

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Mural Restoration

Second Floor Corridor, Main Library

Thirty murals decorate the arches and walls of the second floor of the Main Library. There are twelve lunettes, two tondos, and sixteen arches, all but one of which are painted on canvas which has been glued to the walls. The murals were installed in 1907 under the direction of decorator Elmer Ellsworth Garnsey (1862 – 1946) who was also involved in the decoration of the Boston Public Library and the Library of Congress.

The twelve lunettes, or half-moon shaped murals, each depict a medallion showing a historic figure from the Renaissance period. Each lunette (beginning at the Music, Film and Audio Department doorway and moving down the hall) is based on a medal commemorating the following:

- **Elisabetta Gonzaga** (1471-1526) wife of Guidobaldo Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino
- **Domenico Novello Malatesta**, Lord of Cesena (1418-1465)
- **Nonnina Strozzi**, wife of Bernardo Barbigia
- **Degenhart Pfeffinger**, (1471-1519) Provincial Marshal of Lower Bavaria (1471-1519)
- **Giovanna Albizzi**, wife of Lorenzo Tornabuoni of Florence
- **Sigismondo Pondolfo Malatesta**, Lord of Rimini and Fano (1417-1468)
- **Isotta degli Atti**, wife of Sigismondo Malatesta (d. 1475/5)
- **Lorenzo de'Medici**, "the Magnificent," of Florence (1448-1492)
- **Cecilia Gonzaga**, daughter of Gianfrancesco I, Marques of Mantua
- **Filippo Strozzi** the Elder, Florentine merchant (1426-1491)
- **Giovanni de'Medici**, "Delle Bande Nere," famous condottiere (1498-1526)
- **Don Inigo D'Avalos**, Marquis of Pescara and Vast, Grand Chamberlain to Alfonso, King of Naples

Circular panels or tondos at each end of the corridor above the doorways picture a cherub bearing an inscription in Latin. **Above the door to the Music, Film and Audio Department** the inscription is "Omne Labore" which may be translated as "everything through work."



At the opposite end of the corridor **above the doorway to the South Wing Reading Room** is the inscription "Vivere est Cogitare" (Viverest – Cogitare) which may be translated as "To live is to think" or "Life is thought" from the works of the Roman orator and politician Cicero.



Ornamentation on the archways down the middle of the hallway include small roundels picturing cherubs engaging in literary and artistic pursuits such as dance, sculpting, reading, and playing various musical instruments.

Reference Department, Second Floor, Main Library

Printers' Marks

On the walls of the Reference Department are six large murals depicting early European printers' marks. Printers' marks function much as trademarks do today – to guarantee that a book was the product of a certain craftsman or print house by identifying his work with a symbol.

The three murals to the left as you enter the room, above the doorway to the Music, Film and Audio Department, show the following:

- **LEFT – Regnault Chaudiere** was a French printer of the fifteenth century whose shop in Paris on the Rue St. Jacques was at the "Sign of the Wild Man" (L'homme Sauvage) which he incorporated into his mark. His initials appear on the shield hanging from the tree.



- **CENTER – Balthasar Moretus** was the successor to Christopher Plantin whose sixteenth century printing house in Antwerp is preserved intact as a museum. The mural is based on a title page from a book published by Moretus in 1654.



- **RIGHT – Thielman Kerver** published in sixteenth century Paris from a shop on the Pont St. Michel at the "Sign of the Unicorn" which became part of his mark along with his initials on the shield guarded by the unicorns.



The murals to the right as you enter the room, above the doorway to the South Wing Reading Room, show the following:

- **LEFT – The Estienne/Etienne family** was the most important sixteenth century printer in Paris and used several different marks during their long history, many of which showed an olive tree. Their motto "Noli altum sapere" can be translated as "Be not proud."



- **CENTER – Jean de La Caille** was a Parisian printer of the seventeenth century. His mark depicts a classical figure holding a mirror in one hand and clutching snakes in the other. His motto "Vincit prudentis vires" (*Vin-cheat prudentis vearce*) can be translated as "Prudence conquers strength."



- **RIGHT – Simon Vostre** was a noted French publisher of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who brought book ornamentation to its height and whose style influenced other printers, including Kerver. His mark shows his initials on a shield hanging from a fruit tree and guarded by a pair of heraldic beasts.



Wall Panels

These panels date from the original 1895 building decorations and were rediscovered during the renovations. The green and gold fleur-de-lis pattern background on each panel is an adaptation from the mark of Lucantonio Giunta of Florence and Venice which first appeared in an edition of Livy printed by him in 1495.

The panels on the entrance wall exhibit examples of printer's marks of great Venetian printing houses of the 15th and 16th centuries. Included are the famous "dolphin" mark of Aldus Manutius, a classical device said to have been a symbol of Augustus which appears on medals of Vespasian and Domitian, showing a dolphin twisting around an anchor. The hourglass or "Hexapla" is the device of the DeSandro Brothers, often called the "Dal Gesu" whose motto "Soli Deo Onor et Gloria" can be translated as "honor and glory to God alone." There is the orb-and-cross derived mark of Philip Pincius which he used prior to 1494 and whose motto "Laudate Dominum" can be translated as "Praise the Lord."

Definitions:

In architecture, a **lunette** (French lunette, "little moon") is a half-moon shaped space, either filled with recessed masonry or void. A lunette is formed when a horizontal cornice transects a round-headed arch at the level of the impost, where the arch springs.

A **tondo** is a Renaissance term for a circular work of art, either a painting or a sculpture. The word derives from the Italian rotondo, "round." The term is usually not used in English for small round paintings, but only those over about 60 cm (two feet) in diameter, thus excluding many round portrait miniatures – for sculpture the threshold is rather lower.

A **medallion** (French: médaillon) or medaillon is a round or oval frame (often made of stucco) which contains a plastic or pictorial decoration of a façade, an interior, a piece of furniture or equipment.

A **roundel** is a small circular decorative plate used extensively in Renaissance courtyards and arcades often a niche containing a bust. A roundel window is a small, ornate, circular window.

A **printer's mark**, device, emblem or insignia was a symbol used as a trademark by early printers starting in the 15th century (see full description above).

Additional Reading:

For more information on commemorative medals of the Renaissance:

- Fabriczy, C. **Italian Medals**. Duckworth, London. 1904.
- Hill, George F. **Medals of the Renaissance**. Clarence Press, Oxford. 1920.
- National Gallery of Art. **Renaissance Medal**. Phaidon Press, London. 1967.