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J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM PRESENTS *Sacred Landscapes: Nature in Renaissance Manuscripts*

**On view October 10, 2017–January 14, 2018
at the J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center**

LOS ANGELES—Artists, intellectuals, and pious members of society in Renaissance Europe looked to nature for inspiration and guidance in their contemplation of divine order. The elements of the natural world—including rocks, trees, flowers, waterways, mountains, and even atmosphere—were combined in paintings, drawings, and manuscript illuminations to create expansive landscapes and vistas, which often formed the settings for secular and religious texts. *Sacred Landscapes: Nature in Renaissance Manuscripts*, on view October 10, 2017–January 14, 2018, at the J. Paul Getty Museum, explores the genre of landscape painting in works of art created for personal or communal devotion.

"This exhibition draws heavily on the Museum's outstanding manuscripts collection, showcasing the exceptional artistic achievement of some of the most important illuminators in Renaissance Europe," says Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "Shown alongside drawings and paintings from the Getty's collection, and displayed adjacent to the special exhibition of the work of Giovanni



Saint Jerome, ca.1528 to 1530. Master of the Getty Epistles (French, active about 1520 - about 1549), French. Tempera colors and gold paint on parchment. 16.5 × 10.3 cm (6 1/2 × 4 1/16 in.). The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. Ludwig I 15, fol. 1v. Permanent Collection

Bellini, visitors will be able to appreciate these objects not just as books of faith, but as the exceptional examples of landscape painting that they are."

The Garden and Cultivated Earth

In Renaissance devotional manuscripts, the greenery of gardens and farmlands provided stunning settings for a range of narratives centered on the theme of salvation or sanctity. Accomplished illuminators such as Simon Bening and Lieven van Lathem utilized the spaces of gardens, from fenced plantings to flower beds or groves, to separate moments in narrative scenes.

"The art of verdancy, or greenery, presents an idealized view of nature in perfect harmony, a metaphor that premodern Christians equated with paradise in heaven but which also aligned with renewed interests in classical philosophy and developments in science at the time," explains Bryan C. Keene, assistant curator of manuscripts and co-curator of the exhibition.

The Wilderness and Land Beyond the City

People looked to stark terrains or woodland spaces to heighten their religious experiences during the Renaissance. Some individuals chose to pursue life as hermits, living apart from civilization and relinquishing worldly goods and pleasures of the body. By journeying out into the wilderness, some Christians hoped to achieve a more authentic and pure relationship with God, free from all distraction. Artists often depicted harsh rocky terrains or woodland spaces in religious artworks to both highlight humankind's inability to master the wilds of nature and to express the wondrous richness of God's creation.

"The wilderness and desert were seen as pure or untouched environments, spaces that could test the religious conviction of those who entered there," said Alexandra Kaczinski, former graduate intern at the Getty and co-curator of the exhibition.

Elements and Symbols of the Natural World

Nature flourishes with meaning and metaphor. Wind, rain, thunderstorms, and snowfall are used to evoke a range of moods and engage the spectator in the experience of the landscape. There are many meanings behind individual aspects of a landscape composition, and the tiniest insect or the most threatening mountain held deep significance for Christian devotees. Each actively participated in the narrative and contributed to the

prayers, songs, or meditations of devotees.

Sacred Landscapes: Nature in Renaissance Manuscripts is curated by Bryan C. Keene, assistant curator in the Manuscripts Department, and Alexandra Kaczenski, former graduate intern in the Manuscripts Department. The exhibition is on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center from October 10, 2017 through January 14, 2018. A richly illustrated catalogue, *Sacred Landscapes: Nature in Renaissance Manuscripts*, will be published by Getty Publications to complement the exhibition.

This exhibition is presented in conjunction with *Giovanni Bellini: Landscapes of Faith in Renaissance Venice* (October 10, 2017 –January 14, 2018) at the J. Paul Getty Museum.

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The J. Paul Getty Trust is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that includes the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Foundation. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs serve a varied audience from two locations: the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Getty Villa in Pacific Palisades.

The J. Paul Getty Museum collects Greek and Roman antiquities, European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculpture and decorative arts to 1900, as well as photographs from around the world to the present day. The Museum's mission is to display and interpret its collections, and present important loan exhibitions and publications for the enjoyment and education of visitors locally and internationally. This is supported by an active program of research, conservation, and public programs that seek to deepen our knowledge of and connection of works of art.

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