

Le Louvre des Antiquaires
2 Place du Palais-Royal
75001 Paris (France)
tel. +33 (0)1 42 60 15 58 • fax. +33 (0)1 40 15 00 25
info@lesenluminures.com

2970 North Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, IL 60657 (USA)
tel. +773 929 5986
fax. +773 528 3976
chicago@lesenluminures.com

Book of Hours (Use of Rome)

In Latin and French, illuminated manuscript on parchment

France, Paris, c. 1470

8 historiated initials and 1 full-page miniature by Maître François

274 ff., preceded by 3 parchment flyleaves (ruled) and followed by two flyleaves (also ruled in red), missing 4 leaves with miniatures (collation: i¹², ii-iii⁸, iv⁵ [4+1], v⁷ [8-1, missing i with miniature], vi-xviii⁸, xix⁷ [8-1, missing i with miniature], xx-xxii⁸, xxiii⁷ [8-1, missing iv with miniature], xxiv⁷ [8-1, missing iv with miniature], xxv-xxxv⁸), written in brown ink in a fine lettre bâtarde, in two sizes of script, on up to 13 lines (justification: 66 x 42 mm), some catchwords, rubrics in light red, calendar in alternate lines of red and blue with major feasts in burnished gold, line-fillers in blue and gold, capitals touched in yellow, numerous 1- to 2-line high initials in blue or gold, with red or dark blue filigree penwork, panel borders on every second page with burnished gold ivy leaves, colored flowers and acanthus leaves on reserved grounds, 4-line high initials in blue with white tracery on burnished gold grounds with infill of colored ivy leaves (ff. 20v, 25v) set in three-quarter borders of flowers and acanthus leaves with grotesques, animals, and various drolleries on reserved grounds, 8 historiated initials set within three-quarter borders of flowers and acanthus leaves with grotesques, animals, people and various drolleries on reserved grounds, 1 full-page arch-topped miniature above a 3-line high initial in blue with white tracery on gold ground and infill of colored ivy leaves, miniature set within a full border of flowers, acanthus leaves, grotesques and a bird set on geometrically-patterned reserved and gold grounds (fol. 169). Bound in an elegant sixteenth-century fanfare binding of red morocco over pasteboard, smooth spine decorated in fanfare style, marbled pastedowns, traces of ties, gilt edges ("Empty" Fanfare binding or "Fanfare vide" datable c. 1580s [reign of Henri III], without any foliate ornamentation, see G. Hobson, *Les reliures à la fanfare...* [1970], "Huitième Liste. Les reliures à la fanfare à compartiments vides," pp. 55-59, and plate "Deux reliures à compartiments vides, 1584-1585," pl. XIX). Dimensions 140 x 97 mm.

In its original state, this manuscript was a ravishing, deluxe commission, planned from the start to have but a modest cycle of large illuminations complemented by charming historiated initials. Of impeccable execution, its bright and colorful miniatures are securely attributed to Maître François, an artist who dominated Parisian manuscript illumination in the third quarter of the fifteenth century to about 1480. Its diminutive size, coupled with certain textual features, suggest that it was custom made for a lay woman, perhaps a member of the Third Order of the Franciscans.

PROVENANCE

This Book of Hours was copied and illuminated in Paris, based on stylistic elements. The use of the Hours of the Virgin and that of the Office of the Dead are for the more universal use of Rome, but the saints in the Calendar all suggest this manuscript was copied for Parisian use.

The presence of a suffrage for a grouping of Franciscan saints, suggests a Franciscan sympathy

or relation for this manuscript: "De saint franchois" (f. 259) and "Memoire de saint franchois, de saint loys, de saint anthoine, de saint bernardin et sainte clare" (fol. 259v). In addition, the presence of the uncommon Saint Germer in the Suffrages (f. 260v) might suggest a tie to Saint-Germer-de-Fly (Oise, near Beauvais, just north of Paris) or to the Picardy region of France, with a suffrage to Saint Quentin (f. 255v), also typically Picard. The Beauvais connection would also be supported by the inclusion in the Suffrages of a prayer for Saint Lucien and his companions (f. 254v) (for a list of Beauvais saints, see Réau, 1959, III/3, p. 1419). The manuscript was most likely made for a woman because the "Obsecro te" is for female use.

Private Collection, United Kingdom

TEXT

ff. 1-12, Calendar, in French, in red, gold and blue, with an entry for every day, clearly for Paris use, with the following relevant saints: in gold, Geneviève (3 Jan.); Barnabe (11 June); Denis (9 Oct.);

ff. 13-20, Gospel Sequences;

ff. 20v-25v, *Obsecro te*, for female use;

ff. 25v-31, *O intemerata*;

ff. 31-33, Seven Verses of Saint Bernard, rubric, *Les vers saint bernard*;

f. 33v, blank;

ff. 34-63v, Hours of the Virgin, use of Rome, Matins, incipit, "[...] dominus tecum. [Psalm] Venite exultemus..."; rubric, *Le cantique des angelz* (ff. 61-63v) [begins imperfectly, lacks opening historiated initial or miniature];

ff. 63v-43v, Hours of the Virgin, use of Rome, Lauds to Compline, rubric, *Il est a scavoir que a laudes la premiere antienne sert depuis le premier dymenche de l'advent jusques au noel...*; Lauds (f. 64); Prime (f. 85v), with rubric, *Ceste antienne se dit tousjours et en tous temps*, "Assumpta es..." (f. 89v); and rubric, *Ce chapitre se dit en tous temps*, "Que est ista..." (ff. 90-90v); Terce (f. 94v); Sext (f. 102); None (f. 110v), with *Ceste antienne se dit tousjours et en tous temps*, "Pulchra es..." (ff. 114-114v); and *Ce chapitre se dit toujours et en tous temps*, "In plateis..." (ff. 114v-115); Vespers (f. 118v); Compline (f. 133);

ff. 144-144v, blank;

ff. 145-168v, Penitential Psalms [missing beginning with miniature], with Litanies (beginning f. 161), Kyrie, and Prayers;

ff. 168v-178v, Hours of the Cross, with rubric, *Ce sont les heures de la croix* [missing ending];

ff. 179-185v, Hours of the Holy Spirit [missing beginning with miniature];

ff. 185v-247, Office of the Dead, for the use of Rome, with nine lessons: 1) Parce michi (f. 202v); 2) Tedet animam meam (f. 203v); 3) Manus tue (f. 205); 4) Responde michi (f. 213); 5) Homo natus (fol. 214v); 6) Quis michi hoc (f. 215v); 7) Spiritus meus (f. 220); 8) Pelli mee consumptis (f. 226v); 9) Quare de vulna (f. 228) [missing beginning with miniature];

ff. 247v-274, Suffrages, with following rubrics, all in French, Memoire de la trinité (f. 247v); De saint michiel l'angle (f. 248); De saint jehan baptiste (f. 248v); De saint pierre saint pol (f. 249v); De saint jehan evangeliste (f. 250); De saint jacques le grant (f. 250v); De saint laurens (f. 251v); De saint sebastian martir (f. 251 bis); De saint cosme et saint damien (f. 251 bis verso); De saint pierre martyr (f. 253); Memoire de saint cler (f. 253v); De saint lucian et ses compaignons (f. 254v); De saint quentin (f. 255v); Memoire de saint christofle (f. 257); Memoire de saint denis (f. 258); De saint franchois (f. 259); Memoire de saint franchois, de saint loys, de saint anthoine, de saint bernardin et sainte clare (f. 259v); Memoire de saint germer (f. 260v); De saint evroult (f. 261); de saint julian (f. 261v); De saint nicholas (f. 262); De saint merry (f. 262v); De saint frold confesseur (f. 263v); De la magdaleine (f. 263v); De sainte katherine (f. 265); De sainte avoie (f. 266); De sainte apoline (f. 266v); De sainte geneviefve (f. 267); De sainte barbe (f. 267v); De sainte marguerite (f. 269); Memoire de saint lienard (f. 269v), with prayer opening with a large filigree initial, indicating solemnity: "Maiestati tue...leonardi..." (f. 270); Memoire de tous sains (ff. 270-270v); Memoire de saint martin (f. 272); Memoire de saint paxent (f. 272v).

ILLUSTRATION

The eight historiated initials depict the following subjects:

- f. 13, St. John on Patmos, historiated initial I;
- f. 64, Visitation, historiated initial D;
- f. 85v, Nativity, historiated initial D;
- f. 94v, Annunciation to the Shepherds, historiated initial D;
- f. 102, Adoration of the Magi, historiated initial D;
- f. 110v, Presentation in the Temple, historiated initial D;
- f. 118v, Flight into Egypt, historiated initial D;
- f. 133, Coronation of the Virgin, historiated initial C.

The large miniature:

- f. 169, Crucifixion, full-page miniature, set in an arch-topped frame.

In its original state, this manuscript was a ravishing, deluxe commission, planned from the start to have but a modest cycle of large illuminations well complemented by charming historiated initials.

Four miniatures are missing, at the start of Matins of the Hours of the Virgin [Annunciation]; Seven Penitential Psalms [King David]; the Hours of the Holy Spirit [Pentecost]; and the Office of the Dead [Job?]. Signs of opulence remain: the triple-graded calendar includes many feast days written in gold leaf; and bracket borders of acanthus, liquid gold, azure, and gold leaf adorn nearly every page. The historiated initials for the cycle of the Hours of the Virgin are of great quality, betraying the hand of a master rather than an assistant. They are each accompanied, as is the full-page miniature, by a full border, densely illuminated with acanthus, floral and foliate decoration, and drolleries of great variety including dragonflies, hunters, a mermaid admiring herself in the mirror, a peddler with a basket on his back, lions, a child riding a camel, snails, winged mermaids, and all manner of birds with colorful plumage. The fact that the scribe went out of his way to change the wording of the "Obsecro te" for recitation by a woman ("tua famula") indicates that the manuscript was made to order, surely by a woman, for whom the many rubrics in French, specifying how and when to say one's prayers, would be appropriate. The small, portable size and delicacy of design and execution makes it easy to imagine this little volume as the "vade mecum" of a spiritual lay woman, perhaps even a member of the Third Order of the Franciscans, which might account also for the modest picture cycle.

The bright and colorful style of the Parisian illuminator named Maître François is readily recognizable in this Book of Hours. As defined by Eleanor Spencer, the work of Maître François dominated Parisian manuscript illumination in the third quarter of the fifteenth century up until about 1480. In an era when most artists were anonymous, it is remarkable that we know his name, which comes down to us from an unusually detailed inscription giving the date and place of execution in a deluxe two-volume set of St. Augustine's *City of God* (Paris, BnF, MS fr. 18): the *egregious pictor Franciscus* painted these volumes in 1469 and 1473 respectively on order for Charles de Gaucourt, the counselor and chamberlain of King Louis XI, governor of Amiens, and then lieutenant general of Paris. The inscription praises the artist, stating that even the celebrated ancient painter Apelles could not have done better. Indeed, Maître François worked for a series of patrons at the court and in the close royal circle. About fifty manuscripts attributed to his hand are extant, many of them grand historical or secular volumes, richly illuminated and of large format.

Among the manuscripts attributed to Maître François, there are about thirty Books of Hours of various formats, medium and small, and differing decorative schemata. Relatively early in his career is the well-documented Hours of Jacques de Langeac (Lyon, BM, MS 5154), whose colophon dates it precisely to 1465, gives the name of the patron, and even the name of the scribe Jehan Dubrueil, whose characteristic calligraphy is found in another manuscript (Les Enluminures, Cat. 15, no. 5; and BOH 17). The frames composed of diaphragm arches so favored by the artist are found in this Hours, and a typical version appears in our Crucifixion miniature (f. 169), with tiny triangular finials articulating the arch. Also characteristic of Maître François's Books of Hours, and later in date, are two manuscripts in a type of semi-grisaille, one in Melbourne, the Wharnccliffe Hours (National Gallery of Victoria, Fr. Ms. Felton 1072/3; see Manion, 1972), and another in the British Library (Egerton MS 2045). The present manuscript bears all the characteristics of Maître François's mature style: bright and vivid colors that are well contrasted define the elegant figures, who are sometimes a little stiff, their drapery highlighted with meticulously applied liquid gold; the figures are set in pastel landscapes, painted in light and clear tones, and monochromatically pastel. His *Abrégé de Tite-Live* (Paris, BnF, MS fr. 9186; Avril and Reynaud, 1993, no. 15, pp. 46-48) painted

around 1470 includes figures of this type. So, too, are the dense acanthus and floral borders full of imaginative drolleries found in the BnF MS fr. 9186.

The scenes in the present manuscript are classic and traditional. Models that could be adjusted in size served for the same subjects (sometimes figures are reversed) in our manuscript and in the Wharncliffe and Egerton Hours. Compare for example the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt, and the Presentation in the Temple. Of impeccable execution and with astonishing detail, tiny spaces usually no more than 3 cm. or 1 ¼ inches high are filled with incredible, convincing detail of distant landscapes (ff. 94v and 118v) and shallow, well-articulated architectural interiors (ff. 110v and 133). The last important Parisian illuminator before the explosion of production that occurred with the beginning of printing in Paris, Maître François left his imprint on generations of painters active in Paris in the decades on either side of France 1500. He had many assistants and imitators, but the present manuscript joins the works securely attributed to him rather than to his active workshop.

LITERATURE

Avril, F. and N. Reynaud. *Les manuscrits à peintures en France, 1480-1520*, Paris, Flammarion, 1993.

Manion, M. *The Wharncliffe Hours: a Fifteenth-century Illuminated Prayerbook in the Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia*, Sydney, 1972

Réau, L. *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, 3 vols., Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1958-1959.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Paris Calendar

<http://www.chd.dk/cals/pariscal.html>

Hours of the Virgin, use of Rome

http://www.chd.dk/use/hv_rome.html

Office of the Dead, Use of Rome

http://www.chd.dk/use/OD_rome.html

London, British Library, Egerton MS 2045

<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/welcome.htm>