

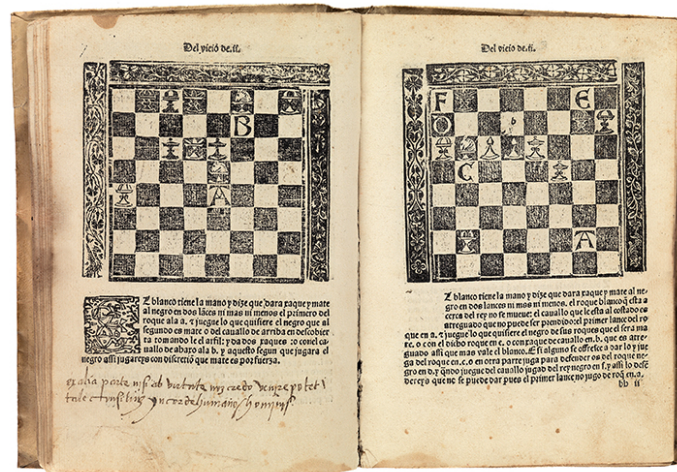


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Medieval Illustrated Astronomy Tomes Star at Swann Galleries' Books Auction

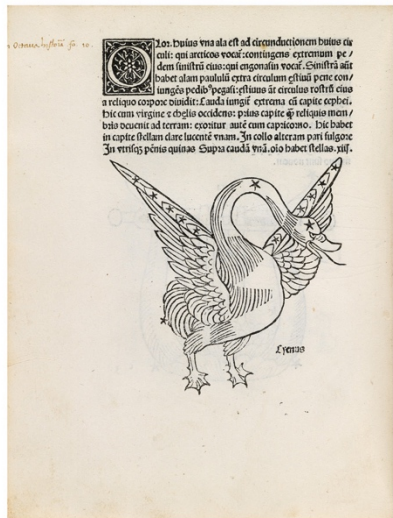
Early Printed Books on Cats, Chess & Erotica Stand Out



New York—Swann Galleries will offer an auction of **Early Printed, Medical, Scientific & Travel Books on Thursday, March 8**, featuring an extensive selection of early Spanish books on a variety of subjects, as well as important Medieval astronomical treatises dating to a period when studying the stars was as mythical as it was scientific.

One of the many “stellar” highlights is the first illustrated edition of *Poeticon Astronomicum*, 1482, by **Caius Julius Hyginus**, containing the earliest printed depictions of the constellations. The work boasts 47 woodcuts of zodiac figures and allegorical depictions of planets, and relays starry myths dating to the first century AD; it is valued at \$15,000 to \$20,000. Also available is the first illustrated edition of the most popular European textbook of astronomy from the thirteenth century to the early modern era, Johannes Sacrobosco’s *Sphaera mundi*, 1478, with 11 woodcut astronomical diagrams, including the phases of lunar and solar eclipses. This edition was also the first to include the tract on planetary theory attributed to Gerard of Cremona, and carries an estimate of \$15,000 to \$20,000.

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The Medieval study of astronomy extended into the medical realm with extensive tracts on the affect of stars on the body. Examples in this auction include *De computatione dierum criticarum*, 1496, by Julián Gutiérrez, uses the stars to determine the critical days affecting the progression of an illness (\$8,000 to \$12,000). Also available in an extremely unusual Spanish tome of astrological veterinary medicine, specifically relating to horses, Pedro García Conde's *Verdadera Albeyteria*, 1734, relaying the influence of the stars on a horse's physiognomy (\$400 to \$600).

Printed circa 1496-97, *Arte de Ajedres* by **Luis de Lucena** is the earliest surviving manual of chess, introducing a new mode of play still in use today. With 161 woodcut diagrams of board setups and discussion in Spanish of 11 openings and 150 problems, the scarce tome is valued at \$10,000 to \$15,000.

Two seventeenth-century French erotic dialogues make a rare auction appearance. *L'Ecole des Filles*, 1676, the first work of pornographic fiction in French, is attributed to Michel Millot and Jean L'Ange, both of whom were punished after the publication (\$8,000 to \$12,000). An early edition of *Aloisiae Sigeae Toletanae Satyra Sotadica de Arcanis Amoris et Veneris* by Nicolas Chorier, previously in the collection of notorious eroticist Gershon Legman, contains six dialogues concerning a sexual initiation; called "the most outspoken erotic work of the seventeenth century," it carries an estimate of \$5,000 to \$7,000.

Also in the auction is the first book devoted to the lore and nature of cats, François-Augustin Paradis de Moncrif's *Les Chats*, 1727, bound together with the rarely-seen *Les Rats*, 1737, by Claude-Guillaume Bourdon de Sigras, the first published book about rats. Amusingly, the city of publication for the rat tome is listed as "Ratopolis"; this sammelband carries an estimate of \$1,000 to \$2,000.

Manuscripts are led by an early sixteenth-century Flemish illuminated Book of Hours in Latin on vellum, with six full-page borders filled with flowers, birds, animals and insects in colors on a gold leaf background, with an estimate of \$6,000 to \$9,000. Also available is Pedro de Gracia Dei's *Blasón General y Nobleza del Universo*, a circa 1500 copy of a substantial portion of his 1489 Coria original edition of the same name. The Spanish manuscript contains 41 drawings in color based on the printed version, concerning heraldry, planets, nobility and the like (\$3,000 to \$4,000).



The travel section contains scarce works on missionary journeys to the East, particularly accounts of ill-fated ventures in Japan such as the first edition of a history and martyrology of a Christian mission to the region, José Sicardo's 1698 *Christiandad del Japon* (\$8,000 to \$12,000).

The complete catalogue with bidding information is available at www.swannalleries.com.

Additional highlights can be found [here](#).

Captions:

[Lot 113](#): Luis de Lucena, *Arte de Ajedres*, first edition of the earliest extant manual on modern chess, Salamanca, circa 1496-97. Estimate \$10,000 to \$15,000.

[Lot 109](#): Caius Julius Hyginus, *Poeticon Astronomicum*, first illustrated edition, with 47 half-page woodcuts, Venice, 1482. Estimate \$15,000 to \$20,000.

[Lot 156](#): Pedro de Gracia Dei, *Blasón General y Nobleza del Universo*, illuminated manuscript, Spain, circa 1500. Estimate \$3,000 to \$4,000.

Auction date: Thursday, March 8, at 10:30 am

Exhibition dates: March 3, 10-6; March 5-7, 10-6

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