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**Rediscovering Catharina van Hemessen's *Scourging of Christ*:  
Women Artists, Patrons, and Rulers in Renaissance Europe**

This exhibition focuses on the Netherlandish painter Catharina van Hemessen's *Scourging of Christ*, a jewel-like devotional work signed by the most famous female artist of the Northern Renaissance. Rarely on public display, this dynamic yet little-known narrative panel reveals Catharina's originality, refined color palette, and adept rendering of the human form. The painting, recently redated to 1556 through technical examination, unites the exhibition's three themes—female artists, female patrons and collectors, and female rulers in Renaissance Europe (ca. 1400-1600). Indeed, the *Scourging of Christ* is the only signed work by Catharina van Hemessen that could have been executed for her patron Mary of Hungary, Regent of the Netherlands, who in 1556 invited the painter to the Habsburg court in Spain.

In the first part of the exhibition, prints and illustrated books by Albrecht Dürer, Andreas Vesalius, and others suggest the kinds of representations and theoretical knowledge that may have inspired Catharina when she painted the *Scourging of Christ*, for she, unlike her male contemporaries, almost certainly would not have been able to study the male body from life. In the second part of the exhibition, Renaissance artists, patrons, and rulers including Lucrezia Borgia, Duchess of Ferrara, and Mary, Duchess of Burgundy, are represented by portrait prints, illuminated manuscripts, and other works. Linking these two parts of the exhibition is a miniature painting of the Italian author Boccaccio, since his bestseller, *Famous Women*, publicized the lives of more than 100 exemplary women, including artists and rulers from antiquity through the 14<sup>th</sup> century. His text inspired later writers

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such as Christine de Pizan, who celebrated contemporary female illuminators in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Paris, and Giorgio Vasari, who in the 1568 edition of his book on famous artists praised Catharina van Hemessen herself.

Drawn from the University of Cincinnati Libraries and a private collection, the artworks, manuscripts, and books in this exhibition highlight the meaningful roles played by women in European art, society, and politics during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. As we celebrate Women's History Month, these objects stand as visual and material testaments to the enduring contributions of women at the beginning of the modern era.

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## Credits & Acknowledgments

This exhibition was curated by Elizabeth Meyer, Head Librarian of the Robert A. Deshon and Karl J. Schlachter Library for Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning (DAAP); Christopher Platts, Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Cincinnati; and Michael Ruzga, Director and Head of Conservation, Fine Arts Conservation, Inc.

Lenders to the exhibition: University of Cincinnati Archives and Rare Books Library, University of Cincinnati Health Sciences Library, and a private collection.

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## *The Scourging of Christ*

Catharina van Hemessen (Netherlandish, 1528-ca. 1583)

Oil on wood panel, 1556

Private Collection



# Standing Male Nude in Mixed Frontal and Profile Views

from *Della simmetria dei corpi humani, libri quattro*

Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471-1528), author and artist

Printed in Venice: Domenico Nicolini, 1591

University of Cincinnati Health Sciences Library PRIMARY

NC 765 D955mt 1591, p. 108



# “Muscle Man” in a Landscape

from *Opera omnia anatomica & chirurgica...*, vol. 1  
Andreas Vesalius (Netherlandish, 1514-1564), author  
Jan Wandelaar (Dutch, 1690-1759), after Jan Steven van  
Calcar (Netherlandish, 1499-1550), designer and engraver  
Printed in Leiden: Joannem du Vivie et al., 1725  
University of Cincinnati Health Sciences Library PRIMARY  
QS 17 V575 v.1 1725, p. 154



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## *The Mass of Saint Gregory*

Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471-1528)

Woodcut on laid paper, 1511

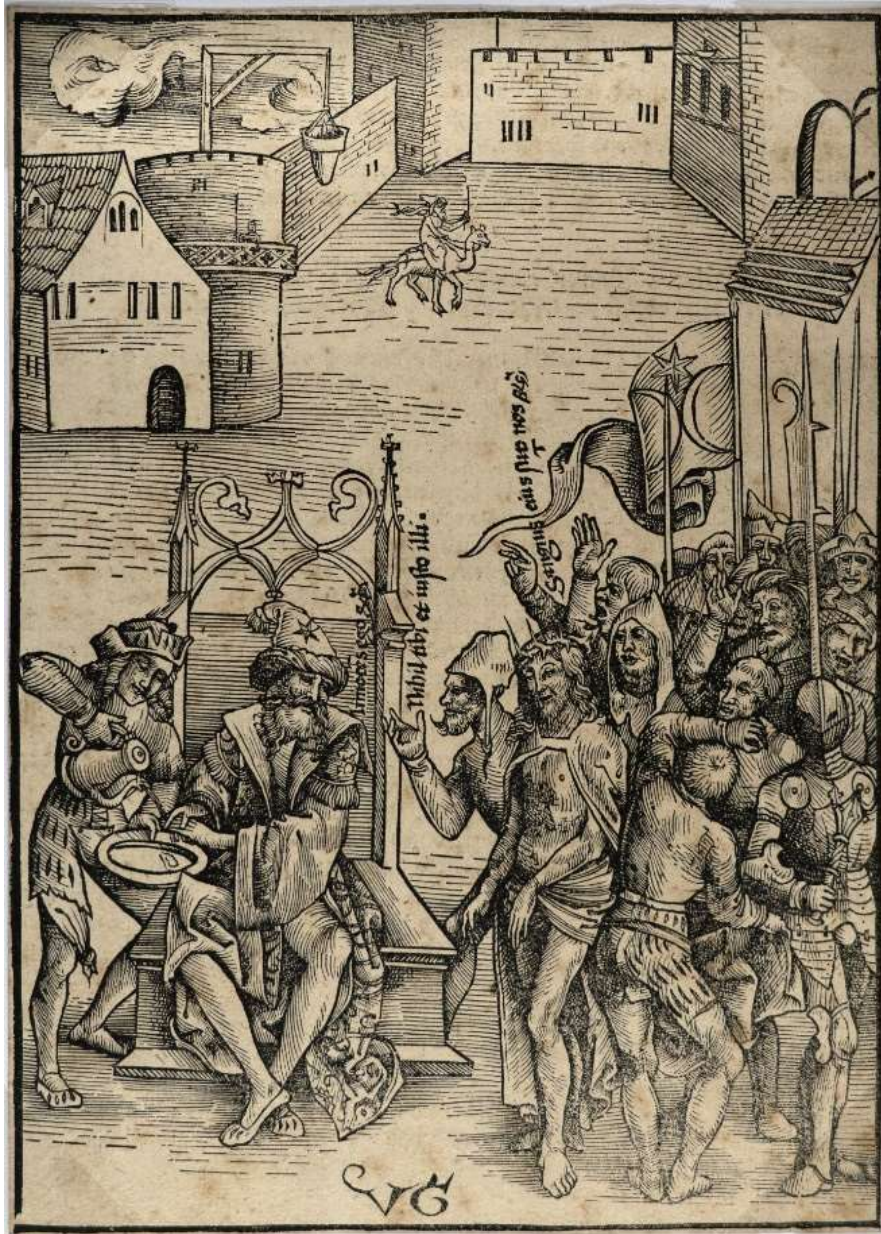
University of Cincinnati DAAP Library





# *Christ before Pilate*

from *Passio Domini nostri Jesu Christi*  
Urs Graf (Swiss, ca. 1485-1527/1530)  
Woodcut on laid paper, ca. 1503  
University of Cincinnati DAAP Library



# *Meeting of Saints Joachim and Anne at the Golden Gate*

from a Book of Hours

Anonymous northern French illuminator

Egg tempera and gold on parchment, ca. 1500

University of Cincinnati Archives and Rare Books Library,

Ms. 37, f. 141r (right-hand page)



## *Boccaccio in an Initial S and Miniature of a Landscape*

from *De Montibus, Silvis, ...*

Giovanni Boccaccio (Italian, 1313-1375), author  
Anonymous Florentine illuminator

Egg tempera and gold on paper, 1440

University of Cincinnati Archives and Rare Books Library,  
Ms. 12, title page



# *A Nun Kneeling before the Infant Jesus (left) and A Nun Kneeling before the Madonna and Child (right)*

from *Meditationes et orationes*

Anonymous German or Austrian illuminator

Egg tempera (?) on paper, early 1400s

Facsimiles of University of Cincinnati Archives and Rare

Books Library, Ms. 2, f. 40v and f. 42v

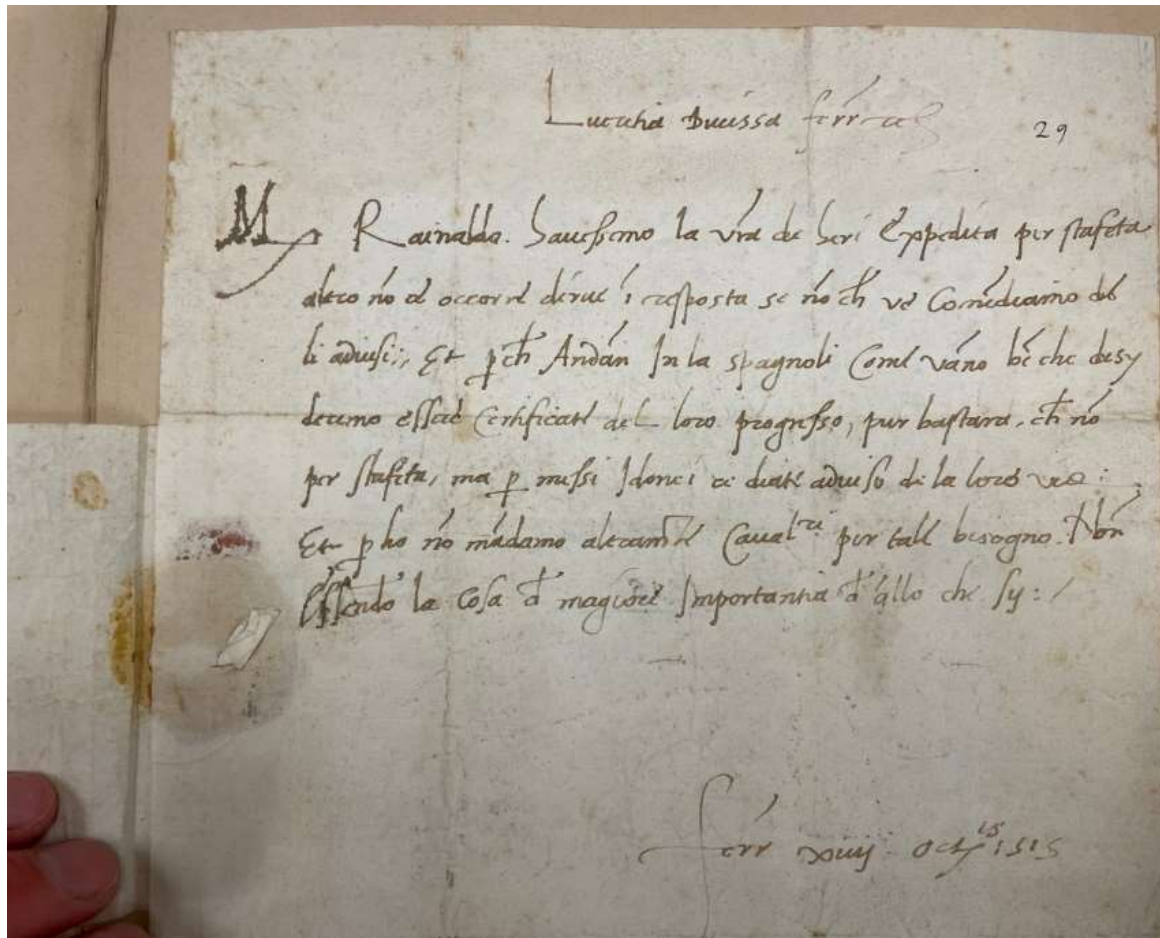


***Letter from Lucrezia Borgia, Duchess of Ferrara, to Sir Rinaldo, a Field Commander***

Ink on laid paper, October 14, 1515

University of Cincinnati Archives and Rare Books Library

DG797.83 1515



## *Portrait of Mary, Duchess of Burgundy*

Pieter de Jode II (Flemish, 1606-1674), after Rogier van der Weyden (Netherlandish, ca. 1400-1464)

Engraving on laid paper, ca. 1663

University of Cincinnati DAAP Library

