

LES ENLUMINURES

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A collection of drawings: Genesis, Twelve Patriarchs and Twelve Sibyls
In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper
France (Paris?), seventeenth century, after 1617
Twenty-nine pen and ink drawings by an anonymous artist

30 + i folios on paper, watermark, letter 'N' crowned, illegible name below, watermark on the contemporary end flyleaf, (only the lower half) cartouche with the letters "I (?) G B," contemporary pagination in brown ink, 1-42 (with errors), modern foliation in pencil, 1-30, single leaves sewn together, at least four leaves removed after sewing/binding (two before f. 1, one after f. 4, and one after f. 13), 29 very fine pen and ink drawings in brown ink within ruled frames, with inscriptions written in brown ink in littera hybrida script on 2 to 4 lines ruled in pale gray ink, off-set of ink from the provenance notes of the facing pages on ff. 7 and 8, a small hole on f. 26, a few small stains, some leaves cut close to drawn frames at the time of binding, otherwise in fine condition. Bound in the eighteenth century in limp parchment covers, lacking part of the front cover, parchment very stained and worn, two pairs of leather ties for fastening the covers are very worn, but in overall satisfactory condition. Dimensions 162 x 205 mm.

This delightful oblong volume reveals twenty-nine very fine pen and ink drawings. The sources for the images are found in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prints by Étienne Delaune, Carel van Mander, Jacob De Gheyn II, Crispin de Passe the Elder, Thomas de Leu and Pierre Firens. The artist is skillful, and the scenes from the Genesis cycle are especially poetic and elegant. The drawings render a beautiful reinterpretation of the lines originally chiseled by a burin. The subject matter transports the viewer from the beginning of time to prophesies of the future.

PROVENANCE

1. The drawings were probably made in Paris soon after 1617.
2. In the eighteenth century the book of drawings belonged to Madeleine Françoise Paisant. Her ownership inscriptions in French are written in brown ink on the front cover, "Ce livre appartient a Madeleine Paisant," and inside the book on ff. 6v, 7v and 10v. The note on 6v, "Votre tres humble et tres obeisante servante Madelaine Françoise Paisant" is dated October 31, 1764. The notes on f. 6v also mention a certain Margueritte de Change de Carqué.

ILLUSTRATION

The 29 pen and ink drawings that comprise this collection have been copied from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century engravings. There are three distinct series: Genesis, the children of Jacob, and the twelve Sibyls.

The first series, ff. 1-5, scenes from Genesis:

f. 1, God reproving Adam and Eve for their sin;

f. 2, Expulsion from the Garden of Eden;

f. 3, Adam and Eve working after the Fall;

f. 4, Cain killing his brother Abel;

f. 5, God ordering Noah to enter the ark.

These five drawings have been copied from engravings in the series "Histoire de la Genèse" by the French printmaker Étienne Delaune (1518-1583). Delaune's "Genèse" is a set of 36 prints, and the drawings here are copies of prints 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 in Delaune's series (see examples in Online Resources). Stubs of removed leaves in our volume suggest that at least three more drawings were made after this series and bound in the volume: two before f. 1 and one after f. 4. In our drawings the scene is framed within borders made of double lines that enclose flower and leaf ornamentation. Below the image is a descriptive title in Latin that derives from Delaune (e.g. f. 1, "Execratus es pre omni..."). Our artist changed the style of the inscriptions from the capitals used by Delaune to a *littera hybrida* script, copied from the prints of Carel van Mander (see below), and left out the reference to the chapter in Genesis (e.g. "GENESE 3" in Delaune for the image on our f. 1).

The second series, ff. 6-16, the twelve sons of Jacob, the twelve patriarchs: f. 6, Ruben; f. 7, Levi; f. 8, Simeon; f. 9, Juda; f. 10, Zabulon; f. 11, Issachar (?); f. 12, Dan; f. 13, Gad; f. 14, Nephtali; f. 15, Joseph; and f. 16, Benjamin; [f. 17, blank].

These drawings and accompanying captions copy engravings by the Flemish artist and art historian Carel van Mander (1548-1606), which were reprinted by the Dutch printmaker Jacob De Gheyn II (c. 1565-1629) around 1590, with the exception of the drawing on f. 11 (see below).

The third series, ff. 18-30, the twelve sibyls: f. 18, frontispiece (see below); f. 19, Delphic Sibyl; f. 20, Erythraean Sibyl; f. 21, Cimmerian Sibyl; f. 22, Samian Sibyl; f. 23, Cumaeian Sibyl; f. 24, Hellespontine Sibyl; f. 25, Libyan Sibyl; f. 26, Persian Sibyl; f. 27, Phrygian Sibyl; f. 28, Tiburtine Sibyl; f. 29, European Sibyl; and f. 30, Egyptian Sibyl.

These drawings of sibyls copy engravings by the French engraver of Flemish origin, Thomas de Leu (1560-1612) after engravings by the Flemish engraver Crispin de Passe the Elder (1564-1637), published in Paris in 1617 by Jean Le Clerc in the work entitled: *XII Sibyllae, ordine, inscriptione & forma elegantiori quam antebac umquam. Ex antiquiss. Monumentis restutae & propriis oraculis redditae* (see Online Resources). Our artist also copied the frontispiece to this publication, engraved by Pierre Firens (c. 1580-1638). The inscriptions on four lines of text contain the oracles of the sibyls, and our artist copied them from the 1617 publication. As in the source, they are within frames, placed below the medallions of the sibyls, except for the Persian Sibyl on f. 26, whose inscription our artist placed above the medallion. He also omitted the captions framing the medallions that bear the geographical names of the sibyls.

The iconography of the patriarch portraits derives from *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, an apocryphal work composed in the second century in Greek, based on earlier Christian

redactions and Jewish documents. It was translated into Latin in the thirteenth century, and enjoyed immense popularity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, being translated into several vernacular languages, including Dutch, English, Welsh, French, German, Danish and Bohemian (cf. Veldman and de Jonge, 1985, p. 177). The work is divided into twelve books, or testaments, in which each patriarch narrates his life, virtues and sins, usually concluding with prophetic visions. The book of Ruben, for instance, concentrates on promiscuity, in reference to the episode when he lay with his father's concubine (Genesis 35:22), depicted on the background of his portrait on f. 6. The attribute of the jug spilling water refers to Genesis 49:4: "Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer excel, for you went up unto your father's bed, onto my couch and defiled it." (cf. Veldman and de Jonge, 1985, p. 180). Our drawings of the patriarchs were copied from the *Twelve patriarchs* series of engravings by Jacob De Gheyn II reprinted around 1590 after engravings made by Carel van Mander a few years earlier, except the portraits of Aser and Issachar (see Veldman and de Jonge, 1985, pp. 191-193, figs. 31-34). One of these missing portraits was undoubtedly on the leaf removed after f. 13, probably representing Aser. The portrait of a man on f. 11 was not copied from van Mander's series, although it might represent Issachar, for the man is holding grapes that could refer to the "fruits of their lands" to which Issachar alludes in his testament: "When I came into man's state, I watched with an upright heart, and became bayliff of husbandry unto my fathers, and brought them the fruits of their lands in their due seasons" (cf. Veldman and de Jonge, 1985, p. 182).

The final series of drawings depicts twelve sibyls, ancient female prophets. Augustine and Roger Bacon, among others, wrote about the importance of the sibyls and the truths they had foretold concerning the life of Christ and the Last Judgement. The publication of the *Sibyline Oracles* in Basel in 1545 in the original Greek, and a year later in Latin, allowed the West to access, for the first time, complete books by the Sibyls that had been read in the Greek world for centuries (cf. de Jonge, 2016, p. 8; for a modern English edition, see Online Resources). A new edition in Greek and Latin was published in Paris in 1599, close to the time of creation of the prints copied to our volume. Sibyls were increasingly depicted in art in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century in Italy and France, including by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel (1509-1510), and set to music by Orlando di Lasso in the motet cycle *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* (1558) (cf. de Jonge, 2016, p. 19).

LITERATURE De Greeve, H. *In de schaduw van profeten: Iconografie van de sibille*, Leiden, 2011.

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Veldman, I. and H. de Jonge. "The Sons of Jacob: The Twelve Patriarchs in Sixteenth-Century Netherlandish Prints and Popular Literature," *Simiolus: Netherlandish Quarterly for the History of Art* 15, no. 3/4 (1985), pp. 176-196.

Online: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/15589127.pdf>

ONLINE RESOURCES

Étienne Delaune, *Genesis*, INHA, Paris

<https://bibliotheque->

[numerique.inha.fr/viewer/49728/?offset=#page=6&viewer=picture&o=bookmark&n=0&q=](https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/viewer/49728/?offset=#page=6&viewer=picture&o=bookmark&n=0&q=)

XII Sibyllae, ordine, inscriptione & forma elegantiori..., Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

<http://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11348914-7>

M. Terry, *The Sibylline Oracles* (modern English edition):

<http://www.elfinspell.com/SibyllineOraclesMyIntro.html>

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