren and Assistant Curator, Dr. Rane Katzstein to create an interactive video exhibit, "An Introduction to Illuminated Manuscripts."

The program consists of four major sections, each represented by a choice on the main menu. They include "types of manuscripts," "materials and techniques" and "keys to understanding."

The fourth section lets you browse through the pages of five important illuminated manuscripts in the Getty collection. It contains video images of 250 pages with three close-ups per page showing detailed illustrations and calligraphy.

Users can view detailed, high-resolution color images of these rare manuscripts on the interactive system without handling the fragile original, notes Peter Bloch, President of Interactive Production Associates (IPA) and Executive Producer of the exhibit.

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The System at a Glance

The museum has two complete systems each consisting of the following elements:

- * A Sony VIW/3015 interactive workstation with an extra 2 MB of RAM
- * A Sony LDP/1550 videodisc player
- * A Sony PVM/1271A 13-inch color video monitor with Carrol IR touch screen.

The Sony Advantage

Why did IPA and the Getty Museum select the Sony VIEW System™ workstation?

"The design called for a system that offered the highest possible resolution but could be easily maintained, well-supported by the manufacturer, and was reasonably priced. The Sony system met these criteria," says Bloch. "Graphic resolution was our primary concern, because the page images are displayed in great detail in full color -- and they look great on the Sony system. Also, it took us six months to design the program and one year to produce it, and during that time we received continuing and ongoing support from Sony."

For more information, contact Ed Mullen, (201) 930-6034.

How the System Works

To put the manuscript pages onto videodisc, the Getty provided IPA with high-resolution transparencies. Bloch used

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a Sony DXC-3000H CCD Camera to capture the images to a TARGA™ R16 graphics board. TARGA frames were then laid off onto a Sony component Betacam® and finally put into NTSC 1-inch format.

The program also has segments consisting of an on-screen narrator and other live footage demonstrating the calligraphy, illustration, and binding techniques used to make the books. Both live action and still images for these segments were captured on 35mm fine-grain motion picture film using a motion control system.

All visitors interact with the system by touching the screen, making it extremely easy to use. There is no keyboard.

Benefits/Results

"The illuminated manuscripts interactive video exhibit is popular and successful," notes Bret Waller, the Museum's Associate Director for Education and Public Affairs. "We recently showed it at the annual conference of the American Association of Museums, and it was enthusiastically received by other museum professionals."

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