

# May 22: Rare Books and Manuscripts, Very Old (and Some Newer) Material at Il Ponte Casa d'asti

- by Thomas C. McKinney



## Highlights from Il Ponte's May 22nd sale of Books and Manuscripts

This article is one of three previews of international sales I've covered this month. [Il Ponte Casa d'Aste](#), the Milan-based auction house that was founded in 1974, will be holding a sale of [Books and Manuscripts](#) later this month on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. With 214 lots, the sale is made up primarily of Italian material with other locales interspersed throughout. Viewings of the sale will begin in Milan 10 days before the sale on May 12<sup>th</sup>, and continue the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> (times listed at the end of this article).

Several items are quite old, dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and earlier. The high estimate for a single item in the sale is lot 2620 (20<sup>th</sup> item of the sale), an ornate Flemish Book of Hours made circa 1460-1480. Miniatures and decorative borders are some of the most compelling aspects of Books of Hours, and the copy being auctioned at Il Ponte contains thirteen of each (twelve full-page miniatures). The miniatures are done in the style of Willem Vrelant, a Dutch book illuminator who was active until circa 1481. Lot 2620 is estimated 20,000 – 30,000€.

Not to be outdone in age, lot 2608 is a manuscript dated September 1, 1456. The item in question is an Italian version of Giovanni Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (Italian, *Le donne famose*), translated by the master Donato Albanzani da Casentino for Niccolò d'Este, Marquess of Ferrara. D'Este was an important character in the history of late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> century Italy. One particularly interesting fact about him is that in 1425, he had both his wife and an illegitimate son executed on charges of adultery, with a follow up decree that all women within his realm of power found guilty of adultery should also be executed. He later had to rescind the command after it was found the order would depopulate Ferrara! The manuscript listed as lot 2608 is estimated 15,000 – 25,000€.

Rounding out the highlights of pre-16<sup>th</sup> century material is another very early item, lot 2619, which is a medieval manuscript begun in Toscana in 1338 and completed in 1346. Entitled *Summa de casibus conscientiae* and written by Bartolomeo di San Concordio, this version, made by Antonio Guarnera, is one of the earliest copies of the manuscript and was completed during the life of the author. More common are later copies, like the [one at Yale's Beinecke Library](#), that were copied after San Concordio's death in 1347. Lot 2619 is estimated 8,000 – 12,000€.