

HIERONYMUS TOCHTERMANN, Calligraphic Alphabet

Illuminated parchment sheet

Germany, Augsburg, 1734

One sheet, thirty-three letters copied in Fraktur in many colors of ink with gold highlights, slightly soiled, central fold and marginal creases, but in good condition, framed. Dimensions 330 x 250 mm.; framed dimensions 370 x 295 mm.

This wonderful alphabet sheet shows off the skill of the master calligrapher and schoolmaster, Hieronymus Tochtermann, who copied it in Augsburg in 1734. The letters, many highlighted in gold, are decorated with flowers, stars, leaves and other motifs; some are delicately colored. At least seven manuscript copy books by Tochtermann, dating from 1729 to 1754, survive in Germany and New York (two in the Butler Library of Columbia University), as well as single sheets. This one is accompanied by an amusing jingle that the scribe used elsewhere as well.

PROVENANCE

1. Copied in Germany by Hieronymus Tochtermann, a schoolmaster and scribe who lived in Augsburg; the date, 1734, is copied in a tiny script in the final punctuation mark, and he signed his name in a humorous verse copied in a microscopic script within the 'm':
"Ein jeder heist mich Tochterman[n], ein jeder thut auch recht daran. Jedoch wenn ich darbey begehrt, das Heyrathgut find sich fein schwehr, und gibt man mir nur den Bericht, man könne ja die Tochter nicht" (which translates as: Each and everyone calls me son-in-law/ each and everyone does so rightly/ but whenever I ask for it/ the dowry proves most hard to find/ and if you only give me the news of it/ you can't [give me] the daughter."

Tochtermann used the same jingle in another manuscript, Frankfurt am Main, Das Museum für angewandte Kunst, Inventar MS LMZ 52 (Roethlisberger, 2003, p. 9 and abb. 9).

TEXT AND ILLUSTRATION

[One sheet, copied on one side only] Decorative alphabet with thirty-three lower case letters (including some double letters and the 'sz' ligature 'ß').

This fanciful alphabet is copied in the classic German script *Fraktur*, based on the script of the Imperial chancery in the late fifteenth-century, and used in manuscript and in print until 1941. Each letter is executed in different colors and patterns, including stars, flowers, and abstract designs.

The calligrapher and schoolmaster, Hieronymus Tochtermann (1683-1755) lived and worked in Augsburg. He produced at least seven calligraphic model books, as well as single sheets, most of which are in German Institutional collections, especially in Augsburg, and two in New York, Columbia University, Butler Library (Online Resources). To attract more business, he regularly advertised in the *Augsburger Intelligenzblätter* (Doede, 1958, no.137; Roethlisberger, 2003, discussing surviving manuscripts).

Even in the early modern period, long after the invention of printing in the mid-fifteenth century, the ability to copy-books and documents in a formal script continued to be a valued skill, cultivated and taught by professional writing masters, both in person, and by means of copybooks and writing manuals that circulated as manuscripts and in printed copies. The two earliest printed examples are Italian, *La Operina* (1522) by Ludovico degli Arrighi, who was employed in the Papal chancery, and Giovanni Antonio Tagliente, *Lo presente libro ...* (1524). Tagliente taught handwriting in the Venetian chancery. *Ein gute Ordnung vnd kurtze Vunternicht, ...* by Johann Neudörffer the Elder (1497-1563), published in Nuremberg in 1538 stands at the beginning of a long tradition of German copy-books.

It was followed by that of Wolfgang Fugger, a printer in Nuremberg, who published an important handwriting manual in 1553; the son of Johann, Antonius Neudörffer in 1598; then Houthusius (Aachen, 1591), Roelands (Vlissingen, 1616), Grahl (Dresden, 1670), along with many Dutch writing masters including Van den Velde and Strick, etc. Manuscript writing books are less well-known and, understandably, much rarer than the printed editions. Some printed copy books had manuscript samples bound into them, including those of Neudörffer (for a brief discussion of these, see Becker, no. 49).

LITERATURE

Becker, David. *The Practice of Letters. The Hofer Collection of Writing Manuals 1514-1800* (exhibition catalogue), Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997.

Bonacini, C. *Bibliografia delle arti scritte e della calligrafia*, Bibliotheca bibliografica italiana, 5, Florence, 1953.

Doede, Werner. *Bibliographie deutscher Schreibmeisterbücher von Neudörffer bis 1800*, Hamburg, 1958, no. 137.

Doede, Werner. *Schön schreiben, eine Kunst: Johann Neudörffer und die Kalligraphie des Barock*, Munich, 1988.

Marzoli, Carla C. *Calligraphy, 1535-1885; A Collection of Seventy-two Writing-books and Specimens from the Italian, French, Low Countries and Spanish schools, Catalogued and Described*, Milan, 1962.

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Sprenger, Kai-Michael. *Zug um Zug: die Schreibmeister und ihre Kunst vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert*, Mainz, Gutenberg-Museum, Frankfurt am Main, 1998.

Whalley, Joyce Irene, and Vera C. Kaden. *The Universal Penman ... Catalogue of an exhibition, held at the Victoria and Albert Museum*, London, 1980.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Hieronymus Tochtermann, *Schreibmeisterbuch*, Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, 4 Cod Aug 272, Augsburg 1731-1733:

<http://bildsuche.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?c=viewer&bandnummer=bsb00087189&pimage=00051&v=2p&nav=&l=en>

and

http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/ausgaben/thumbnailseite.html?id=00087189&seite=00005&image=bsb00087189_00005.jpg&fip=193.174.98.30

Hieronymus Tochtermann, *Vorschrift, Teutsch, lateinisch und französischer Schrifften*, Augsburg, 1729, Augsburg, UB, Sign. 220/Cod.20

<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:384-uba002011-9>

Hieronymus Tochtermann, [Specimens of illumination and Calligraphy], 1754, p. 12, George Arthur Plimpton Manuscripts 093 1754

<http://library.columbia.edu/locations/rbml/rotating/01.html>

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