



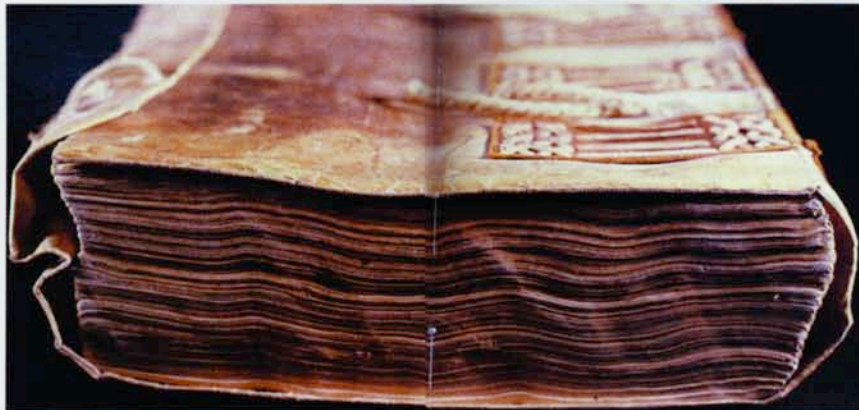
TURNING LEAVES OF MIND

by Ligorano/Reese and Gerrit Lansing. New York: Granary Books, 2003. Edition of 700, \$34.95.

Nora Ligorano and Marshall Reese have long collaborated on scathingly witty videos, installations, and sculptural and printed multiples that address the nexus of power, religion, and commerce. *Turning Leaves of Mind* is a very different project, a tender homage to books as a historical form. A small, square paperback, it contains borderless color photographs toned a honeyed brown, all featuring details of leather-bound volumes from

Spain that date between the 13th and 17th centuries. Lavishly embossed, tooled in gold, and sewn with the intricacy of lace, these books were clearly meant, like sacred reliquaries, to be objects of reverence. Evoking, at times, bricks and mortar, and at others, sinews and flesh, the books are shown close up, as if they were faces intimately observed. Ligorano took the photographs twenty years ago while studying in Spain on a Fulbright Scholarship, and it seems they've waited ever since in an enchanted slumber. Lansing's poetic text, which celebrates the books' "impeccable decay," sits lightly on the images, no more than a few words at a time, and printed in pale brown ink. Inside both covers is an index invented by Reese that alludes to the variety of knowledge, bracingly majestic from some angles, gloriously absurd from others that books contain. With its recursive structure and its immersion in the cloistered but richly—even fanatically—detailed sensory life of medieval scriptoria, *Turning Leaves* recalls Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*; Abelardo Morell's recent photographic essay *A Book of Books* is also kin. But the alchemy of *Turning Leaves*—it seems to have been fermented rather than merely written and illustrated—is all its own. □

Contributing Editor Nancy Princenthal regularly writes this column for Art on Paper.



Ligorano/Reese, from *Turning Leaves of Mind*. Courtesy Granary Books, New York.