

Map Room

700-1500



THE EXHIBITION

The Map Room exhibition presents a fascinating collection of maps dating from approximately 700 to 1500 CE, offering a unique window into the historical understanding of geography and world exploration. This period witnessed significant advancements in cartography, with maps reflecting the evolving knowledge of different cultures.

The exhibition includes early Islamic maps, medieval European charts, and Asian depictions, each showcasing a variety of artistic styles and geographical interpretations.

Islamic cartographers, known for their scientific approach, produced maps that combined detailed geographic information with artistic flourishes. European maps of the medieval period, often influenced by religious perspectives, provide insights into the medieval worldview and the gradual expansion of geographic knowledge. Asian maps, rich in cultural and historical context, reflect the sophisticated understanding of geography in regions such as China and Japan.

These maps not only illustrate the technological and navigational progress of the time but also reveal the cultural exchanges and expanding horizons that characterized the medieval world. The exhibition underscores the importance of cartography in connecting distant regions and peoples, offering visitors a comprehensive view of how different civilizations perceived and documented their world. This collection provides a captivating journey through the history of map-making and its impact on global exploration and cultural exchange.

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FEATURED IN THE EXHIBITION



HEREFORD MAPPA MUNDI (=/-1300)

158x134cms. Hereford Cathedral, UK



Map Room

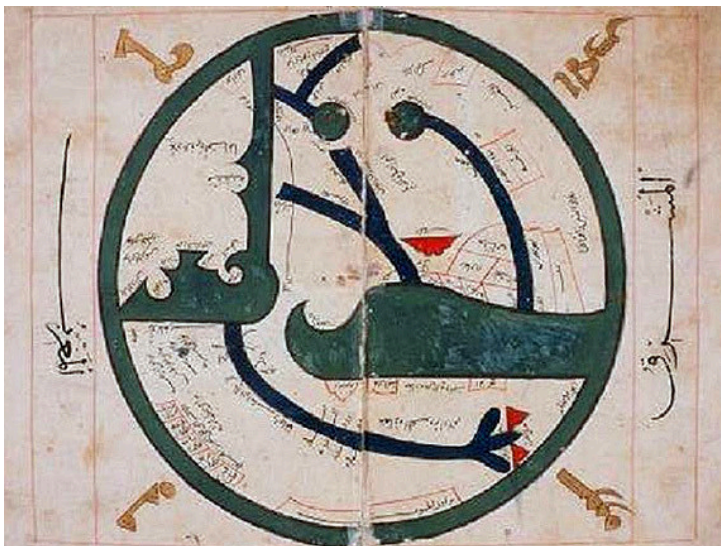
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The Hereford Mappa Mundi, created around 1300 CE, is one of the most remarkable medieval world maps, housed in Hereford Cathedral, England. Measuring 1.58 by 1.34 meters, it is drawn on a single sheet of vellum (calfskin). This map not only represents geographical knowledge of the time but also serves as a visual encyclopedia of medieval cosmology, history, and mythology.

At the center of the map lies Jerusalem, reflecting the medieval Christian worldview. East is at the top, with the Garden of Eden depicted in a circular walled enclosure.

The map features over 1,100 illustrations of cities, biblical events, animals, plants, and mythical creatures. Europe, Asia, and Africa are represented with various significant sites, including the Pillars of Hercules, the Labyrinth of Crete, and the Tower of Babel.

The Hereford Mappa Mundi is a fusion of cartography, theology, and storytelling, encapsulating the medieval understanding of the world. It was likely used for educational purposes, to illustrate sermons, and as a tool for contemplation on the divine order of creation. Its rich detail and artistry make it an invaluable artifact of medieval scholarship and religious thought.



WORLD MAP OF AL-ISTAKHRI (1193)

The world map of al-Istakhri, created in the 10th century, is a significant example of early Islamic cartography. Al-Istakhri, a Persian geographer, designed this map to illustrate his book "Kitab al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik" (Book of Roads and Kingdoms).

The map features a highly stylized depiction of the world, emphasizing the Islamic world, including detailed regions of Persia, the Arabian Peninsula, and parts of Africa and Asia.

Unlike Western medieval maps, it focuses on practical information for travelers and traders, reflecting the advanced geographical knowledge and navigational skills of the Islamic Golden Age.



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GOTENJIKU-ZU (1364)

171 x 167cms. Art gallery, South Australia

The Gotenjiku-Zu, created in 1364, is a significant Japanese world map depicting the Buddhist cosmology. Drawn by the monk Joken, it represents India (Gotenjiku) at the centre, reflecting its importance as the birthplace of Buddhism. The map features various regions and significant religious sites, surrounded by oceans and mythological lands.

Unlike contemporary Western maps, the Gotenjiku-Zu emphasizes spiritual geography over physical accuracy. This map illustrates the medieval Japanese worldview, highlighting the influence of Buddhism on Japanese culture and the integration of religious beliefs into cartographic practices.



CANTINO WORLD MAP (1502)

105x220cms. Biblioteca Estense, Modena, Italy



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The Cantino World Chart, created in 1502 CE, is a pioneering Portuguese world map that showcases the latest discoveries of the Age of Exploration. Named after Alberto Cantino, who smuggled it from Portugal to Italy, the chart illustrates the coastlines of Europe, Africa, and parts of the New World, including Brazil and the Caribbean.

It features detailed depictions of newly discovered lands and sea routes, reflecting the advanced navigational knowledge of the time. The Cantino World Chart is significant for its portrayal of the expanding world and the emerging global trade networks of the early 16th century.



CATALAN ATLAS (1375)

50X258cms. National Library, Paris, France

The Catalan Atlas, created in 1375 by the Majorcan cartographer Abraham Cresques, is one of the most important medieval world maps. This detailed atlas, commissioned by King Peter IV of Aragon, features the known world, focusing on Europe, North Africa, and Asia.

It combines geographical knowledge with rich illustrations of cities, trade routes, and notable figures, including Marco Polo and Mansa Musa. The map also includes astronomical and cosmological information, blending practical navigation with mythological elements. The Catalan Atlas is a remarkable example of medieval cartography, reflecting the era's exploration, trade, and cultural exchange.

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