

Between history and memory

06.07
> 08.09

Incunabula in San Marino

The aim of this exhibition is to make known the rare and ancient printed resources, twenty-eight volumes dating back to the 15th century, preserved in the two major libraries of the Republic of San Marino, namely the State Library and the University Library. Normally, an exhibition is followed by a catalogue, but in this case it was the other way round.

It is a journey through the history of the printed word, from 1473 to 1500, in which memory and history, two concepts that are inextricably linked, return and intertwine with each other: there is no history without memory, whether personal or collective.

History is represented by the incunabula of the State Library, from the founding core, i.e. the Belluzzi-Valloni Library, the oldest library in San Marino, exhibited in its entirety for the first time.

Memory is the main theme of the University Library's collection of incunabula, a precious part of the Young Fund, acquired in the 1990s by the American collector Morris Young on the recommendation of Umberto Eco.

Without memory, which allows us to preserve and transmit traces and signs of the past, there is no historical reconstruction. The exhibition of the most valuable bibliographical material of our Republic is intended to promote these "agents of history", which recall a past that is a source of knowledge and belonging.

"There are many ways to celebrate a catalogue of incunabula. Here are a few. Emphasising the unique detailed work of cataloguers [...]; stressing the antiquity and quality of the items registered and described: both factors are well represented in this exhibition (the oldest incunabulum dates back to 1473, while the most recent one to January 1500); highlighting the precious and significant presence of "lay" authors, whose march, not always triumphant, marked the stages of the progressive affirmation of a modern vision of the world: here we have some very significant ones, from Ovid to Horace, from Cicero to Plutarch".

Luciano Canfora