

Intelligent by design : the manuscripts of walter of whittlesey, monk of Peterborough

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This article examines two important fourteenth-century manuscripts containing historical and other texts from Peterborough Abbey, both made for a monk named Walter of Whittlesey (Add. MS. 37958 and Add. MS. 47170). It reviews the biographical evidence for Whittlesey, the muddled issue of his role in the manuscripts' production, and also the textual and iconographic constitution of these manuscripts. As such, it is essentially a study of the exercise and effects of personal monastic book-patronage. As its objects show, this patronage was heavily inflected by institutional culture, oriented in practical ways towards specific goals, and intelligently implemented. Particular emphasis is placed here on subtleties of design, and how these contributed to the utility of the manuscripts. Although the evidence for Walter's patronage is unusually clear (at least where illuminated manuscripts are concerned), opportunities for similar analysis exist elsewhere, and this study offers a model for how such work might proceed.

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This article examines two important fourteenth-century manuscripts containing historical and other texts from Peterborough Abbey, both made for a monk named Walter of Whittlesey (Add. MS. 37958 and Add. MS. 47170). It reviews the biographical evidence for Whittlesey, the muddled issue of his role in the manuscripts' production, and also the textual and iconographic constitution of these manuscripts. Particular emphasis is placed here on subtleties of design, and how these contributed to the utility of the manuscripts. Although the evidence for Walter's patronage is unusually clear (at least where illuminated manuscripts are concerned), opportunities for similar analysis exist elsewhere, and this study offers a model for how such work might proceed. Citation. This page links to high-resolution archival images of entire manuscripts and printed books from the collection of the Walters Art Museum, along with detailed catalog descriptions. They are available for free under a Creative Commons -- CC0 license. All manuscript images and descriptions created between 2008-2015 were made possible through Preservation and Access grants awarded to the Walters Art Museum by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Images are offered in four sizes For an animated "turning the pages" presentation of the manuscripts and downloadable PDFs, visit the Walters Art Museum's Works of Art Web site. Manuscripts that have pages on the Walters Works of Site have links that say "art.thewalters.org". This article examines two important fourteenth-century manuscripts containing historical and other texts from Peterborough Abbey, both made for a monk named Walter of Whittlesey (Add. MS. 37958 and Add. MS. 47170). It reviews the biographical evidence for Whittlesey, the muddled issue of his role in the manuscripts' production, and also the textual and iconographic constitution of these manuscripts. As such, it is essentially a study of the exercise and effects of personal monastic book-patronage. As its objects show, this patronage was heavily inflected by institutional culture, oriented