

REMARKABLE EXAMPLE OF A PERFECTLY PRESERVED PARISIAN RENAISSANCE BOOK WITH BINDING, CLASPS, AND PICTURES ALL INTACT

Book of Hours (Use of Rome)

In Latin and French, illuminated manuscript, on parchment

France, Paris, c. 1500

14 large miniatures and 23 small miniatures from the workshop of Jean Coene IV (=Master of the Paris Entries)

1 p.l. (blank), 90 leaves, [1] leaf, single column, 30 lines in a pleasing formal bâtarde book hand. Rubrics in red, one-line initials throughout with gilt letters against a blue or red ground, many blue and red line fillers with gilt decorative embellishment, calendar leaves with a two-line "KL" ("Kalends") in gold against a blue or red ground, one-line Dominical letter "A" similarly depicted, Golden Numbers and important feast days in red ink, numerous two-line gold initials against a blue or red ground and WITH 14 LARGE AND 23 SMALL FINELY EXECUTED MINIATURES, the larger miniatures inside an architectural border approaching trompe-l'oeil style, some with marbled columns and many with a golden chain or tassel extending into the margins, the text (underneath the miniatures) on these pages incorporating a large three-line embellished gold initial against a blue and red ground and an assortment of one- and two-line initials in the same style as elsewhere in the text, the smaller miniatures (nine lines high and framed by three thick gold bars). Front pastedown with armorial bookplate of Monsieur le Marquis de Dollon, front flyleaf with faded ink signature of "Jehan Martin" in an adolescent hand and later ink date 1667[?]; rear flyleaf with genealogy of Jean Martin in a contemporary hand, recording his birth in 1472, the birth of his wife Katherine Treteau in 1503, their marriage in 1518, and the birth of their daughter Marguerite in 1518; f. 90v with a later inscription by C[laude] Martin, dated 3 January 1579. Gid 27 (for a very similar binding). A few marks and a little rubbing to the leather, small stain affecting the top margin of one gathering, trivial erosion to paint and light rubbing to one or two of the miniatures executed on the hair side of the vellum, but all of these imperfections very minor, and the volume IN OUTSTANDING CONDITION. FINE CONTEMPORARY BLIND-STAMPED CALF, covers with central panel composed of five vertical floral rolls enclosed by two swirling floral-roll frames, raised bands, two original openwork silver clasps incorporating the initials "J M," original catch plates and anchor plates (these incorporating the initials "A M," no doubt for "Ave Maria"), remnants of velvet beneath the catch plates and anchor plates (see below), vellum pastedowns, all edges gilt, (probably some small repairs to the binding, but, if so, done with very great skill). In a modern brown cloth clamshell box with leather spine label. Dimensions 220 x 130 mm. (8 3/4 x 5 1/8 inches).

Few Books of Hours survive in their original bindings, because they were well-handled, sometimes worn out, and often customized by successive owners. In its unrepaired blind-stamped leather binding with original clasps (and remnants of purple velvet chemise), this manuscript is therefore exceptional. Wide margins, rich coloring, and beautiful script all signal a luxury production painted by an artist, the Master of the Paris Entries, who worked on commission for figures in the court circle.

PROVENANCE

1. The original owner of this Book of Hours was Jean Martin, an official in the French government (according to notary records, the Contrôleur Ordinaire des Guerres), whose name and important genealogical dates are written in the back of this volume.

2. Front pastedown with armorial bookplate of Monsieur le Marquis de Dollon (1769- 1856, over which is written in pencil "Miniatures ... du peintre du roi Charles VIII."
3. Private collection

TEXT

ff. 1-6r, Calendar, in French

ff.7r-14v, Extracts from the Gospels

ff. 14v-16v, prayers "Obsecro te" and "O intemerata"

f. 17r-54v, Hours of the Virgin (Use of Rome), with mixed Hours of the Cross and Hours of the Holy Spirit incorporated into it

ff. 55r-59v, the Seven Penitential Psalms

ff. 60r-63v, Litany, Petitions, and Collects

ff. 64r-82r, Office of the Dead (Use of Rome)

ff. 82v-88r, Suffrages

f. 88v, Seven Prayers of Gregory

f. 89r-90v, two prayers to Saint Martin and five prayers in French (these added in a different hand)

ILLUSTRATION

Full-page miniatures:

f. 7r, Saint John on the Island of Patmos writing the Book of Revelation

f. 10r, The Agony in the Garden

f. 17r. The Annunciation

f. 25r, The Visitation

f. 30v, Pentecost

f.31v, The Nativity

f.34v, The Annunciation to the Shepherds

f.37v, The Presentation in the Temple

f. 40r, The Adoration of the Magi

f. 43r, Flight into Egypt

f. 47r, Coronation of the Virgin

f. 55r, King David in Penitence

f. 64r, Job on a Dung-heap

f. 88v, The Mass of Saint Gregory

Historiated initials

f. 8r, Saint Luke

f. 8v, Saint Matthew

f. 9r, Saint Mark

f. 14v, The Virgin praising the Christ Child

f. 16r, The Virgin Enthroned holding the Christ Child

f. 82v, The Throne of Mercy

f. 83r, Saint Michael, Saint John the Baptist

f. 83v, Saint John, Saints Peter and Paul

f. 84r, Saint James

f. 84v, Saint Stephen, Saint Lawrence

f. 85r, Saint Christopher, Saint Sebastian

f. 85v, Saint Nicholas, Saint Claudius

f. 86v, Saint Anne

f. 87r, Saint Mary Magdalene, Saint Catherine

f. 87v, Saint Margaret, Saint Apollonia

f. 88r, Saint Barbara

This is a very beautiful late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century Book of Hours which features, among other notable elements, a condition that is absolutely remarkable and an original binding

decorated in such a way as to identify the owner for whom the book was made. The manuscript boasts a particularly well-preserved program of miniatures that can be attributed to style of the so-called Jean Coene IV (active c. 1490-1520), an artist who hailed from a long line of manuscript illuminators originally from Bruges but active in Paris from the early fifteenth century. Identified by Isabelle Delaunay and Eberhard König and dubbed the "Master of the Paris Entries," Coene was a prolific artist who, according to Peter Kidd, "was perhaps particularly known to contemporary patrons for his ability to create new compositions." His versatility as an artist is demonstrated by the variety of volumes to which he contributed, including histories, voyages, and Royal Entry books (the latter earning him his sobriquet), in addition to devotional works such as the Book of Hours seen here. Although the artist is known to have collaborated with Parisian illuminator Jean Pichore on several occasions (see, for example, British Library MS Sloane 2418), Coene had his own style, readily identifiable through his unique use of sharp, black outlines, minimal modelling, and gold highlights (particularly on garments). Like most professional workshops of the period, the Coene atelier was capable of producing work of varying quality, which often depended on the wealth and needs of the patron; this work, clearly a premium production, almost certainly was done by the master himself. The harmonious composition of each scene, the use of vibrant color combinations, and the confident line strokes clearly indicate the work of a practiced hand with none of the shortcuts one might expect in a more hurried execution.

As indicated above, the original owner of this Book of Hours was Jean Martin, an official in the French government (according to notary records, the *Contrôleur Ordinaire des Guerres*), whose name and important genealogical dates are written in the back of this volume. Two devotions to Saint Martin and his Translation (i.e., movement of his relics), added to the end of the Suffrages in a slightly different hand than that of the main scribe, are further evidence of the owner's identity, as is the design of the openwork hasps, with their prominent initials that seemingly must refer to "I[ean] M[artin]." Remnants of purple velvet under the anchor plates and catch plates indicate that the book was once covered in a chemise of this precious material. According to Szirmai, it was not unusual for medieval books to consist of a primary leather binding with an overcover added for extra protection and, especially in the case of textile overcovers, as a luxury material befitting the sumptuous contents.

LITERATURE

Orth, Myra, *Renaissance Manuscripts: The Sixteenth Century*. 2 vols., A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in France, Turnout and London, Brepols and Harvey Miller, 2017.

De Hamel, Christopher. *The Medieval World at Our Fingertips. Manuscript Illuminations from the Collection of Sandra Hindman*, Turnhout and London, Brepols and Harvey Miller, 2017, pp. 189-99 (for the latest contribution on this artist).

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