

Jean Pichore, workshop of (Paris, fl. 1500-1520)

Men Sowing, October miniature from the Calendar of a Book of Hours (122 x 67 mm.)

France, Paris, c. 1515

This charming leaf comes from a Book of Hours in the Morgan Library and Museum that lacks its Calendar (MS M.286). Prefacing the feasts for the month of October is a leaf illustrating the traditional occupation for the month; it depicts men sowing seeds for the winter wheat harvest. Painted with great delicacy and finesse, the miniature displays elegantly dressed figures in semi-grisaille tones against a softly colored landscape, the houses of which are painted in pastel tones. The text is written as though on a screen, all within a Renaissance architectural surround with the zodiac sign, Scorpio, in a gold medallion below.

Recent scholarship has attributed Morgan M.286 to an illuminator in the workshop of Jean Pichore or a close follower (see Zöhl, 2004, p. 187, and Wieck, 2004, pp. 247-253). The elegance and sophistication of this October leaf accord well with the style of Pichore, who played such a dominant role in Parisian illumination in the early decades of the sixteenth century. Wieck includes him in a small group of "post-Poyet" artists and notes his familiarity with Poyet models, even if he was apparently trained in Tours under Jean Bourdichon not by Poyet. A leaf for December likely from the same manuscript was sold at Christie's in London, 2 June 1999 (lot 19b, there attributed to the 1520s Workshop). The Pichore Workshop's compositions for October and December hark back, if distantly, to the Hours of Henry VIII (Morgan Library and Museum, MS. H.8, ff. 5v and 6v, see Wieck, 2000).

An unusual feature of this leaf is its final quatrain, belonging to a sequence of verses relating the years in a man's life (the Ages of Man) to the months of the year. In this case, the poem reads "in the month of October man is sixty years old/ if he is rich, he is fortunate/ with his means, he can feed his wife/ and children/ [and] will no longer need to work/ or labor." These quatrains appear more commonly in printed *Horae*; their appearance in this manuscript seems likely to be an adoption from such a source.

Literature: Wieck, 2000, p. 70-71; Wieck, 2004, pp. 247-253; Zöhl, 2004, p. 187.