

By Appointment Only
43 Sabine Avenue
Narberth, PA 19072-1741



Bruce McKittrick
Rare Books, Inc.

Tel. (610) 660-0132
Fax (610) 660-0133
mckrare@voicenet.com

FIFTEENTH CENTURY PRINTED WRAPPERS

Monte dell' Orazione. [Venice, Bernardinus Benalius before June 1493]. 4to (195 x 137 mm.). [36] leaves. Gothic type, 32-33 lines per page, full-page woodblock of an angel before a church greeting St. Francis, twenty-one large white-line and smaller Lombardic woodcut initials.

Superb decorative printed book covers with unshaded Venetian woodblocks on the first recto and final verso. On the first recto the full-page cut shows John the Baptist and St. Peter in a desert landscape supporting four circles formed of intertwined foliage. The large central circle bears the Christogram and the three smaller (with *letterpress* legends) represent the Holy Trinity. On the final verso St. John the Evangelist with his eagle and St. Francis stand before a church, again supporting four foliage circles, the largest with maria and the others with her virtues (these legends xylographic).

Bound in gilt ruled crushed green morocco (Wallis & Lloyd), spine and title gilt, all edges gilt. \$35000.00

FIRST EDITION OF THIS ILLUSTRATED VERNACULAR PRIVATE DEVOTIONAL SPECIFICALLY FOR WOMEN AND THE FIRST USE OF THE THREE FULL-PAGE WOODBLOCKS.

The *Monte's* "handsome woodcuts [are] placed on the first and last page...so as to form an ornamental cover" (*BMC*). "Examples of early paper bindings with woodcuts are rare indeed, and they are of considerable interest...[for] binding...and for the history of wood engraving" (E.P. Goldschmidt). Paul Needham notes that pictorial printed woodcut wrappers "were meant to function...as eye-catching advertisements for the books they covered, precisely as book jackets do today".

IN THE PRESENT CASE, THE COVERS ARE INTEGRAL TO THE TEXT BLOCK, FORGING A CLOSE IDENTITY BETWEEN THE BOOK'S EXTERIOR ICONOGRAPHY AND ITS CONTENT. A good copy (washed and pressed). We have traced one complete example at auction in the last half century (1977, to Breslauer). ISTC im00847000; Goff M-847 (2 exx.); *BMC* V: xxxi-xxxii and 378; Essling 728 and see 306 n. 1 "Les deux grands bois...forment une couverture illustrée"; Sander 4879; Jackson, "Printed Wrappers of the 15th to the 18th Centuries" in *Harvard Lib. Bull.* 6 (1952) pp. 313-21 p. 314, 318 and 321 "integrated wrapper"; see Needham's *Twelve Centuries of Bookbinding* 117-9 and Goldschmidt's *Gothic & Renaissance Bookbindings* 36.