



## Sr Margaret Manion awarded Doctor of Letters



**Sr Margaret Manion has been awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters from Melbourne University. She received her honorary degree at a conferring ceremony at Melbourne University on Saturday 31 March 2007.**

Margaret Manion is one of Australia's pre-eminent art historians, whose scholarship on Medieval and Renaissance art, and in particular the art of the illuminated manuscript, is acclaimed internationally.



Born in Nowra NSW, Margaret Manion was educated at Loreto Convent, Normanhurst NSW and entered religious life with the Loreto Sisters in 1952. She taught at St Peter and Paul's Primary School in South Melbourne in 1955. She studied at Melbourne University from 1956 to 1961, completing a Bachelor of Arts, a Bachelor of Education and a Masters degree in Fine Arts.

Margaret was principal and teacher at Mary's Mount Boarding School in Ballarat from 1962 to 1966. In 1967 she became a member of the foundation team of Christ College, the Catholic Teachers College in Melbourne which is now part of the Australian Catholic University and also began tutoring at Melbourne University.

She undertook doctoral studies at Bryn Mawr College, USA from September 1968 to March 1972, studying also at Princeton and the University of Pennsylvania, and carrying out research fieldwork in Rome and Umbria.

In 1972 Margaret Manion joined the staff of The Fine Arts Department at Melbourne University and has dedicated over thirty years of her life to developing the discipline of art history in this country.

As Herald Professor of Fine Arts at Melbourne University from 1979 to 1995, Margaret Manion set directions in the teaching of art history that have had far reaching consequences. These include the introduction of specialist courses in art curatorship and cinema studies. The art history program she fostered at Melbourne University has equipped a generation of students, many of whom now hold position as directors, curators and academics in major art institutions in Australia and abroad. She is also the author of several books and many articles on manuscript illumination, her specialist field.

As Professor emeritus and honorary professorial fellow of the University of Melbourne, Margaret is active in teaching and research. She is co-ordinator of the Manuscript Resource Unit at the Academic Centre, St Mary's and Newman Colleges, The University of Melbourne and of the Research Cluster for Manuscript Studies, an inter-university research group supported by the ARC (Australian Research Committee) Network for Early European Studies. She is presently guest curator for an exhibition to be held at the State Library of Victoria in 2008, which will include some fifty manuscripts from the libraries of Cambridge University, UK, and another fifty from Australian and New Zealand collections.

Margaret is an emeritus trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria and honorary curator of its Medieval and Renaissance Collections. She is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and of the Australian College of Educators.

Margaret Manion's publications include the groundbreaking studies of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in Australian and New Zealand collection (1984, 1989); major books such as *Medieval Texts and Images* (1991) and *The Art of the Book: its Place in Medieval Worship* (1998); and specialist studies such as *The Wharcliffe Hours* (1981). Her most recent book, *The Felton Illuminated Manuscripts in the National Gallery of Victoria* (2005) breaks new ground, not only in bringing to light new research but also in the integration of text and image as a result of new technologies. In 2000 she was a guest curator of the major exhibition on the *Book of Kells* at the National Gallery of Australia. This exhibition also brought together fifty-five manuscripts from Australasian collections and attracted an audience of 81,000 people. An international conference was held in her honour in 2001 entitled: *Reading Texts and Images: Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Art and Patronage in honour of Margaret M Manion*, published by Exeter University Press in the following year.

Margaret Manion's high academic standing in art history is reflected in the role she has played on Australian and international professional bodies. She is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities (of which she was Deputy President) and of the Australian College of Education. She was a foundation member for Australia of the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art; a foundation member of the Società di Storia della Miniatura, Italy and served two terms as Foreign Adviser to the International Center of Medieval Art, New York.

Margaret was the first woman to be appointed to an established Chair at Melbourne University; and the first woman to chair the Academic Board. She served as Deputy Dean and Acting Dean in the Faculty of the Arts, and Associate Dean for Research. She also played a major part in the establishment of the In Potter Museum of Art.

Margaret Manion has brought passion, generosity, dedication and creativity to her field of work. She was a trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria for 15 years and its Deputy President from 1984 to 1990. She has been a member of the Council of Adult Education (1989-1994), the Victorian Arts Centre Trust (1980-1990), the Australia Council (1981-1984) and the Victorian Tapestry Workshop (1992-2000). She is also honorary curator of Early Medieval and Renaissance Art at the National Gallery of Victoria and in 2004 was appointed Trustee emeritus of the National Gallery of Victoria in recognition of her continuing contribution to the Gallery.

Margaret Manion was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for her contribution to the arts and education in 1988. She received the Centenary Medal in 2001.

*Information sourced with permission from: Conferring Ceremony Booklet, University of Melbourne, March 2007.*