150,000 graphics in the city library

From the collection Dr. Gernot Blum

Enjoy browsing the new bookplate portal!

stadtbibliothek-mg.de
exlibrisportal.moenchengladbach.de
What are bookplates?

Who has not experienced this: you lend a book to somebody, forget that you did and remember about the book years later, but now it is gone forever. This situation is as old as book printing itself. About 500 years ago, book owners had the idea to mark their ownership. Bookplates, also known as exlibris (Latin: „from the books of...“) were born. Bookplates are small graphics which mention the book owner by name. The graphic itself contains several elements; often related to mythological, historical or professional topics the book owner identifies himself with.
Sought-after collector’s items

During their long and changeful 500 year history, bookplates accompanied the guild of book owners. This continues until today. Bookplates were often made by well-known artists in a variety of printing styles. Artists such as Lucas Cranach the Elder, Franz Marc or Günter Uecker immortalised themselves. Furthermore, bookplates reflect a multitude of stilistic elements and societal developments.

In the past, these miniature graphics were simply glued into books. In Germany, however, there has been a community of enthusiasts exchanging and collecting multifaceting bookplates for the last 120 years. An international meeting to exchange bookplates is hosted by the city library of Mönchengladbach every summer.
Center for bookplates
Mönchengladbach

»I know my bookplates are in the best of hands.«
(Dr. Gernot Blum during the official handing over of his collection)
Since 2014 the city library of Mönchengladbach has been owning one of the largest bookplate collections in Europe due to the generous donation of Dr. Gernot Blum. This donation was the foundation for the international center for bookplates in Mönchengladbach. The collection focusses mainly on themes of archaeology, eroticism and medicine. Around 150,000 miniature art pieces from more than 30 countries are kept in the archives of the central library in Carl-Brandts-Haus. The collection contains pieces from the beginning of the 16th century up until today. The collection also includes numerous preparatory drawings, drafts and sketches making it possible to follow the process of creating a bookplate. In addition, the archive of Deutsche Exlibris Gesellschaft, which was loaned to the city library of Mönchengladbach, can be found at central library in Carl-Brandts-Haus.
Exhibitions, guided tours and exchange meetings

The city library of Mönchengladbach together with various co-operation partners offers regular exhibitions presenting the variety and cultural demands of the miniature graphics in a public space and to a broad audience. Different exhibitions are to be found regularly in the lobby in the central library of Carl-Brandts-Haus. Moreover, guided tours through the archive of the city library can be arranged, giving more insights into the bookplate collections. Especially in times of digital media and virtual platforms it is more important than ever to make this cultural heritage ascertainable.

Feel free to contact us!
The bookplate portal

An internationally unique bookplate portal was created through the efforts of the city library of Mönchengladbach. The online portal allows access to several ten thousands of data sets. Search queries about motifs, technics, countries, artists and owners are possible. In this context, the portal also contains links to relevant literature and further information. Numerous bookplates are represented with picture in the databank. The collection Dr. Gernot Blum is constantly worked on. Graphics are being digitalised and scientifically processed. In this regard, the city library of Mönchengladbach would like to thank Landschaftsverband Rheinland and others for their generous promotion of our digitalising project.

The collection is freely accessible online at all times at exlibrisportal.moenchengladbach.de or www.stadtbibliothek-mg.de.