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**Antiquity for Connoisseurs
Animals with Classical Pedigree in the Emblems of
The *Theatrum Memoriae Nobilis ac Almae Societatis Unitorum***

The *Theatrum Memoriae Nobilis ac Almae Societatis Unitorum* or the *Album of the Ljubljana Noble Society of St Dismas* (Archive of the Republic of Slovenia, ref. AS 1073, I/1), is a monument of great cultural value which unequivocally reflects the intellectual milieu of Ljubljana at the time of its dynamic renewal in the late 17th and early 18th century. It is the most outstanding illuminated manuscript of the early modern period that survives in Slovenia, as well as a treasury of hand painted emblems created for academy members. The article focuses on animal symbolism with origins in Greek and Roman Antiquity. The abundance of animals in the illuminations of the *Album* clearly indicates their importance in the iconography of the emblems and demonstrates the patrons' interest in animal symbolism. The emblems fall into three main categories: (1) the first group consists of animal motifs with an apparent origin in Greco-Roman culture, well-known literary sources and/or an established tradition in the visual art of Classical Antiquity; (2) the second demonstrates more sophistication in handling themes from Greco-Roman animal lore: the classical origin of animal symbolism is less manifest and it may take some effort to identify; (3) the third group is characterized by a highly skilled and sophisticated treatment of the motifs from Classical Antiquity as well as the interesting iconography. Many of them actually appear to have no reference to Greco-Roman culture whatsoever because the allusion is particularly refined. The author shows the characteristics of this group by the emblem made for Siegfried Bonaventura von Werthenthal, featuring an original image of Bucephalus. The author points out that the ambitious members of St Dismas Society designed their individual emblems as witty demonstrations of erudition for their learned colleagues and for posterity. The complexity of the emblems proves that many patrons were well aware of Paolo Giovio's idea of *buona impresa* which (as stated in his *Dialogo dell'impresse militari et amorose*), must not be too obscure, in a way that it would take the wisdom of a Sybil to understand it, nor should it be so clear as to be understood by any plebeian. In this context, the patron's familiarity with Greco-Roman Antiquity and his sophistication in dealing with classical themes was not only consistent with the prevailing intellectual trend, it was also a matter of personal prestige.