

## **MONTEFIASCONE PROJECT**

**SUMMER 2016**

**Montefiascone is a small medieval walled city about 100 k (80 miles) north of Rome, on Lake Bolsena. Since 1988, conservators and others interested in books and their history have come together to work, to learn and to enjoy this special place. Participants come to enjoy the medieval architecture, friendly people, a clean accessible lake, books and scholarship. The Montefiascone Project is a non-profit making organisation, set up to fund the restoration of the Library of the Seminario Barbarigo in Montefiascone.**

### **COURSES FOR SUMMER 2016:**

#### **25-29th July Re-creating the Medieval Palette**

This class will study the colours (made from rocks, minerals, metals, insects and plants) that were processed to produce the colours used by artists throughout the medieval era. The focus will mostly (though not exclusively) be on manuscript art -Islamic and European- and participants will re-create the colours using original recipes. Illustrated lectures will address the history, geography, chemistry, iconography and conservation issues. Practical making and painting sessions will follow these lectures. No previous experience is necessary.

***Course tutor: Cheryl Porter***

#### **1-5<sup>th</sup> August The Unicorn Binder**

This course will focus on the work of the Unicorn Binder, so named because of his use of a distinctive finishing tool cut to the design of a small woodland unicorn. He is known to have bound at least seventy volumes between 1484 and 1505, of which eighteen are in Cambridge libraries. His work can be securely placed in late fifteenth-century Cambridge, where several bindery workshops produced bindings of blind-tooled leather over wooden boards, with clasps to hold the volume closed. The rich, warm, mahogany colour of the leather, seen on Cambridge bindings, sets them apart from the other main fifteen-century bookbinding centres of London and Oxford. The tutors have examined extensively all eighteen Unicorn bindings in Cambridge libraries and have looked at more from other collections in the UK. The Unicorn Binder successfully exploits the high quality materials at his disposal, both structurally and aesthetically, to produce some of the finest work seen in Cambridge bindings.

The tutors will enable the course participants to recreate a binding based on the work of the Unicorn Binder. Processes will include sewing the text-block, sewing endbands, shaping and attaching the boards and covering with leather. The covered books will be blind tooled with replica finishing tools based on the Unicorn Binder's designs and have brass fittings and fixtures applied. Complementing the practical aspect of the course the tutors will seek to set the binding into context. The course will give an over-view of late English fifteenth-century structures and examine previous influences on their evolution and how they, in turn, influenced later bindings.

Some knowledge and experience of bookbinding or book history would be useful, but is not essential. All materials will be supplied at a nominal cost. Participants will need to bring basic bookbinding tools. The tutors will contact prospective students well in advance of the class with suggested readings and a list of recommended tools.

***Course tutors: Jim Bloxam and Shaun Thompson***

### **8-12<sup>th</sup> August An al-Andalusian Islamic Binding**

From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Iberian Peninsula was a cosmopolitan society governed by Muslims, but where Christians, Jews and Muslims lived together. The free exchange and influences between these cultures are reflected in the specific characteristics of the Andalusian book structure.

In 1492 the kingdom of Granada surrendered to the Catholic monarchs and the period of Islamic rule in Spain came to an end. The majority of books from the large Islamic libraries were burnt and destroyed, but a small number of manuscripts were hidden or moved to safer locations.

The marriage of cultures exemplified by the Andalusian binding typology can be found in a number of the manuscripts that survive. In this course, participants will make an accurate model of an exquisite example of the Andalusian binding structure, found recently in the village of Hornachos in the southwest of Spain. Produced at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> or beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this tiny devotional prayer manuscript contains a collection of prayers and chapters from the Qur'an along with a number of illustrations. It is likely it was considered to have talismanic properties, providing protection to those who carried it. Now held in the Extremadura Library, this manuscript demonstrates the significant variations made to sewing, endbands, treatment of the spine, and the covering process characteristic of the Andalusian structure. It also bears witness to the Coptic heritage of Islamic binding traditions, and provides further evidence that the Islamic binding is not a casebinding structure.

The course will be complemented by illustrated presentations, and a lecture by Dr Alison Ohta, Director of the Royal Asiatic Society in London.

All materials will be provided though basic bookbinding tools will be needed. Some knowledge of historic bookbinding would be helpful, but is not essential.

***Course tutors: Ana Beni, Kristine Rose (and Alison Ohta)***

### **15-19 August Carolingian Binding**

The Carolingian binding style was used in western Europe from the seventh century and is often characterized by the paths of the slips of the sewing supports as they lace into the wooden boards. This course will focus on the late Carolingian binding structure of a manuscript held at the Canterbury Cathedral Library Archives, written and bound in Canterbury in the late eleventh century. Participants will recreate a model of the book in order to study and understand the distinctive features of a Carolingian binding, the historical influences upon it, and the ways that it differed from the structure of the Romanesque bindings that followed it. The Canterbury binding features wooden boards of quarter-sawn oak, sewing supports of alum tawed leather, sewn endbands and tab ends, and a covering of alum tawed leather.

All materials can be supplied at nominal cost. Participants will need to bring basic bookbinding tools.

Some knowledge and experience of bookbinding or book history would be useful.

***Course tutor: Michael Burke***

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Cheryl Porter** has been Director of the Montefiascone Project since its inception in 1988. After graduating from Camberwell College (University of the Arts, London) she worked at University College London Paintings Analysis Unit, analysing the use of pigments in paintings and manuscripts. She was Manager of Conservation and Preservation at the Dar al-Kutub (National Library and Archives of Egypt) and Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation 2007-2010 and is currently a consultant for a number of institutions with book, papyrus and manuscript collections. She has published many articles concerning colour in manuscripts and has lectured in the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and throughout Europe.

**Jim Bloxam**, Head of Conservation, Cambridge University Library, UK. Jim is an Accredited Conservator of the Institute of Conservation. His particular research interests lie mainly in the history of books; their structural qualities and their cultural context. He has taught historical book structures in the UK, Europe and the US, focusing mainly on Romanesque and Gothic book structures.

**Shaun Thompson**, Collection Care Manager, Cambridge University Library, UK. Shaun has worked at Cambridge University Library since 2003 and during this time he has taken the opportunity to examine and recreate some of the medieval bindings within the library. He has sought to share his knowledge and skills by teaching a number of practical workshops in the UK. Shaun taught courses in 2013 and 2014 at Montefiascone and is looking forward to returning to share his ever-widening knowledge and experience.

**Ana Beny** has been a freelance conservator since 1984. She has worked for many prestigious Spanish institutions and treated diverse library items, but always with a special dedication to historical bookbinding. Ana has worked on Islamic manuscripts from the Dar al-Kutub in Cairo, the Royal History Academy, Islamic Library of the Spanish Agency of Cooperation, Extremadura's Library, and several private collections in Spain. Ana has taught and lectured internationally, and now divides her time between Madrid and Cairo where she works closely with the conservators at Dar al-Kutub.

**Kristine Rose Beers** is Senior Conservator at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin and an accredited member of the Institute of Conservation. Her research interests include the conservation of Islamic manuscript material, early binding structures, and the use of pigments and dyes in medieval manuscripts. Before moving to Ireland, Kristine has worked at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge as Assistant Keeper (Conservator of Manuscripts and Printed Books); at the Chester Beatty Library with a particular focus on the Turkish manuscript collection; and at Cambridge University Library. She graduated from the Conservation programme at Camberwell College of Arts in 2002 and is a member of The Islamic Manuscript Association.

Ana and Kristine have been working together on the importance of the Andalucían binding structure and its applications in contemporary manuscript conservation for a number of years.

**Alison Ohta** is currently Director of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. She completed her PhD thesis at SOAS on Mamluk bindings and has published and lectured extensively on the subject.

**Michael Burke** studied bookbinding with Dominic Riley and paper conservation with Karen Zukor. Michael lives in the Lake District, where he teaches bookbinding. In recent years he has taught and lectured at Society of Bookbinders conferences and seminars, and at Guild of Bookworkers meetings in the USA as well as teaching tours in Australia, New Zealand, and Brazil. Michael researches the structures of ancient and medieval bindings. He has a Masters degree in the History of the Book from the University of London.

**Costs:** £445 UKP per week for all tuition (which is in English)

**Scholarship:** The Nicholas Hadgraft Montefiascone Scholarship is awarded each year by Conservation-by-Design. The successful applicant will be offered £1000 (UKP) towards tuition and accommodation for the Montefiascone course(s). For further information see Conservation-by Design website.

**For further information,** contact Cheryl Porter: [chezzaporter@yahoo.com](mailto:chezzaporter@yahoo.com) or consult our website: **[www.monteproject.com](http://www.monteproject.com)**