

**LES ENLUMINURES, LTD**  
2970 North Lake Shore Drive 11B  
Chicago, Illinois 60657

tel. 1-773-929-5986  
fax. 1-773-528-3976  
chicago@lesenluminures.com

**LES ENLUMINURES**  
Le Louvre des Antiquaires  
2 place du Palais-Royal  
75001 Paris

tél : 33 1 42 60 15 58  
fax : 33 1 40 15 00 25  
info@lesenluminures.com

**Doctoral Diploma of the University of Padua  
In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment  
Italy, Padua, dated 10 June 1612**

*6 ff., preceded and followed by three paper flyleaves (with watermark), complete in one gathering (i<sup>6</sup>), written in an Italian cursive italic script on 19 long lines, pages ruled with double framing lines in purple and gold (163 x 105 mm.), many letters in majuscule in liquid gold, text pages framed with full foliate and floral borders in liquid gold, illuminated frontispiece with full border, roundel of the Virgin and Child in the upper margin, grotesques with urns, garlands, heads of putti, mermaids, and floral and foliate motifs in the margin, a large initial "V" contained in a frame with a town and cityscape in the background, all against a beautifully rose and blue sky, the arms of the recipient, Antonio Butta below, enframed in a garland. Bound in contemporary Italian red morocco binding, lavishly gilt in the fanfare style, covers with small tooled borders, straight and curved fillets forming compartments of various small tools including floral and foliate motifs, volutes, cavorting deer with antlers, central bare oval cartouche in the center, traces of ties (likely silk or fabric ties), with the heraldic wax seal of the Bishop of Padua encased in an oval box (small piece of wax missing, lacking lid), binding likely made in Veneto (compare Doctoral degree of the University of Padua, earlier in 1576 [London, BL, Davis 872] and similar 17<sup>th</sup> c. degrees [Universities of Pavia and Pisa] in the Michel Wittcock Collection, Christie's, 7 July 2004, lot. 101). Dimensions 230 x 168 mm.*

There appears to be no comprehensive study of the illuminated diplomas produced for the alumni of the University of Padua, of which this survives as a fine example. Perhaps its recipient could be identified through further research. These illuminated diplomas show how the art of illuminating enjoyed an unbroken evolution from the later Middle Ages through modern times at the second oldest Italian university.

**PROVENANCE:**

1. Written and illuminated in Padua, where there must have been a steady supply of scribes and illuminators who turned out similar diplomas for graduates of this celebrated university. None are signed by their scribes or illuminators.
2. France, Private Collection.

**TEXT:**

ff. 1-6, "IN CHRISTI NOMINE AMEN. Universis et singulis praesens hoc publicum doctoratus privilegium visuris, lecturis, seu legi audituris Alexander Terentius iuris utriusque doctor canonicus

patavinus, et in episcopatu paduae illustrissimi et reverendissimi in christo patris domini D. Marci Cornelii [grant the degree of the Doctor of Law to] D. Io. Antonium Buttam Bellunensem ... ; explicit, "[...] Viris in magna & frequenti copia. Testibus omnibus ad.praemissa vocatis & rogatis. L. D. O. M."

This illuminated diploma was granted to Antonio Butta of Belluno for a doctorate in law in 1612 and is signed by Alexander Terentius, the Vicar of the bishopric of Padua representing the Bishop of Padua, Marcus Cornelius, whose red wax seal authenticates the diploma. Although we have not been able to identify further Butta, the certificate fits into a substantial group of similar documents from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries. Compare, for example, the illuminated diplomas manuscripts made for Dr. William Harvey of 1602 in the Royal College of Physicians and that of Dr. Giacomo Levi in 1684 (from the Umberto Nahon Museum of Italian Jewish Art).

Founded in 1223, the University of Padua is one of the oldest European universities and the second oldest in Italy. It originally taught jurisprudence and theology, but in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it became known as well for medicine and astronomy. Among its famous students are the English physician William Harvey, and the scientist Galileo, who held a chair in Physics there from 1592 and thus would have been a lecturer when Antonio Butta was a student. Added to this illustrious roster are Nicolas of Cusa, Pietro Bembo, Copernicus, Vesalius, and Tasso, who were all either alumni or faculty at the university. Under the protection of the Republic of Venice, the University of Padua was known for its spirit of tolerance and attracted students from all over Europe. In the seventeenth century, the first woman graduate in the world received her degree in philosophy at the University of Padua.

The history of the University of Padua is an industry unto itself. As far as we can tell, there is no comprehensive study of the illuminated diplomas produced for its alumni, although see below (Cristoforetti, del Negro, and Varanini). Surely, more could be discovered about our student, Antonio Butta, in the vast documents available for consultation at the Centro per la Storia dell'Università degli Studi di Padova (see Online Resources) and elsewhere. What is interesting about these illuminated diplomas is that they show how the art of illuminating enjoyed an unbroken evolution from the later Middle Ages through modern times.

## LITERATURE

Cristoforetti, Giuliana. "I diplomi di laurea padovani del fondo *Diplomi* della Biblioteca Civica da Rovereto," *Quaderni per la storia dell'università di Padova* 30 (1997), pp. 227-34.

Del Negro, Piero. "Lo scrittore-miniatore di diplomi di laurea tra Sei e Settecento: da mestiere senzalcuno impedimento a carica di un *deputato*," *Quaderni per la storia dell'università di Padova* 36 (2003), pp. 109-134.

Piovan, F. and L. Sitran Rea, eds. *Studenti, Università, Città nella storia padovana. Atti del convegno di studi, Padova, 5-8 febbraio 1998*, Teviso, Editrice Antilia, 2001.

Varanini, Gian Maria. "I diplomi di laurea padovani del fondo *Lauree* dell'Archivio di Stato di Verona," *Quaderni per la storia dell'università di Padova* 29 (1996), pp. 171-90.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Harvey's diploma 1602, University of Padua

[http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/heritage/harvey/exhib\\_harvey\\_life.htm](http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/heritage/harvey/exhib_harvey_life.htm)

Archives of the University of Padua: Archivio generale di Ateneo

<http://www.unipd.it/archivio/progetti.html>

Center for the Study of the University of Padua

<http://www.centroistoria.unipd.it/>