

Master of Philippe de Gueldres (Paris, active c. 1500-1510)

***Resurrection* (280 x 186 mm.)**

France, Paris, c. 1500-1510

This monumental initial "R" comes from a giant illuminated Gradual, where it prefaced the Introit for the Mass on Easter Sunday which begins *Resurrexi, et adhuc tecum sum*. The arms in the lower margin, held by two angels, are those of the famous abbey of St.-Victor, described as "azure 8 fleur-de-lys scepters or" arranged like the spokes of a wheel. Founded in 1113 and frequently patronized by Louis XI and Anne of Brittany, the royal Abbey of St.-Victor possessed an important library dispersed after the dissolution of the monastery. The medieval library of St.-Victor is preserved virtually intact at the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Bibliothèque Mazarine but most of the Renaissance liturgical books are lost.

Christ steps out of the open sarcophagus, his right hand raised in blessing, while four armored soldiers are depicted in various attitudes of sleep. In the right background appear the three Marys, a reference to the subsequent episode, the arrival of the holy women who bear ointments and find the tomb already empty. Mary Magdalene is identifiable by her ointment jar. The city of Jerusalem appears in the left distance.

The personality of the Master of Philippe de Gueldres was defined by John Plummer, who recognized his connections with Paris. He was once thought to be a pupil of Jean Colombe, native of Bourges, because certain characteristics of his architecture and facial types recall the art of Bourges. Working in Paris in the first decade of the sixteenth century, he was regularly employed by Antoine Vérard for the illustration of printed books, as well as for certain high-born princesses, such as Philippe de Gueldres (wife of René II, duke of Lorraine), from whom he takes his name. Among the characteristics of his style are the carmine red of the robes, the small mouths of the figures, and the thick pleats. There is an illuminated Missal the artist made for the Abbey of St.-Victor in Paris (BnF, MS lat. 14818); perhaps this Gradual was a companion piece. A cutting of St. Victor is in all probability from the same manuscript (London, Sotheby's 23 June 1992, lot 25, listing other possible sister leaves and related manuscripts).

Provenance: Paris, Collection Ambroise Firmin-Didot, sale, Hôtel Drouot, 10-14 June 1884, lot 73.

Literature: Avril and Reynaud, 1993, pp. 278-281; Plummer, 1982, pp. 69-71.