

# THE GROLIER CLUB

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## **Vivat Rex! Commemorating the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Accession of Henry VIII**

*Exhibition Details Glory, Weaknesses of Powerful English Monarch*

**Venues: The Grolier Club, New York City, March 4-May 2, 2009  
Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC, September 18 to December 31, 2010**

**New York, NY, October 21, 2008** – The magisterial and tyrannical reign of King Henry VIII will be the subject of a major exhibition, *Vivat Rex! An Exhibition Commemorating the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Accession of Henry VIII*, to be held in New York City at The Grolier Club from March 4 to May 2, 2009. The exhibition will travel, in modified form, to the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC, in 2010.

Henry's dramatic personality and reign – visionary or tyrant, masterful monarch or ruthless bully, defender of the faith or imperious destroyer of monasteries, lover of women or libertine – have been immortalized (and fictionalized) in literature, on stage, and in film by leading writers of their generations. *Vivat Rex!* brings the real Henry and the machinations of his court and times to life through books, manuscripts, handwritten letters, and prints. Among them are works that are unique or belonged to Henry himself, to his family, or to members of his court, including the monarch's schoolboy copy of Cicero, which he emphatically inscribed, "Thys Boke Is Myne Prynce Henry."

– More –

Henry's rule, which began 500 years ago on his accession on April 21, 1509 and ended with his death on January 28, 1547, saw the beginnings of the Reformation and the Protestant Church of England, the English Renaissance, and a state that within generations of his death would become a world power.



*Vivat Rex!* takes its title from the phrase “Long live the King!,” which appears in a woodblock print in the first sanctioned English Bible (1539). This work is among the 140 items that shed light on Henry VIII as man and monarch – his education, character, and unrelenting efforts to ensure his legacy by fathering male heirs. The themes of power, marriage, and religion run throughout the exhibition. Its subjects include Henry's children, his six wives (two of whom were executed), and his advisors, confidantes, and opponents, many of whom met grisly fates.

Works relating to his ongoing battles over religion include *The Defense of the Seven Sacraments against Martin Luther* (1521), Henry's attack on Martin Luther, which the king wrote in defense of the Roman Catholic Church. The book earned him the title “Defender of the Faith” from Pope Leo X. Also included are many books and documents relating to Henry's irrevocable break with the Church, which was triggered by Pope Clement VII's refusal to annul Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, who had failed to produce a male heir.

Another highlight is a manuscript letter from Catherine of Aragon to her nephew, the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, in which she complains of Henry's slanderous allegations in the “abominable litigation between the King my Lord and myself” and asserting that she “was a maid . . . when [she] came unto the King.”

While much of the material is historically significant, some of it baldly presents the common side of royalty. All too human are a series of inquiries by Henry VIII's father, Henry VII, about the attractiveness of a prospective wife and responses by his ambassadors, a dialogue that, in today's culture, might be found in a string of text messages.

Visually arresting exhibits include fine prints of Henry and his wives, children, and advisors based on paintings by court artist Hans Holbein, hand-colored aquatints of several royal palaces, elaborately –

illustrated frontispieces of the earliest printed English Bibles, a magnificent 10<sup>th</sup>-century illuminated manuscript presented to Henry by Pope Leo X, and a lengthy New Year's Gift Roll (1539) listing gifts made both to and by the king.



This exhibition is an exceptional collaboration between The Grolier Club and three major American libraries: the Folger Shakespeare Library of Washington, DC; the Houghton Library of the Harvard College Library of Cambridge, MA; and The Morgan Library & Museum of New York, NY. Books and prints from the collection of Arthur L. Schwarz (see separate bio), organizer and curator of the exhibition, as well as items from the collections of six other institutions and private collectors, will be included in the exhibition.

A full-color, fully illustrated, 248-page catalogue by Mr. Schwarz, *Vivat Rex! An Exhibition Commemorating the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Accession of Henry VIII*, accompanies the exhibition. It includes essays by three major scholars in the field of Tudor history: John Guy, a Fellow of Clare College, University of Cambridge; Dale Hoak, Chancellor Professor of History at the College of William & Mary; and Susan Wabuda, an Associate Professor of History at Fordham University.

Founded in 1884, The **Grolier Club of New York** is America's oldest and largest society for bibliophiles and enthusiasts in the graphic arts. Named for Jean Grolier, the Renaissance collector renowned for sharing his library with friends, the Club's objective is to foster the literary study and promotion of the arts pertaining to the production of books. **Folger Shakespeare Library**, located on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, is a world-class research center on Shakespeare and on the early modern age in the West. *Vivat Rex!* will be on view at the Folger from September 18 to December 31, 2010. **The Houghton Library of the Harvard College Library** is the primary repository for Harvard's rare books and manuscripts. **The Morgan Library & Museum** was incorporated in 1924 as an educational institution dedicated to fostering a greater knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of, primarily, Western history and culture.



Exhibition: *Vivat Rex! Commemorating the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Accession of Henry VIII*  
 Place: The Grolier Club • 47 E. 60th St. • New York, NY 10022  
 Dates: March 4 to May 2, 2009  
 Hours: Monday - Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
 Admission: Free  
 Catalogue: Available for purchase onsite at the Grolier Club, and online through University Press of New England (www.UPNE.com), exclusive distributors of Grolier Club publications.

Image sheets, catalogues available to the press upon request.

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Upcoming Grolier Club Exhibitions: May 20 – August 1, 2009. *Cuban Artists' Books and Prints: 1985-2008*. Curated by Linda S. Howe.

September 16 – November 21, 2009. *In Pursuit of Knowledge: Six Hundred Years of Leipzig University, 1409-2009*. Curated by Dr. Ulrich Schneider.

December 9, 2009 – February 6, 2010. *Dr. Johnson at 300: A Tercentenary Celebration*, from the collections of the Houghton Library, Harvard University. Curated by Thomas Horrocks.