

Chapter 29

EXHIBITING ITALIAN BOOKS OUTSIDE ITALY

TAMMARO DE MARINIS AND THE 1926 EXPOSITION DU LIVRE ITALIEN

GAIA GRIZZI

IN 1926 SEYMOUR de Ricci published three articles in the *Bulletin du bibliophile et du bibliothécaire* examining French, English, and American bibliophily during the first quarter of the twentieth century. He began by stating: “In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the history of bibliophily has been at least as much the history of booksellers as of book lovers.”¹ The same year, the Italian bookseller Tammaro De Marinis organized, with de Ricci’s help, the *Exposition du livre italien* in Paris (Figure 29.1). The exhibition featured 1,034 manuscripts, printed books, and bindings dating from the eleventh to the eighteenth century, and was divided between two separate venues: the Bibliothèque nationale and the Pavillon de Marsan (Union centrale des arts décoratifs).² This event, described in *The Times* as a “happy reminder to the obligation we owed to Italy as lovers of books,”³ or in more flamboyant terms as “the apotheosis of the Italian book,”⁴ demonstrates De Marinis’s attempt to become known as one of the booksellers who made book history. Comprising loans from around fifty French and Italian libraries

1 “Dans le premier quart du XX^e siècle, l’histoire de la bibliophilie a été au moins autant l’histoire des libraires que celle des amateurs”; Seymour de Ricci, “Les amateurs de livres anciens en France de 1900 à 1925,” *Bulletin du bibliophile et du bibliothécaire* 5 (1926): 54–65 at 54. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

2 The exact opening dates are May 21, 1926, for the Bibliothèque nationale and May 26 for the Pavillon de Marsan. The closing date was June 28, 1926.

3 “Early Italian Books,” *The Times*, June 30, 1926, 17.

4 Seymour de Ricci, Musée des arts décoratifs, and Bibliothèque nationale, *Exposition du livre italien: mai-juin 1926, catalogue des manuscrits, livres imprimés, reliures* (Paris: [s. n.], 1926), 6.

Gaia Grizzi studied Art History at Parma University and then at the École du Louvre in Paris where she achieved an MA in Museology and the Art Market. In 2008 she joined Les Enluminures, an art gallery specializing in medieval manuscripts. She is currently a PhD student at the École nationale des chartes in Paris. Her thesis is entitled: “Tammaro De Marinis et le Livre italien: entre marché et erudition.” She would like to thank Christine Bénévent and Gennaro Toscano, her advisers at the École nationale des chartes. She is immensely grateful to Jocelyn Monchamp, Conservateur chargé de collections de manuscrits modernes et contemporains at the BnF, who granted her access to archival documents. She wishes to express gratitude to Morgaine O’Connor for her linguistic revision of this paper.

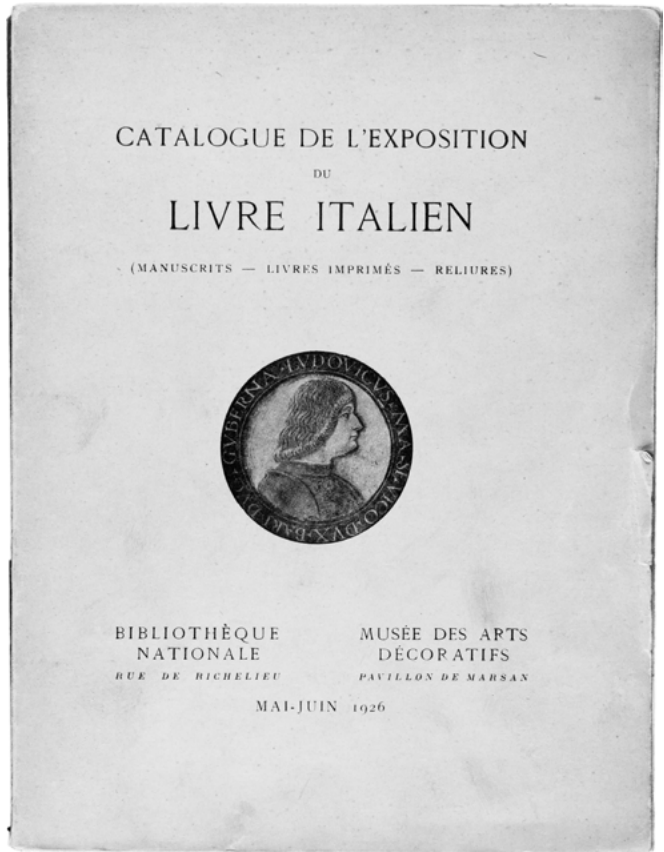


Figure 29.1. Cover of *Catalogue de l'exposition du livre italien*, 1926. Venice, Fondazione Cini, Fondo De Marinis. Per gentile concessione della Fondazione Giorgio Cini.

and several private collectors (both European and American), the *Exposition du livre italien* provides an excellent case study of how booksellers have contributed to the history of bibliophily.

It would only have been possible to concretize the idea of the *Exposition* within a favourable cultural and political context. In this regard, we should note an earlier exhibition: the *Mostra storica della legatura artistica* also curated by De Marinis and held in Florence, at the Palazzo Pitti in 1922. In 1926 the Italian government was asked to reciprocate the exhibition loans made by the French government in 1922.⁵ The 1922 exhibition was a collaboration between De Marinis, de Ricci, and Amédée Boinet. The latter, administrateur de la Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris, also curated the *Exposition du livre français au Musée des arts décoratifs* in 1923, a clear model for the 1926 exhibition.⁶ An international network of book specialists, with different backgrounds and institutional roles, who collaborated on various exhibition projects over that period, was thus established. To obtain loans, De Marinis made use of his contacts, including several high-level collectors, dealers, and librarians, but was particularly reliant on the support of the art critic and journalist Ugo Ojetti. Ojetti, a member of the 1926 exhibition's

⁵ Paris, Musée des arts décoratifs, (hereafter MAD), D1/154.

⁶ MAD, D1/154.

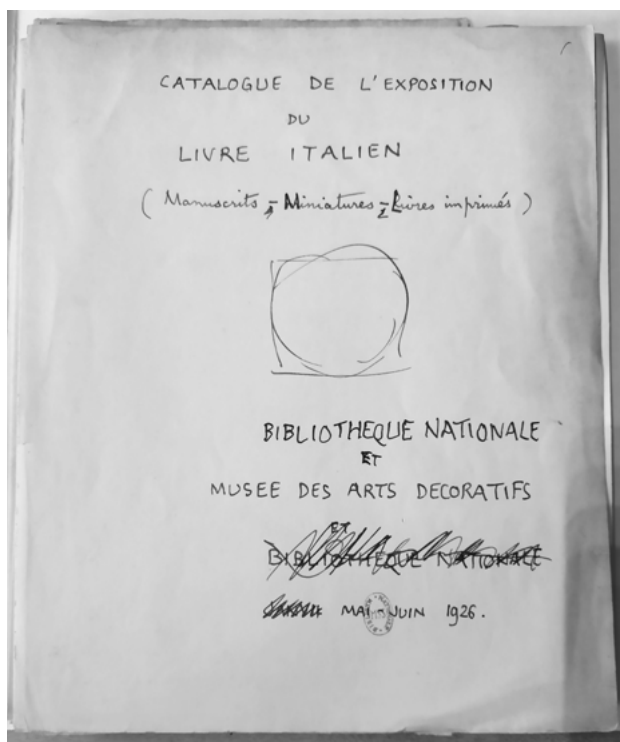


Figure 29.2. De Ricci's sketch of the cover for the exhibition catalogue. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fonds Seymour de Ricci. Courtesy of the BnF.

organizing committee, aimed to use exhibitions of Italian art abroad as a means of cultural propaganda.⁷ Benito Mussolini himself intervened on several occasions, both to facilitate loans to Italian libraries and rectify organizational issues.⁸ The collaborative efforts and behind-the-scenes work that brought about the 1926 *Exposition* aimed to promote a cultural discourse that fostered the rare and ancient book as an instrument to express *italianità* and bring international prestige to Fascist Italy. Exhibitions of books spread widely in

the 1920s, even within Italy and were often intended to celebrate recent acquisitions, for example in 1925 for the “return” of Borso d’Este’s Bible to Modena (an operation orchestrated, as is well-known, by De Marinis). Similarly, in 1929, exhibitions took place across Italy in conjunction with the first World Library and Information Congress, and in 1934 a major exhibition opened in Rome at Palazzo Carpegna.⁹ Indeed, the Fascist policy of rare book acquisition was very active, principally to stop the exodus of bibliographic treasures.¹⁰ This brief contextual analysis demonstrates that the 1926 *Exposition du livre italien* was, in fact, part of a broader phenomenon of book exhibitions.

⁷ Marta Nezzo, *Ugo Ojetti: Critica, azione, ideologia: Dalle biennali d’arte antica al Premio Cremona* (Padova: Il poligrafo, 2016).

⁸ Rome, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, D 2615, Scavi; musei, gallerie, oggetti d’arte, esportazioni, Divisione seconda (1925–1928), b. 99, fasc. 2195.

⁹ Enrico Castelnuovo and Alessio Monciatti, eds. *Medioevo, medioevi: Un secolo di esposizioni d’arte medievale* (Pisa: Ed. della Normale, 2008); Andrea de Pasquale, “Bibliothèques et musées: exemples italiens,” *La fabrique du patrimoine écrit: objets, acteurs, usages sociaux*, ed. Fabienne Henryot (Villeurbanne: l’ENSSIB, 2020), 271–84.

¹⁰ Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione. Direzione Generale delle Accademie e Biblioteche, *La mostra delle biblioteche italiane a Palazzo Carpegna [Roma 27 Maggio–15 Luglio 1934]* (Rome: Biblioteca d’Arte Editrice, 1934). See also Chapter 14 in this volume.

Although the project was probably the result of a long-standing desire of De Marinis, the exhibition itself was organized quickly. In a letter dated November 25, 1925, the Neapolitan bookseller expressed his gratitude to Roland Marcel, then administrator of the Bibliothèque nationale, for having agreed to host the event, while de Ricci mentioned that it only took a month to write and print the exhibition catalogue.¹¹ Despite de Ricci's and De Marinis's outstanding commitment and experience, the limited time dedicated to the organization of this exposition suggests that it should not be interpreted as a summary of brand-new research. Rather it should be considered as a moment of verification, a sort of visual audit of the knowledge acquired so far, or even an opportunity to formulate new hypotheses. A richly illustrated catalogue with six hundred facsimiles and reproductions was to be published after the exhibition by the publisher John Holroyd-Reece. Unfortunately, this project was never completed (Figure 29.2).¹²

From amongst the vast collection of Italian manuscripts at the Bibliothèque nationale, De Marinis picked sixty items, all displayed in a single room on the ground floor of rue de Richelieu along with other items. The sources for making a well-considered choice of manuscripts from the Bibliothèque nationale were vast. Particularly noteworthy were Léopold Delisle's *Cabinet des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque impériale* (1868), and for Italian manuscripts Antonio Marsand's *I manoscritti italiani della Regia Biblioteca parigina*, continued by Gaston Raynaud (1882).¹³ The manuscripts were primarily selected for their illustrations. The vast majority were from the fourteenth century (twenty items) and fifteenth century (thirty-seven pieces) and were part of the Aragonese and the Sforza collections. We can see here, in embryo, the core of the research from which De Marinis would develop *La Biblioteca napoletana dei Re d'Aragona* and which would inspire other scholars, including Élisabeth Pellegrin with her *La bibliothèque des Visconti et des Sforza*.¹⁴

The desire to identify and, moreover, reconstruct a dispersed heritage was perhaps the principal driving force that led to the paradox of planning, for the first time, an exhibition of Italian books with a nationalist slant, but hosted abroad. It is, however, impor-

11 On this, see the letter from de Tammaro De Marinis to Roland Marcel dated November 25, 1925, BnF, E24/16 and 2005/028/563 (I am grateful to Anne Leblay-Kinoshita for pointing out this reference); de Ricci, *Exposition du livre italien*, 12.

12 A part of this publication project is still at the BnF and an analysis of it is the subject of my doctoral thesis. BnF, NAF 28414. I am very grateful to François Avril for telling me about this archival fund's existence and to Jocelyn Monchamp for granting me access.

13 Léopold Delisle, *Le cabinet des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque impériale [puis nationale]: étude sur la formation de ce dépôt, comprenant les éléments d'une histoire de la calligraphie, de la miniature, de la reliure et du commerce des livres à Paris avant l'invention de l'imprimerie* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1868); Antonio Marsand, *I manoscritti italiani della Regia Biblioteca parigina*, 2 vols. (Paris: dalla Stamp. reale, 1835–1838); Gaston Raynaud, *Inventaire des manuscrits italiens de la Bibliothèque nationale qui ne figurent pas dans le catalogue de Marsand* (Paris: Picard Champion, 1882).

14 For these, see Tammaro De Marinis, *La biblioteca napoletana dei Re d'Aragona*, 4 vols. (Milan: Hoepli, 1947–1953); Élisabeth Pellegrin, *La bibliothèque des Visconti et des Sforza, ducs de Milan: Supplément* (Florence: Olschki, 1969), funded by De Marinis.

tant to cite at least one precursor of this type of research on Italian books dispersed in major collections abroad, especially in France: Giuseppe Mazzatinti. Best known for his monumental work *Inventari dei manoscritti delle biblioteche d'Italia* (thirteen volumes, 1891–1906), Mazzatinti surveyed and catalogued Italian manuscripts in French libraries on behalf of the Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione on ministerial commission and published *La biblioteca dei Re d'Aragona in Napoli* (1897).¹⁵ It may seem surprising at first glance that De Marinis, a bookseller, carried out this reconstitution of dispersed books, whereas antiquarian book-dealers were often accused in the 1920s of being responsible for the ongoing exodus.¹⁶ This is, however, a lot less surprising if we consider that provenance was an important criterion, particularly in the art market at the beginning of the twentieth century.

We do not have any pictures of the exhibition layout, either for the Bibliothèque nationale or for the Musée des arts décoratifs, but we can deduce some aspects of the display from newspapers of the time and archival sources.¹⁷ Apparently, at the Bibliothèque nationale a “mixed” setting associating the manuscripts with ivories, bronzes, medals, carvings, or cameos from the Cabinet des Médailles was chosen, while the walls were covered by tapestries and drawings lent by the Louvre.

The second part of the show, held at the Musée des arts décoratifs, was a customized selection of rare books from various sources, but predominantly from public libraries in Italy and France. The material was divided into five rooms. The main room, *la grande nef*, contained most of the manuscripts, along with tapestries on the walls.¹⁸ A large double-sloping display case had been specially brought in from the Museo di San Marco in Florence and towered in the centre of the “nave,” displaying the show’s highlights.¹⁹ The four smaller rooms of the Musée des arts décoratifs, which overlooked the Tuileries Gardens, contained a few printed books, bindings, and only six manuscripts, along with a significant number of single leaves and cuttings.²⁰ In total, the exhibition catalogue listed 170 pieces in the manuscript section, consisting of one hundred manu-

15 Giuseppe Mazzatinti, *Inventario dei manoscritti italiani delle biblioteche di Francia*, 3 vols. (Rome: [s. n.], 1886–1888); Giuseppe Mazzatinti, *La biblioteca dei re d'Aragona in Napoli* (Rocca S. Casciano: Licinio Cappelli Editore, 1897).

16 Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *La mostra*, 208.

17 BnF, E24/16; MAD, D1/154; Venice, Fondazione Cini, annotated copy of the exhibition catalogue by Tammaro De Marinis; Antonio Boselli, “La mostra del libro italiano a Parigi,” *Emporio* 63.378 (June 1926): 348–60. See also Gaia Grizzi, “La terra del libro,” in *Multa Renascentur: Tammaro De Marinis studioso, bibliofilo, antiquario, collezionista*, ed. Ilenia Maschietto (Venice: Marsilio, 2023), 76–87.

18 de Ricci, *Exposition du livre italien*, cat. 1025–34.

19 Florence, Galleria delle statue, Verbale di Consegna degli oggetti d'arte per la mostra del libro italiano, April 28, 1926.

20 Boselli, “La Mostra,” 352. Two manuscripts, the Sforza-Savoia Legendary and the Sforza Codex (cat. 193–94, now Turin, Biblioteca Reale, MSS Varia 124 and 75), were placed on ancient lecterns. Surrounded by a group of bindings, two enormous Choirbooks, one by Lorenzo Monaco (cat. 270, BMLF, Corali 3) and the other by Attavante (cat. 274, BMLF, Corali 4), dominated the centre of the room.

scripts and seventy cuttings,²¹ all dating from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries. Once again, the best represented centuries were the fourteenth century, with forty-five works listed in the catalogue, and the fifteenth century with 114 works. A first glimpse of this chronological split, along with the layout, emphasizes two theories that regularly arise in early scholarship on Italian manuscripts. The first stressed the difficulty of defining an “Italian art” before the twelfth century (only five manuscripts were catalogued before that date), the second the idea of progress in the arts, suggesting that Italian miniature painting reached its apogee in the fifteenth century.²²

Although most loans came from French or Italian libraries, providing the exhibition with a strong institutional character, several came from private owners. These included from Sir George Lindsay Holford, Antonio Cornazzano’s *Del modo di regere e di regnare*, made for Eleanor of Aragon;²³ the *Baths of Pozzuoli*, lent by Leo Olschki;²⁴ and the *Cronaca Crespi* signed by Leonardo da Besozzo.²⁵ Additionally, the Morgan Library sent four major loans:²⁶ the Gospel Book of Matilda of Tuscany,²⁷ the Missal of Domenico della Rovere,²⁸ the *Fior di Battaglia*,²⁹ and Didymus’s *De Spiritu Sancto* from the library of Mathias Corvinus.³⁰ Private loans of single leaves or cuttings were more abundant: thirty-three from Georges Wildenstein, twenty-one from Ulrico Hoepli, four from Arthur Sambon, three from De Marinis, and one from Olschki. Fifteen items came from Parisian libraries and museums, including l’Arsenal, Sainte-Geneviève, Mazarine, and the Louvre. A few others were requested from other French cities: two from Avignon, one from Lyon, and one from Le Havre. The latter two were the Missal of Thomas James, bishop of Dol, signed by Attavante from Lyon exhibited with its sister leaf from Le Havre.³¹

21 Regarding De Marinis and cuttings see Federica Toniolo, “Tammaro De Marinis e la miniatura,” in *Multa Renascentur: Tammaro De Marinis*, 51–65.

22 This statement has ancient origins and can be associated with Vasari. It was then used constantly in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, notably by Seroux d’Agincourt. It remains topical and was still stated, for example by John A. Herbert in 1911.

23 PML, M.731 (cat. 243). The 1926 exhibition catalogue mistakenly transcribed the inscription as “Leonora Maria Gonzaga,” while it was correctly transcribed in [Sydney Cockerell], *Burlington Fine Arts Club: Exhibition of Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1908), cat. 267, p. 129.

24 Cologny, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cod. Bodmer 135 (cat. 187), formerly owned by De Marinis, exhibited with its twin manuscript from Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, MS 1474, (cat. 188).

25 de Ricci, *Exposition du livre italien*, cat. 148.

26 BnF, NAF 28414. According to the organizers, these were the first overseas loans from the Morgan Library.

27 PML, M.492 (cat. 135).

28 PML, M.306 (cat. 222).

29 PML, M.383 (cat. 228), formerly Libreria Antiquaria T. De Marinis, *Manuscripts et livres rares*, cat. 8 (Florence: De Marinis, 1908), no. 31, plate IX.

30 PML, M.496 (cat. 281), formerly Libreria Antiquaria T. De Marinis, *Manuscripts, incunables et livres rares*, cat. 12 (Florence: De Marinis, 1913), no. 15, plate VIII.

31 Lyon, BM, MS 5123 (cat. 273); Le Havre, Musée d’art moderne André-Malraux, inv.36.1 (cat. 272).

Coming from several different cities, the loans from Italy were more numerous and varied. Twenty-nine items arrived from Florence: eighteen from the Biblioteca Laurenziana, nine from the Nazionale, two from the Riccardiana, and one from the Bargello. Fourteen manuscripts were lent by the Estense library in Modena, and eleven arrived from Bologna, from the state archive, the city library, and the university library. Six came from Rome and five from Naples. Only a few loans were received from Venice, Turin, Parma, Pavia, Milan, and Brescia.

At the same time, the major Italian lenders were striving to contribute to a broader knowledge of their collections through illustrated publications and, in some cases, in-house exhibitions. This is made clear in the preface to the catalogue of reproductions of illuminated manuscripts from the Laurenziana written by its director Guido Biagi and published in 1914 by the Librairie Ancienne T. De Marinis:

These reproductions...may well, I deem, furnish useful material for the yet unwritten history of miniature painting in relation to illuminated manuscripts. Up to the present this history has been neglected both by bibliographers and art critics, as the ornamentation of books comes neither within the scope of palaeography nor within that of the history of painting...For this volume, the first of a series which it is hoped may comprehend miniatures and valuable manuscripts in various Italian collections, I have selected only a few of the most characteristic that are to be seen in the glazed cases, at present all too scarce, in the Laurenziana, whose treasures it is my ambition to expose in an ordered Exhibition that shall form the Museo del Libro...In compiling this Album we have followed the example set by the British Museum in its *Reproductions from illuminated manuscripts* edited by George F. Warner.³²

This statement reaffirmed the need to create a national history of Italian miniatures and the desire to use two complementary tools for this purpose: illustrated albums and exhibitions. A similar need was expressed by Paolo d'Ancona in 1906, while presenting his proposal for a corpus of Italian miniatures.³³ D'Ancona complained about the lack of photographs or facsimiles, necessary tools to establish school affinities or the style of an artist with the appropriate comparisons, a methodology used in the French albums of the Comte de Bastard d'Estang.

Of the various political and personal objectives that brought about the realization of the *Exposition du livre italien*, one that is of particular interest is De Marinis's desire to provide new material for scholarship on Italian manuscripts. This exhibition offered a unique opportunity to see many masterpieces side by side, compare them, organize

The reunion of these two pieces was not a scholarly novelty. On this, see Emile Bertaux, "Le Missel de Thomas James," *La Revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 20 (1906): 129–47.

32 Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana and Guido Biagi, *Reproductions from Illuminated Manuscripts: Fifty Plates from MSS. in the R. Medicean Laurentian Library* (Florence: De Marinis, 1914), 5–6.

33 Paolo d'Ancona, "Proposta di un corpus della miniatura italiana," in *Atti del congresso internazionale di scienze storiche (Roma, 1–9 Aprile 1903)*, 12 vols. (Rome: Loescher, 1904–1907), 5:47.

knowledge, verify recent hypotheses, and even to promote new approaches. In the main nave of the Pavillon de Marsan, the manuscripts were divided by region, school and, where possible, by artist. Many signed or dated works, both manuscripts and single leaves, could be compared to each other. We can imagine the organizers struggling to find the right place, in the right showcase for each school, in the right chronological succession for every single manuscript. In the Bibliothèque nationale, the fifteenth century was the most represented, especially by works of the Florentine school. However, the lack of homogeneity in the material exhibited should not necessarily be attributed to the taste of the organizers. Instead it may have been due to the fact that a comprehensive history of the Italian miniature had not yet been written.³⁴

The first attempt to write a history of Italian miniatures was made by Gaetano Milanesi in 1850 in his *Nuove indagini*, based mostly on material from Siena and Florence.³⁵ From 1866 to 1870, at the request of the Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Milanesi, accompanied by the artist Carlo Pini, undertook a journey across Italy in search of illuminated manuscripts. Of this venture, only the preface was published in 1871.³⁶ It can be read as an assessment of the situation. Milanesi affirms:

I started writing a historical essay...about miniatures in Italy...A beautiful subject, as everyone sees, pleasant and perhaps new among us: as up to now there has been no one, as far as I know, who has dealt separately and systematically with this art...much greater is the number of writers of France, Germany, and England, who have published very splendid works with a set of coloured plates, facsimiles, and more. But since they were focused on their local art, they are of little use to the historian of the Italian miniature.³⁷

34 BnF, NAF 28414. One of the organizers' major sources was undoubtedly Francesco Carta, Carlo Cipolla, and Carlo Frati, eds., *Monumenta palaeographica sacra. Atlante paleografico artistico compilato sui manoscritti esposti in Torino alla mostra d'arte sacra nel 1898* (Turin: Bocca, 1899).

35 Carlo Milanesi, Gaetano Milanesi, and Carlo Pini, *Nuove indagini con documenti inediti per servire alla storia della miniatura italiana* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1850). See also Piergiacomo Petrioli, *Gaetano Milanesi: Erudizione e storia dell'arte in Italia nell'Ottocento. Profilo e carteggio artistico* (Siena: Accademia degli Intronati, 2004); Piergiacomo Petrioli, "Il carteggio di Gaetano Milanesi," November 8, 2022 www.artivisive.sns.it/progetto_milanesi.html, accessed May 16, 2023; Ada Labriola, "Miniature rinascimentali riprodotte nel XIX secolo," *Rivista di Storia della Miniatura* 20 (2016): 155–69.

36 Gaetano Milanesi, "Della Miniatura in Italia," *Nuova antologia di scienze, lettere ed arti*, 16.2 (1871): 467–73.

37 Milanesi, "Miniatura," 467–69: "Io ho preso a scrivere un Saggio Istorico...intorno alla miniatura in Italia...Argomento bellissimo, come ognuno vede, piacevole e forse nuovo tra noi; non essendo stato fino ad ora nessuno, ch'io sappia, il quale separatamente e con ordine abbia trattato di quest'arte...Della Miniatura...assai maggiore è il numero degli scrittori di Francia, Germania, ed Inghilterra, i quali hanno pubblicato opere splendidissime col corredo di tavole colorate, facsimili, ed altro. Ma trattando essi per lo più di quest'arte presso di loro, ben poco se ne può giovare la storia della miniatura italiana."

The beginning of the twentieth century saw an abundance of studies, articles, and major publications on Italian miniatures. Also noteworthy is the remarkable publication by Pietro Toesca about the Lombard school.³⁸ Despite this, in his 1912 review of *Illuminated Manuscripts* by John Alexander Herbert, Lionello Venturi wrote:

One can indeed feel how the author has only worked on what he personally knows in the British Museum without studying directly the enormous amount of artistic material still existing in Italy. Having read the three chapters dedicated to Italian miniatures, one is convinced that we need to make a greater contribution to these studies, which are very popular abroad, because many beautiful works of art the churches and libraries are dispersed outside Italy.³⁹

Between 1901 and 1926, Adolfo Venturi published his *Storia dell'arte italiana* devoting several chapters to the history of Italian miniatures.⁴⁰ Just before the exhibition, in 1925, *La miniature italienne* by d'Ancona appeared, which described his work as the "first attempt of this kind which would at least bring together in a synthetic table the notes scattered all over the places, extracted from articles, newspapers, almost always lacking stylistic considerations about works of art."⁴¹

In his article entitled "Gl'insegnamenti dell'esposizione parigina del libro italiano,"⁴² published one year after the exhibition, de Ricci explained that De Marinis had visited all the major Italian and French libraries again before making his final decisions about which works deserved a place in the 1926 exhibition. He thus gave us the account of a connoisseur who, since photographs were rarely available at that time, relied upon direct experience of each work of art. The figure of Bernard Berenson also immediately comes to mind. In a letter to Belle da Costa Greene, dated October 25, 1926, De Marinis recounted his meeting with the famous art historian during four concerts conducted by Toscanini at La Scala in Milan.⁴³ Beyond the personal encounter between these two men,

38 Pietro Toesca, *La pittura e la miniatura nella Lombardia, dai più antichi monumenti alla metà del Quattrocento* (Milan: Hoepli, 1912); see also Pietro Toesca, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, 2 vols. (Turin: [s. n.], 1913–1927).

39 Lionello Venturi, "John A. Herbert, *Illuminated Manuscripts*," *L'Arte* 15 (1912): 231–32: "e si sente invero come l'A. si sia ristretto a quanto egli personalmente conosce nel British Museum senza aver fatto uno studio diretto sull'enorme quantità di materiale artistico ancora esistente in Italia. Realmente alla lettura dei tre capitoletti dedicati alla miniatura italiana viene la persuasione della necessità che vi è di dare da parte nostra maggior contributo a questi studi, che all'estero incontrano molto favore, per la conoscenza di tante belle opere artistiche sparse per le chiese e le biblioteche d'Italia."

40 Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, 14 vols. (Milan: Hoepli, 1901–1926).

41 Paolo d'Ancona, *La miniature italienne du Xe au XVIe siècle*, trans. P. Poirier (Paris: Van Oest, 1925), preface.

42 Seymour de Ricci, "Gl'insegnamenti dell'esposizione parigina del libro italiano," *Dedalo* 7 (1927): 138–78. See also Tammamo De Marinis, "Le livre italien à la Bibliothèque nationale et au Musée des arts décoratifs," *La revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 50 (1926): 65–72, 167–74.

43 Letter from Bernard Berenson to Belle da Costa Greene dated October 5, 1926, PML, ARC 3291, De Marinis T. I am grateful to Philip Palmer for sharing this document.

Figure 29.3. Illustration from: Seymour de Ricci, "Gl'insegnamenti dell'esposizione parigina del libro italiano," *Dedalo* 7 (1927), 151, showing a detail of Kane MS 44 now at Princeton, University Library.



Berenson's theories, his fascination for the Italian Renaissance, his connections within the art market, and above all, the emphasis he placed on a visual approach to the works of art had a significant impact on the *Exposition*.

The exhibition should therefore be understood as a testing ground, an instant to challenge the knowledge of the time. A concrete example helps us here. In 1912, Toesca recognized the same hand in a group of manuscripts and decided to name the artist the Master of the *Vitae imperatorum* after an Italian translation of Suetonius's *Vitae imperatorum* (Bibliothèque nationale de France, It. 131), dated 1431 and commissioned by Filippo Maria Visconti.⁴⁴ This manuscript was exhibited in 1926 at the Bibliothèque nationale (catalogue no. 58), along with Dante's *Inferno* (BnF, It. 2017, catalogue no. 14), which Toesca had attributed to the same artist. For the Pavillon de Marsan venue, the catalogue listed under no. 199 a "*Missale Romanum* of the beginning of the fifteenth century, Lombard school, from the Marchese Girolamo d'Adda."⁴⁵ This manuscript, lent

⁴⁴ Toesca, *Pittura*, 529–32.

⁴⁵ "MISSALE ROMANUM. Début du xv^e s. — École lombarde. De la bibl. du marquis d'Adda," de Ricci, *Exposition du livre italien*, 50.



Figure 29.4 Tammaro De Marinis with Albi Rosenthal, 1968. Venice, Fondazione Cini, Fondo De Marinis. Per gentile concessione della Fondazione Giorgio Cini.

by Maggs, is now at the Morgan Library and currently attributed to Master of the Vitae imperatorum.⁴⁶ The following entry in the catalogue, no. 200, was a miniature lent by Hoepli now in Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini.⁴⁷ De Ricci assigned it to the Lombard school and he transcribed the inscription on the miniature as *Quidam frater mediolanensis ordinis m. opus explevit in M.CCCC.XXXVIII*.⁴⁸ This renowned miniature is currently attributed to the so-called Olivetan Master (Fra Girolamo da Milano), an artist whose style is very similar to that of Master of the Vitae imperatorum.⁴⁹ The next item in the catalogue, no. 201, Suetonius, *De vita Caesarum*, lent by Grenville Kane, is now in Princeton University Library (Figure 29.3) and also currently attrib-

uted to the Master of the Vitae imperatorum.⁵⁰ De Ricci indicated that this manuscript was copied in 1433 by Milanus Burrus for Guiniforte de la Croce, once again referring to the Lombard school to define the miniatures.⁵¹ Of all the pieces assigned to the Lombard school, these three items were evidently grouped together because of their stylistic similarities. The dated and “signed” works offered a basis from which to identify the others. However, de Ricci did not disclose attributions to any specific (or anonymous) artist in the exhibition catalogue. By bringing together and displaying to a large audience the works of an artist or “school” that had previously been hidden away and scattered

⁴⁶ PML, M.937.

⁴⁷ Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, inv. 22099.

⁴⁸ Anna Melograni provides the following transcription: *Quidam frater mediolanensis ordinis montis oliveti hoc opus explevit in m cccc xxxviii*, meaning “a certain brother from Milan of the Olivetan order completed this work in 1439.” See Anna Melograni, “Maestro olivetano,” in *Le miniature della Fondazione Giorgio Cini: Pagine, ritagli, manoscritti*, ed. Medica Massimo and Federica Toniolo (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana editoriale, 2016), 399–400, cat. 153.

⁴⁹ Alison Stones, “An Italian Miniature in the Gambier Parry Collection,” *Burlington Magazine* 111 (1969): 7–12.

⁵⁰ Princeton, University Library, Kane MS 44. On this see Don Skemer, *Medieval & Renaissance Manuscripts in the Princeton University Library*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 2:99–103.

⁵¹ See also Robert Hoe and Carolyn Shipman, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts Forming a Portion of the Library of Robert Hoe* (New York: Priv. print., 1909), 168–71; *Catalogue of the Library of Robert Hoe of New York...to be sold by auction by the Anderson Auction Company, May 1, 1911* (New York: Anderson Auction Company, 1911), lot 2511, p. 401.

between several different libraries, this exhibition not only drew together all the knowledge of the time on Italian miniatures, but initiated new discussions and hypotheses. This ultimately means that the *Exposition du livre italien* was a crucial visual source, providing a strong foundation for further research to fill the much-lamented gap in the history of the Italian miniature.

De Marinis's ambition to cultivate a deeper understanding and appreciation of Italian books beyond Italy's borders acted as a catalyzing force, converging the endeavours of booksellers, scholars, institutions, and political powers alike. Nevertheless, while the exhibition illuminated Italy's bibliophilic treasures, it also accentuated persistent gaps and challenges within the domain of Italian miniature scholarship. Paradoxically, it might be this very inability to provide definitive conclusions that transformed this event into a cornerstone for future exploration and discovery.