



ook of kells

About the *Book of Kells....*

"...with almost as many drawings as pages, and all of them in marvelous colours...If you look at them carelessly and casually, you may judge them to be mere daubs rather than careful compositions. But if you take the trouble to look very closely, and penetrate with your eyes to the secrets of artistry, you will notice such intricacies, so delicate and subtle, so involved and bound together, and so fresh still in their colourings that all these things must have been the work, not of men, but of angels."

Giraldus Cambrensis
(Gerald of Wales, 1185)

"The most beautiful book ever written."

◆ **Book of kells** ◆

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The *Book of Kells*

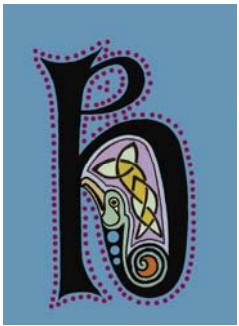
Now over 1200 years old, the *Book of Kells* is an illuminated manuscript, written by a community of monks, with text adorned by decorated initials and borders. It is one of the first surviving books created in the form of a codex, the format of book we know today. The text is written in Latin and is based on the Vulgate (the translation of the Bible completed by St. Jerome in AD 384). The illuminated decorations stem from a rich tradition of Celtic art from stone sculpture, jewelry, and ironwork of great magnificence.

Created During Brutal Times

During one of the most remarkable artistic periods in Western civilization, and during one of the most brutal times in history, the *Book of Kells* was crafted by the hands of 4 calligraphers and several artists. The Book was designed as a work of art, to be used as an altar piece, rather than a functional book. It was never completed. The text, written on vellum made from the skins of 185 calves, couldn't be read by kings and commoners, who were illiterate.

Decorated with Exquisite Illustrations and Lettering

The *Book of Kells* is an illustrated, artistic work of timeless charm and elegance. 33 fully illustrated pages, the most famous of which is the "Chi Rho" page, depict some of the most elaborate specimens of calligraphy ever executed. The Book features more than 2,000 illuminated letters decorated with inks made from precious lapis lazuli from Mesopotamia (blue), red lead, orpiment (yellow), verdigris (green), and ultramarine (blue) to name a few.



The Book is also renowned for its intricate interlacings and knotwork, so fine they cannot be seen with the human eye. Detailed borders with no fewer than 158 interlacings can be found in one space of a about a quarter inch square. Humorous Celtic animal designs are depicted, like a mouse running off with the communion wafer. The Book is characteristic of iconographic style.

"Every detail repays the closest of studies, every feature is capable of more than one reading."

Ruth & Vincent Megaw
Celtic Art from Its Beginnings to the Book of Kells



Shrouded in Mystery and Revered by a People

The *Book of Kells* was stolen in 1007, only to be found buried in the earth a few months later, undamaged except for the loss of the jeweled cover. It has survived for over 1200 years and has been on display at Trinity College, Dublin, since the 1800s. There, pages are turned weekly (as they will be at Centerville Library), and it is viewed each year by half a million people. The original is a national treasure and will never leave that location again.

Reproduced in Facsimile Version

This timeless work of art and incredible artifact was reproduced in a publishing feat that took more than 10 years to complete. Using 10 magnificent colors (versus the typical 4 used in printing) and a machine designed to hold The Book in air so as to not damage it during reproduction, only 1480 copies of The Book were produced. The facsimile is virtually indistinguishable from the original. The difference is that it is printed on paper rather than quires and folios of vellum. The facsimile edition is sought after by scholars and is an object of incomparable and timeless beauty.

Given as a Gift To Our Library

The *Book of Kells* was donated by the Fallang family so that it could be accessible to many. The Book, which will be available for continuous study and observation, provides inspiration for new ways to understand and value books, art and learning.

"Throughout the centuries, the pages of this great book have aroused wonder and admiration at the ingenuity and creativity of the human spirit."

Margaret Manion, Emeritus Professor, University of Melbourne

Join the quest

Are you ready to seek adventure? Take the challenge and join the quest. Learn about the times that created this extraordinary artifact. Explore the most beautiful book in the world. Reveal for yourself a great treasure. The *Book of Kells* --illuminating the past, an inspiration for the future.

The *Book of Kells* at Washington-Centerville Public Library...

Our Library is honored to display this rare donated facsimile edition of the *Book of Kells*, the world-famous 9th century illustrated manuscript acclaimed as the most beautiful book ever written. The Library, which advances no religion or belief system, presents this destination book which has transcended its religious origins to become an object worthy of study— as a window into the past and a source of artistic inspiration for the future.

Project funded in part by the Washington-Centerville Public Library Foundation and others. For more information about the Book of Kells and the Library Foundation, visit www.wcpl.lib.oh.us.

Learn More about the *Book of Kells*

A quick, visual introduction for all ages:

The Book of Kells 745.67 Book

A little about the book; and the times for all ages:

Exploring the Book of Kells 745.67 Simm

A comprehensive, approachable yet in-depth treatment in a single volume:

The Book of Kells; an Illustrated Introduction to the Manuscript in Trinity College Dublin 745.67 Meeh

"The *Book of Kells* is a physical metaphor of exploration, of expanding ideas, of delving deeply into all areas of human pursuit—it's a stimulus and invitation, to the community."

Roger Crum, PhD, University of Dayton

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