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Ferial Psalter and Breviary

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment

[Low Countries, diocese of Liege (Maastricht?)] signed and dated 1499-1500

268 folios, mostly in gatherings of 8 (collation impracticable), written in a neat rounded Gothic script in brown and brownish-black ink on 23-25 long lines, vertical ruled only in brown ink in left and right margins (justification c. 75 x 43 mm.), 1-line initials alternating in red and blue, sometimes in brushed gold, guide letters frequently visible, occasional calligraphic penwork in red and purple, 11 LARGE ILLUMINATED INITIALS in colors and highly burnished goldleaf on 9 to 12 lines, 2 ILLUMINATED FULL BORDERS (ff. 9 and 246) with plump multi-colored acanthus in orange, pink, green, blue, yellow, and grey with animals (lion, rabbit, birds) and putto in the margins, 1 FULL-PAGE MINIATURE WITH A FACING FULL BORDER (ff. 109v-110), many later (seventeenth-century) marginal notations mostly of added prayers, numerous finding tabs in parchment, the tips painted red, blue, or green, generally in clean condition, the miniature and facing page slightly faded. Bound in modern red niger, parchment pastedowns stamped MARLIERE, with two braided leather and metal clasps, uncut (?), edges painted blue, leather and cloth clamshell box "A BOOK OF HOURS" [sic]. Dimensions 94 x 65 mm.

Signed in three places and dated in four by an unrecorded scribe, who must therefore have taken great pride in his work, this near-miniature devotional manuscript betrays unusual decoration and idiosyncratic liturgical features that place it in the southeastern Low Countries in the diocese of Liege. Precisely localized signed and dated manuscripts are rare..

PROVENANCE

1. Signed in three places (ff. 108v, 268v, and 47v, the latter carefully tooled on the gold leaf of an initial) and dated in four (ff. 7v, 1501; 58, 1500, written in the the bar of an initial; 108, 1500; and 268, 1499) by the scribe: "Fr. Ar. Guetsen." He appears to be unrecorded. Although no liturgical use is indicated for the Psalter-Breviary, the saints in the calendar and litanies are specific to Maastricht and Liege : Lambert and Hubert, bishops of Maastricht, both in red (17 september

and 3 November). Saint Odilia of Alsace also appears in the calendar (her translation on 17 July as in the diocese of Liege) and in the litany, as does St. Servatius, bishop of Tongeren (St. Servatius Church in Maastricht), in red (13 May).

2. Still in use in the seventeenth century, when a later reader added many prayers to the text and some saints to the calendar, including an obit dated 1647 (f. 2).

TEXT

ff. 1-6v, Calendar in black and red (see Provenance);

f. 7, Easter Table, beginning 1501 (date added by the scribe);;

f. 8, Prayers to say before the canonical office, Rubric, *Ante horas canonicas oracio*; incipit, "Aperi domine os meum ...";

ff. 9-108v, Ferial Psalter, incipit "Beatus Vir"; f. 22, "Dominus illumacio mea"; f. 30v, "Dixi custodiam vias meas"; f. 39, "Dixit insipiens in corde suo"; f. 47v, "Salvum me fac" (signed in the middle bar of the S "Fr. Ar. Guetsen"); f. 58, "Exultate domino" (dated in the middle bar of the E "Anno ds. 1500"); f. 67v, "Cantate domino"; f. 77v, "Dixit dominus domino meo"; followed by the Canticles, Isaiah, f. 98v, and so forth; f. 107r-v, litanies, including Lambert, Servatius, Odilia; explicit, "1500 Ar. Guetsen."

ff. 110-268v, Breviary, Temporal, beginning with Advent; followed by the Sanctoral, beginning incompletely in the middle of a prayer to Andrew (thus, missing only one leaf), "... ita apud te sit pro nobis ..." including Odilia (f. 207), Lambert (f. 229); ff. 236-, Rubric, *In vigilia beate marie virginis et omnium sanctorum*; f. 246, Common of the Apostles; f. 265, *Incipiunt vigilie defunctorum..* Explicit, "An[no] 1499 p[er] fr[ater] Ar. Guetsen."

ILLUSTRATION

f. 9, in the border, richly illuminated in thick gold leaf scrollwork enclosing the figures of David holding his harp, a phoenix regarding his nest, another bird, a putto, and a lion in full flight.

ff. 109v-110, in an architectural border with an armorial shield containing fanciful motifs is an Annunciation, in a bedroom, the Virgin portrayed with long blond hair, interrupted while reading her hours, an angel hovers in the left middleground, a view through a doorway in the background and a roundel in the center background in which the dove, the Holy Spirit, is depicted, facing a Renaissance border with scrolls (blank), candelabra, and garlands of fruit.

f. 246, in the border, rich acanthus in a variety of colors enclosing a lion and several birds; the thick gold leaf ground of the initial delicately tooled with foliate scrollwork.

The two fully illuminated borders and the full-page miniature and facing border are in the style of work produced in the southeastern Low Countries. Especially the richly illuminated borders reveal the influence on Liege painting at the end of the century of middle-Rhenish motifs from the last half of the century. The gold leaf scrollwork borders and the dense acanthus borders are atypical, as strewn borders are more common in other Liege productions of this date.

The model for the Annunciation in our book is the same as that in a closely related Book of Hours and Prayerbook for Dominican use (The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 74 G 36, f. 82v) made for a member of the Bylant family in Liege (Maastricht?) between 1505-15 (see Online Resources).

LITERATURE.

Online Resources

The Breviary in Latin and English
<http://www.breviary.net>

An introduction to the Roman Breviary
<http://www.ewtn.com/library/PRAYER/DIOFFICE.TXT>

Digital images of illuminated manuscripts in The Hague
<http://www.kb.nl/kb/manuscripts>