

The Master of François de Rohan (Paris, active c. 1525-1546)  
*Messenger Brings a Letter: the Judgment* (270 x 205 mm.) from Jean Cretin's *Le Débat entre deux dames*  
France, Paris, 1525-1530

This leaf comes from the only surviving illuminated copy of a poem by Guillaume Cretin (died 1525), *Le Débat entre deux dames sur le pasetemps des chiens et oyseaux* ("The Debate between Two Women on the Pastimes of Dogs and Birds"). The poem considers the relative merits of hunting with dogs or hunting with birds and was illustrated with four miniatures on the following subjects: a debate between two women in front of a poet (the frontispiece, now Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, CMA 91.157), a hunt with dogs, a hunt with birds (both USA, Private Collection), and a messenger bringing a letter with the final judgment. The fourth miniature of the final judgment, presented here, shows the clerk, who receives the letter containing the judgment in the left background and gives it to the count in the foreground. The contenders, a bird and a dog, pose nearby, and the two women animating the debate peer out of the doorway in the background. The dogs win.

This miniature is by a distinctive artist, named the Master of François de Rohan by Myra Orth (Orth, 1998). He takes his name from the eponymous manuscript, a *Fleur de Vertu*, which shows François de Rohan the translator of the *Fleur de Vertu* and archbishop of Lyons, picking a lily in an enclosed garden (Paris, BnF, MS fr. 1877). His coherent corpus, as reconstructed by Orth in 1998, includes 18 manuscripts and 4 printed books, extending from the 1520s to 1546. He was formerly called the Master of Francis I because of the large number of manuscripts he painted for François I, Margaret of Navarre, and other individuals in the close royal circle.

The artist's style is characterized by vibrant colors, animated figures, and lush landscapes populated with numerous animals. Orth proposes that he was trained in Germany or perhaps Switzerland (1998, p. 72). Through his particularly northern skill at depicting verdant landscapes and frolicking animals combined with his propensity for Italianate architecture and classical decoration, the Master of François de Rohan created an artistic idiom that is wholly in keeping with the internationalism of King François I's court at Fontainebleau.

**Provenance:** Henri Gallice (acquired in 1894); Marcel Jeanson, MS 112 (his sale, Monaco, Sotheby's, 28 February 1987 to 1 March 1987, lot 157).

**Literature:** Hindman, 1988, no. 34, pp. 68-73 and 133-134; Orth, 1998, pp. 69-91.