Medieval Bologna: Art for a University City
Upper-Level Galleries • November 5, 2021–January 30, 2022
Organized by the Frist Art Museum

This is the first museum exhibition in the United States to focus on medieval art made in the prosperous northern Italian city of Bologna. Home to the oldest university in Europe, Bologna fostered a unique artistic culture at the end of the Middle Ages. With its large population of sophisticated readers, the city became the preeminent center of manuscript production south of the Alps, and it helped bring about a revolution in the medieval book trade. Manuscripts circulated in a thriving market of scribes, illuminators, booksellers, and customers operating mostly outside traditional monastic scriptoria. The university initially specialized in law, and many law books were illuminated in Bologna with brightly colored scenes. University professors enjoyed high social status and were buried in impressive stone tombs carved with classroom scenes.

The approximately 65 objects in the exhibition span from 1250 to 1400, from the first great flowering of manuscript illumination in Bologna to the beginnings of the construction and decoration of the ambitious Basilica of San Petronio in the city’s Piazza Maggiore.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue with seven essays and, while the artworks are on view, the Frist Art Museum will host the Andrew Ladis Trecento Conference, a biannual event that brings together historians of medieval and Renaissance art from around the world.
Tennessee Academic Standards

Fine Arts Standards
By analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating artworks, students fulfill the Respond domain of the Tennessee Fine Art Standards. Synthesizing information and contextualizing the works applies to the Connect domain. The Create domain includes the generation, conceptualization, development, and refinement of artistic work.

Seventh Grade Social Studies
World History and Geography: The Middle Ages to the Exploration of the Americas
7.29 Explain how Charlemagne shaped and defined medieval Europe, including: his impact on feudalism, the creation of the Holy Roman Empire, and the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Empire.
7.30 Describe the development of feudalism and manorialism, their role in the medieval European economy, and the way in which they were influenced by physical geography (i.e., the role of the manor and the growth of towns).

High School Ancient History
AH.51 Analyze the causes, experiences, and consequences of the Crusades during the medieval period.
AH.53 Identify patterns of crisis and recovery related to the Black Death (i.e., Bubonic Plague).
AH.54 Describe social, political, and religious developments in the later medieval period (e.g., Magna Carta, decline of feudalism, and church-state conflicts).
AH.56 Explain the rise of Italian city-states and their political development, including Niccolo Machiavelli’s theory of governing as described in “The Prince.”
AH.57 Examine how economic growth in the Italian city-states enabled patronage for the arts.
AH.58 Describe how Renaissance art, literature, and philosophy (e.g., Petrarch) differed from those in the medieval period.

Frist resources
FristKids videos and activities; see especially “Books and Art” (FristArtMuseum.org/resource/books-and-art/)

Selected programs
Thursday, November 11, 6:00 p.m.
Curator’s Perspective: Art and Learning in Medieval Bologna with Trinita Kennedy, senior curator, Frist Art Museum
Presented on Zoom
Free; registration required

Thursday, December 2, or Saturday, December 4 (select one)
9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.
Educator Workshop
Studio and Upper-Level Galleries
$30 members; $35 not-yet-members (all materials, gallery admission, parking validation, continental breakfast, and lunch included)