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Book of Hours (Use of Reims)

In Latin and French, illuminated manuscript on parchment

France, probably Paris, c. 1490-1500

14 large miniatures and 1 small one attributed to the Master of Jean d'Albret

157 folios, collation (i-ii⁶, iii⁶⁻¹ [a cancel], iv-vii⁸, viii⁸⁻¹ [missing 5th leaf with loss of text no loss of illustration], ix-xix⁸, xx⁴, xxi⁸), two leaves ruled but otherwise blank, written on 17 long lines in brown and dark brown ink in a gothic liturgical bookhand, rubrics in red, 4-line initials under most miniatures in blue on a gold ground, every page with a two-line initial and a text-height illuminated border with foliate and floral ornament often on geometrically-shaped panels on grounds of gold, colors or plain vellum, 2-line initials in burnished gold edged with black on a blue and red ground with white-line ornament, verse initials and line-fillers in liquid gold on a ground of alternating red, blue, red, brown, one small miniature and 14 large miniatures with full borders sometimes incorporating birds or acanthus leaves., some minor marginal thumb soiling but generally in fine condition throughout with prickings often intact and so preserving almost the full original dimensions. Bound in a 19th-century dark green velvet, blind-stamped in a panel design with a foliate border and a central device incorporating a fleur-de-lis and a crown, silk doublures, parchment endleaves, gauffered and gilt edges, housed in a morocco blind-tooled drop-box (corners, bands and foot of spine torn, but binding in generally very good condition).

Dimensions 200 x 135 mm.

Custom-made, on account of its unusual texts, many in French verse, and rich cycle of pictures, this Book of Hours is in excellent condition, large in format with wide, clean margins. Named after richly illuminated copies printed by Antoine Vérard and presented to the King of Navarre, Jean III or Jean d'Albret, the artist seems to have inspired the confidence not only of the best Parisian publishers of the day, but of high-ranking families with money to spend on their illuminated books. This *Horae* was made for a woman, perhaps as a dowry or wedding present.

PROVENANCE

1. Made for use in Reims or perhaps Chalons-sur-Marne. The use of the Hours of the Virgin and the Office of the Dead is Reims. Among the saints in the calendar are St. Remigius, archbishop of Reims, in red (January 13), Saint Alpinus, twice, bishop of Chalons-sur-Marne (May 2 in blue, and September 7), Saint Memmius, bishop of Chalons-sur-Marne in red (August 5), Saint Nicasius in red, bishop of Rouen (October 11), Saint Nicasius, bishop of Reims (December 14). Saints Alpinus and Claude appear at the end of the litanies. The painter is Parisian (see below), and there is every reason to believe that the manuscript was produced in Paris for export to the provinces.

2. A sonnet entitled "Vraye amour l'ame nous y alie" is inscribed in a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century hand on f. 1, above a monogram in formed for the letters in gold coupled in love-knots.
3. Long bibliographic note written in a nineteenth-century hand, dated 1820, commenting on the value of the manuscript in comparison with those of the Duke of Berry (!): "Ce genre de manuscrit etait a cause des miniatures le plus cher s'il en faut juger par l'inventaire de la succession du Duc de Berry" The note goes on to comment on the Belles Heures and the Tres Riches Heures of the Duke of Berry.
4. Sale London, Sotheby's 5 December 2000, lot 63; previously sold London, Sotheby's, 26 July 1920, lot 318.
5. Miscellaneous notes in English describing the manuscript listing a price (\$125,000) on the verso of the front flyleaf and on the recto of the rear flyleaf the bookseller's inventory "HBS 63390" [Heritage Book Shop?].

TEXT

ff. 2-13v, Calendar in red, blue, and black, red signaling the major feast days, for Reims or Chalons-sur-Marne (see above);

ff. 14-18v, Gospel Sequences;

ff. 19-67, Hours of the Virgin, use of Reims, with Lauds (f. 30), Prime, f. 40v, Terce (f. 46), Sext (f. 50), None (f. 53v), Vespers (f. 56v), and Compline (f. 63);

ff. 67v-70, Prayer on the Passion of Christ, in French in twelve stanzas, beginning "Ihesucrist a matines fut vostre cher vendue. / A prime de crachieen la face batue / ... " (Leroquais, *Livres d'heures*, II, p. 290; and Sonet, *Répertoire d'incipit de prières en ancien français*, no. 934);

ff. 70v-73v, Short Hours of the Holy Spirit;

ff. 74-89, Seven Penitential Psalms and litanies (Alpinus and Claude among the confessors);

ff. 90-128v, Office of the Dead, for the use of Reims;

f. 129, blank and ruled;

ff. 130-134, Fifteen Joys of Mary Magdalene, rubric, "Se sont les xv. ioies de la Magdalaine en manier d'oroison; incipit, "O tres saintct dame magdalaine des dons de dieu enluminee / Par penitence et par ta peine. Lassus es cieulx es couronnee. / ... " (not recorded in Leroquais or Sonet);

ff. 134-140, Suffrages to Saints Peter and Paul, Lupus (f. 134), Sebastian (f. 135), Nicolas (f. 136), Christopher (using masculine forms) (f. 136), Remi (f. 137v), John the Baptist (f. 138), Stephen (f. 138), Lawrence (f. 138v), Catherine (f. 139), Appolonia (f. 139v) and Barbara (f. 140);

ff. 140v-141, Prayer at the Mass, rubric, "A la elevation du corps nostre s[eigneur]," incipit "Anima Christi ...";

ff. 141-142, Seven Verses of St. Bernard (written as eight);

ff. 142-144, Suffrages to Saints Anthony (f. 142), James (f. 142v), All Saints (f. 143) and to One's Guardian Angel (f. 143v);

ff. 145-147v, Two Latin prayers, and a Credo in French, incipit, "Mon benoit dieu ie croy de cuer et confess de bouche tout ..." (Sonet, no. 1150);

ff. 147v-149, Prayer, rubric, "Oroison de nostre seigneur saint Ioseph patriarche et mary de la vierge Marie," incipit, "Jesus ioseph honoravit ...";

ff. 150r-156v, Life of Saint Margaret in French verse, incipit, "Apres la saincte passion. / Ihesucrist a l'ascension. / Quant il fut ou ciel montes. / ..." (Leroquais, II, pp. 138, 210).

A large number of prayers in French, some of them unusual, suggest that an effort was made to customize the book for a reader unfamiliar with Latin. It seems likely that the manuscript was made for a woman, perhaps as a dowry or wedding present. The inclusion of the rare "Life of Saint Margaret" in verse (ff. 150-156v) supports this hypothesis, since Margaret, issuing forth from the dragon that had swallowed her, became the patron saint of childbirth. According to Leroquais there are only two other occurrences of the rare Life of Saint Margaret (see above, Paris, BnF, MSS lat. 13303, 18026). To these, we can add the following: Paris, BnF, MSS n.a.fr. 11670, fr. 2198; New York, Morgan Library, M.779; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson E.12, E.25, E.33; and Aberystwyth, BN NLW 5002-B. Also included, and again appropriate for a female patron, is the evidently entirely unrecorded "Fifteen Joys of Mary Magdalene" (ff. 130-134). Hours for the Use of Reims are not common; Leroquais includes only one Book of Hours for the use of Reims.

ILLUSTRATION

The subjects of the miniatures are as follows:

f. 14, St. John on Patmos;

f. 19, Annunciation;

f. 30, Visitation;

f. 40v, Nativity;

f. 46, Annunciation to the Shepherds;

f. 50, Adoration of the Magi;

- f. 53v, Presentation in the Temple;
- f. 56v, Flight into Egypt with the Miracle of the Cornfield in the background;
- f. 63, Coronation of the Virgin;
- f. 67v, Betrayal of Christ;
- f. 70v, Pentecost;
- f. 74, David and Bathsheba;
- f. 90, Job on the Dungheap;
- f. 130r, St. Mary Magdalene (small miniature);
- f. 150, St. Margaret emerging from the dragon;

The painter responsible for the illumination of this Book of Hours is the artist Isabelle Delaunay christened the Master of Jean d'Albret, who was active in Paris from c. 1490 to c. 1510 and who produced a prodigious number of volumes, both printed ones and manuscripts (2000, vol. II, pp. 28-31). The artist's eponym derives from two incunables destined for Jean d'Albret: Raoul Le Fevre's *Le recueil des histories troiennes*, c. 1494 (copy in New York, PML 515 CHL N°F1541; Winn, 1997, pp. 198-99, 349, figs. 5) and Sebastian Brant, *La nef des fous*, Paris, A Bocard for J. Philippe and G. de Marnef, 1497 (copy in Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Inc. 4114, 2°; Winn, 1997, p. 198, fig. 4, 26). John III (1469-1516), or Jean d'Albret, became King of Navarre through his marriage to Catherine, Countess of Foix, who reigned as Queen of Navarre from 1483. Through his alliance with Catherine, he also acquired the territories of Foix and Béarn. The kingdom of Navarre was lost to Ferdinand of Aragon in 1512. Members of the d'Albret family were important patrons of the arts in France around 1500.

The Master of Jean d'Albret frequently painted both secular and religious volumes for the Parisian printer Antoine Vêrard. His two eponymous productions are secular, as is a splendid copy of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini's *Euralius et Lucesse*, Paris, Antoine Vêrard, c. 1493 (London, BL IB 41145; Winn, 1997, fig. 3.2, p. 90). Also for Vêrard, he painted deluxe personalized Books of Hours, such as the *Grandes Heures Royales* for Anne de Beaujeu, August 20, 1490 (Private Collection; Winn, 1997, p. 195, fig. 4.25), as well as an *Horae* destined for Charles of Angoulême, c. 1492 (New York, PML 127775; Winn, 1997, p. 159, fig. 4. 12). Among his manuscripts are the Hours of Jean de Launay, procurer of the Parliament of Paris (?) in the Walters Art Museum (W. 448; Randall, 1992, cat. 198) and a Book of Hours for an unknown patron and now in Carpentras (BM, MS 54), on which he collaborated with another Parisian painter of the same period, the Master of Etienne Poncher.

Distinctive features of his style evident in works attributed to him and found in the present Hours include the triangular shapes of his faces, with their brown or black hair, highlighted in gold, and

the distinctive painterly treatment of the trees in pale green on black grounds. His style is sometimes difficult to differentiate from that of the Master of the Paris Entries, with whom he often collaborated. Among his patrons, in addition to Jean d'Albret, were the Angevin family Baraton and the Duke of Lorraine. Even if his art does not reach the level of some of his Parisian contemporaries like Jean Pichore, the Master of Jean d'Albret seems to have inspired the confidence not only of the best publishers of the day, like Vérard, but of high-ranking families with money to spend on their illuminated books.

Custom-made, on account of its unusual texts and rich cycle of pictures, the present Book of Hours is large in format with wide, clean margins. Its paintings are in excellent condition, and the borders are highly inventive, often divided into multi-colored geometric compartments formed by lozenges, hearts, or triangles.

LITERATURE

Delaunay, I. "Échanges artistiques entre livres d'heures, manuscrits et imprimés produits à Paris vers 1480-1500," 3 vols., Thèse de doctorat, Paris IV, Sorbonne, 2000, II, pp. 28-31.

Randall, L. et al. *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery, France, 1420-1540*, 2 vols., Baltimore, 1992.

Winn, M. B. *Antoine Vérard, Parisian Publisher, 1485-1512*, Geneva, 1997.

ONLINE RESOURCES

List of Books of Hours, use of Reims

<http://blog.pecia.fr/post/2007/11/02/Les-Heures-a-lusage-de-Reims>

On Carpentras, BM, MS 54, see the image bank

www.enluminures.culture.fr.