

Book of Hours (use of Rouen)

In Latin and French, illuminated manuscript on parchment

France, Rouen, c. 1510

13 large miniatures by the Master of the Missal of Ambroise Le Veneur, with borders by Jean Serpin

77 folios, missing 2 leaves between ff. 46-47 (collation: i6, ii-v8, vi8 (7+1, missing viii with miniature, here replaced by a blank ruled leaf), vii7 (8-1, missing i), viii-x8, ruled in pale red ink, signatures and catchwords, written in a regular bâtarde script on 25 long lines (justification 72 x 120 mm), line-fillers in blue or dark red highlighted in liquid gold, numerous initials in gold on alternately blue or dark red grounds, 2- to 4-line high initials painted in grisaille and black on grounds of gold with a floral motif, 13 full page miniatures with full borders of swirling grisaille acanthus leaves on gold grounds with flowers, grapes, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures or drôleries, birds and other animals, of the 13 full-page miniatures there are 3 set in architectural frames with putti (ff. 15, 27, 29), bracket borders on all pages. Bound in original purple velvet binding, over wooden boards, parchment endleaves, back sewn on four raised thongs, gilt edges (Velvet a bit worn, but nonetheless in overall good original condition, very fresh internal state of conservation).

Dimensions 201 x 132 mm

This is a fine manuscript of large format, in very fresh condition, with a full cycle of illuminations, and an original purple velvet binding. Custom-made in Rouen for a woman who appears in one of the illustrations, the manuscript is attributed to an artist of the Rouen Renaissance much influenced by Robert Boyvin. Named for an eponymous manuscript for the bishop of nearby Evreux, the Master of Ambroise Le Veneur emerges as a distinct artistic personality of considerable skill and accomplishment.

PROVENANCE

1. The Rouen origin of the manuscript is clear from the use of the Hours of the Virgin, the Office of the Dead, and from certain saints in the calendar (see below), as well as the style of the miniatures. No doubt it was painted for the woman who is present praying in devotion in the miniature of the Descent of the Cross (f. 73v). Her arms, now over-painted, must have figured at least on f. 73v below the Pietà and the robes of the Virgin, where one still perceives the contours of the original, now effaced, shield, now replaced by the arms of an abbot or bishop (see below).
2. The original arms, which occurred on several leaves, are over-painted (cf. ff. 1, 15, 27, 39v, 56v et 73v) with the following arms: *écartelé au 1 et 4 d'argent plain au lambel à trois pendants de*

gueules, au 2 et 3 à l'hermine au chef de gueules. These arms are those of an abbot (the crosier associated with the shield indicates his rank or position), certainly the second owner after the patron by whom the manuscript was commissioned. Several families bore the arms *hermine au chef de gueules*: the Arquenay, de Campené, de Champeigné, Gollencourt, Goussencourt, Hargicourt, de la Rossignolière, Roubaix, Simon du Val au Houle, Vernel, Verneto, Verneys, La Vieuville, Vivonne. Normally the Blandin family bore the arms of *argent au lambel à cinq pendants de sable*, which differ considerably from what we see here (*trois pendants de gueules*), thus the second part of the arms remains for now unidentified, but will doubtless eventually be identifiable by name.

3. Gascon de Fayolles, inscription in light brown ink on back pastedown.

4. Private European Collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-6, Calendar, in blue, red, and gold, with the following noteworthy saints: in red, Julien (27 Jan.); Translation of Saint Anne (31 Jan.); Austreberte (10 Feb.); Aubin (1 March); Translation Saint Quentin (2 May); Desir (23 May); Philibert (20 Aug.); Maurille (13 Sept.); Nicaise (11 Oct.); Mellon (22 Oct.); in gold, Eloy (25 June); Martial (3 July); Romain (23 Oct.); in blue, Evod (8 July); Wandrille (23 July);

ff. 7-10, Gospel Sequences;

ff. 10v-12, *Obsecro te*, for masculine use;

ff. 12-14, *O Intemerata*

ff. 14-14v, Prayer to the Virgin, rubric, *Alia salutatio ad beatam Virginem*; incipit, "Ave cujus conceptio solemni plena gaudio...";

ff. 15-45v, Mixed Hours of the Virgin, use of Rouen, as follows, f. 15v, Matins; f. 21, Lauds; f. 27, Matins of the Hours of the Cross; f. 28, Matins of the Holy Spirit; f. 29, Prime; f. 32, Prime of the Hours of the Cross and the Holy Spirit; f. 32, Terce; f. 34, Terce of the Cross and the Holy Spirit; f. 35, Sext; f. 36v, Sext of the Cross and the Holy Spirit; f. 37v, None; f. 39, None of the Cross and the Holy Spirit; f. 40, Vespers; f. 41, Vespers of the Cross and the Holy Spirit; f. 42v, Compline; f. 45, Compline of the Cross and the Holy Spirit;

f. 46-46v, blank;

ff. 47-56v, Seven Penitential Psalms and litanies (incomplete at the beginning), including Austreberte and Aubin, as in the calendar;

ff. 57-73, Office of the Dead, with three readings, f. 57v, Vespers; f. 60, Matins; and f. 71, Lauds;

ff. 73v-75, Prayer to the Virgin, *Stabat mater*;

ff. 75-77v, Suffrages, with rubrics, f. 75, *De sanctissima trinitate; De sancto Michale*; f. 75v, *De sancto Johanne Baptista; De sancto Johanne evangelista*; f. 76, *De sanctis petro et paulo*; f. 76v, *De sancto Stephano*; f. 77, *De sancto Nicolao; De sancto Katherina*; f. 77v, *De sancta Barabara*;

ILLUSTRATION

f. 7, Four Evangelists;

f. 15, Annunciation;

f. 21, Visitation;

f. 27, Crucifixion;

f. 28, Pentecost;

f. 29, Nativity;

f. 32v, Annunciation to the Shepherds;

f. 35, Adoration of the Magi;

f. 37v, Presentation in the Temple;

f. 40, Flight into Egypt;

f. 42v, Coronation of the Virgin;

f. 57, Last Judgment;

f. 73v, Descent from the Cross.

This large-format Book of Hours was specially made to order for the elegant Rouen woman portrayed in the miniature of the Descent from the Cross (f. 73v), and it evidently changed hands shortly thereafter, when her arms were altered (on ff. 1, 15, 27, 39v, 56v, and 73v) to signal the ownership by a yet unidentified abbot or bishop most likely from Normandy or Brittany. It offers an excellent example of the work of the artist known as the Master of the Missal of Ambroise Le Veneur, identified and studied by Isabelle Delaunay (see Delaunay, 1991, below). The Master of Ambroise Le Veneur appears to have collaborated with the illuminator Jean Serpin or Cerpin, also studied by Isabelle Delaunay.

The Master is named after a grand Missal painted for Ambroise Le Veneur, Bishop of Evreux (1511-1531), now in Evreux, BM, MS lat. 100 (see Delaunay, 1991, fig. 164 and p. 104). His style is influenced strongly by Robert, or Robinet, Boyvin, with whom he collaborated in a manuscript painted for the Duc d'Alençon (Paris, Bibliothèque du Musée du Petit-Palais, MS Dutuit 217).

Boyvin is an illuminator recorded in the accounts from 1487 and last mentioned in 1535-36. Long associated in the literature with the School of Rouen, Boyvin began his apprenticeship with the principal illuminator of the Playfair Hours, in which he participated and was, in turn, deeply indebted to the Gothic style of the Master of the Échevinage of Rouen whose models from the 1470s he adapted. The prolific Boyvin then worked extensively for Cardinal Georges d'Amboise, who was archbishop of Rouen from 1493 until his death on 25 May 1510 (Cardinal from 1498). In all, 56 manuscripts are assigned to him, and his mature work displays a Renaissance aesthetic that has evolved far from earlier Rouen painting and was evidently much favored by Georges d'Amboise.

The palette, the facial types, the organization of the landscapes, and the borders in our manuscript all confirm the close relationship between the Master of Ambroise Le Veneur and Robert Boyvin and, at the same time, its firm attribution to the former artist. Extremely close to the present book are the miniatures in a Book of Hours formerly in the Carlton R. Richmond Collection (New York, Christie's, 20 May 1983, lot 45; now dispersed, with single sheets belonging to Cleveland, Museum of Art, Jeanne Miles Collection). This Richmond Hours can be dated to the second style of Robert Boyvin (between 1495 and 1503). Our illuminations recall more closely the eponymous manuscript of Ambroise Le Veneur (compare the Crucifixion, Delaunay, 1991, fig. 164, and our f. 27), where the disposition of Christ on the cross, the two thieves, and the reversed horse and rider are comparable. The Adoration of the Magi in the present manuscript (f. 35) compares with the miniature of the same subject in a Book of Hours attributed to the Master of Ambroise Le Veneur (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 72, f. 36; see Madan, 1897, p. 512). The borders of arabesques, putti, scrollwork, and dangling finials occur in both the above-mentioned manuscripts.

Relationships between Rouen and Paris during this period have yet to be disentangled. Norman booksellers evidently financed Parisian printers, and the skilled Parisian illuminator cum woodcut designer, Jean Pichore strongly influenced the School of Rouen. These ties are underscored in our manuscript, in which the *Crucifixion* derives from a metalcut designed by Pichore, first used by Simon Vostre in 1496 and then employed by Gillet Hardouyn until 1515 (see Zöhl, 2004, figs. 85, 216, 118, 149).

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

For reproductions of the Missal of Ambroise Le Veneur, Evreux, BM, MS lat. 100

www.enluminures.culture.fr