

## Book of Hours, Use of Bourges

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment

France (Bourges), c. 1470-1480

ii (paper) + 115 + ii (paper) folios on parchment, missing all the large miniatures, with consequent loss of 18 leaves: missing leaves before ff. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 25, 41, 53, 55, 57, 59, 63, 65, 66, 81, 84, 87 (stubs before ff. 19, 66, 81, and 87 have been obscured by glue), two folios on darker parchment also cut out at end of manuscript before paper flyleaf, complete collation impracticable, ruled in pale red ink, (justification 62 x 45 mm.), written in a bâtarde script in 18 long lines, pale red rubrics, hundreds of 1-line burnished gold initials within the text, one hundred and twelve 2-line illuminated initials in brown with various animals and zoomorphic-hybrids in camaïeu d'or, calendar 12 SMALL MINIATURES with the signs of the zodiac in camaïeu d'or, several partial catchwords, calendar miniatures for January, February, and November, as well as six additional 2-line illuminated initials, smudged and partially effaced, a few leaves were cut when the miniatures were removed, thumbing and signs of use on several leaves, particularly the first folios, a few small stains, f. 54, 1 mm hole in parchment in text block but no loss to text (imperfection in parchment) SIXTEENTH-CENTURY VELVET BINDING embroidered with floral motifs, manuscript fragment used to line the spine with small sections visible on back pastedowns, in fragile condition, with losses to the textile cover on spine and front and back boards. Dimensions 134 x 78 mm.

A tiny Book of Hours that bears all the hallmarks of having once been a remarkably luxurious book, produced at the workshop of Jean Colombe. Although now lacking its large miniatures, gold is used throughout the manuscript, including shining gold initials within the text, replacing the more usual red and blue initials, along with numerous delicate initials in "camaïeu d'or," including signs of the zodiac in the calendar. It survives in a precious, although now fragile, example of a sixteenth-century embroidered velvet binding, and includes family records, direct evidence of its early provenance.

## PROVENANCE

1. Copied in Bourges in the second half of the fifteenth century, likely c. 1470-1480 as supported by textual and liturgical evidence, and the style of the script and illumination, which can be linked to the style of the prominent Bourges artist, Jean Colombe (discussed below). The Office of the Dead is Use of Bourges, the calendar includes feasts of saints local to Bourges, including numerous bishops of Bourges, including the rare Feast of the Miracles of Notre-Dame of Déols (dep. Indre), celebrated in the diocese of Bourges on May 31.
2. Belonged to the families of Imbert L'Huillier (1430-c.1492/3?), and Marguerite Braque (b. 1446), who left family notes (a *livre de raison*) on ff. 1-2v (see below). The L'Huillier/Braque family were Parisian; the paternal grandmother of Imbert L'Huillier was Marie Marcel, daughter of Etienne Marcel, prevost of the merchants of Paris. Imbert L'Huillier's children were all born in Paris and baptized at the church of Saint-Jacques de la Boucherie. The family may, of course, have had some connection with Bourges, but

even if not, they could have commissioned the manuscript from an atelier there (the calendar and the Office of the Dead are local to Bourges, but the Hours of the Virgin is Use of Rome).

### 3. European private collection.

#### TEXT

ff. 1-2v, Family notes by Imbert L'Huillier (1430-c.1492/3?), seigneur of Corbeilles, La Morte d'Egry, and Nourard-le-Franc, échevin of Paris, 1480-1484; by Germain Braque, seigneur of Gyancourt (1425-1485), father of Marguerite Braque (b. 1446), échevin of Paris in 1448, 1451, 1462; by Marguerite Braque, married in 1477 to Imbert L'Huillier, son of Jean II L'Huillier, seigneur of Maniquan, and of Jean de Vitry;

ff. 3-14v, Calendar;

ff. 15-18, Gospel Extracts (incomplete); [f. 18v, blank];

ff. 19-21v, Prayer, Obsecro te (beginning imperfectly);

ff. 22-24v, Prayer, O intemerata (beginning imperfectly);

ff. 25-64, Hours of the Virgin, Use of Rome (incomplete); [f. 65rv, blank but ruled];

ff. 66-80v, Penitential Psalms (beginning imperfectly), and Litany (beginning f. 77) with Saints Stephen, Martial, Ursin, Macau, and Hilary;

ff. 81-83, Hours of the Cross (beginning imperfectly); [f. 83v, blank but ruled];

ff. 84-85v, Hours of the Holy Spirit (beginning imperfectly); [ff. 86rv, blank but ruled];

ff. 87-114v, Office of the Dead, Use of Bourges (Ottosen, 1993), p. 171; [f. 115rv, blank].

#### ILLUMINATION

Decorated with hundreds of burnished gold initials within the text, complemented by 124 dark brown initials with animals and fanciful hybrid creatures in delicate *camaïeu d'or*, including small miniatures of the zodiac signs in the calendar (zodiac signs for January, February, and November partially effaced). Now lacking all the large miniatures (likely once included 18: perhaps 4 for the Gospel extracts, 1 for the *Obsecro te*, 1 for the *O intermerata*, 8 for the Hours of the Virgin (stubs visible in seven cases, but it is likely each Hour was once introduced by a miniature), and 1 each for the Penitential Psalms, the Hours of the Cross, the Hours of the Holy Spirit, the Office of the Dead).

The style of the delicate *camaïeu d'or* initials (initials with figurative decoration executed in one color, in this case gold on brown ground) suggest our manuscript was illuminated in the workshop of Jean Colombe (c. 1430-1493). Several manuscripts ascribed to the latter's production in Bourges present *camaïeu d'or* initials that offer similar stylistic features, both in the shape of the letters and in the handling of the gold hatches used to define their volume. These

are best compared to the larger decorated initials of Sébastien Mamerot's *Passages d'Outremer*, illustrated by Jean Colombe around 1475 (see e.g. Paris, BnF, MS fr. 5594, ff. 106, 248v; Avril and Reynaud, 1993, 179-180, pp. 328-330). Although *camaïeu d'or* initials appear in contemporary books produced in Angers and Tours, those of the present manuscript are identically framed with liquid gold and softly highlighted with hatches of liquid gold.

The production of this manuscript in Colombe's workshop is demonstrated by the nature of the models used in the conception of the calendar's signs of the zodiac. Indeed, almost each of these signs present a simplified repetition of the composition conceived by Colombe in the *camaïeu d'or* calendar medallions that he added to Jean Fouquet's Hours of Jean Robertet around 1465 (New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.834, ff. 1-12v). These are best demonstrated upon comparison of the compositions of the medallions with the small miniatures of Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Scorpio, and Capricornus.

The use of *camaïeu d'or* is a hallmark of Jean Colombe's production and technique. Although it occurs quite frequently in the secondary decoration of his manuscripts, it is also found in the illusionistic architectural frames depicted around the full-page miniatures of his most luxurious Book of Hours, whether it be in the Hours of Louis de Laval (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 920) or in the completion of the Très Riches Heures of Jean de Berry (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65). Jean Colombe's interest in this technique is further demonstrated by a Book of Hours now at Harvard University (Houghton Library, MS Typ. 464; see Wieck 1983, 16, pp. 34-35). It preserves an unusual and rare cycle of fifteen large miniatures that alternate between *camaïeu d'or* (see e.g. f. 40v) grisaille, and full colors. Although it is difficult to assess the nature of the large miniatures missing in the present manuscript, these are likely to have been illuminated in Colombe's workshop.

Native of Bourges, youngest brother to the famous sculptor Michel Colombe, Jean Colombe (c. 1430-1493) oversaw one of the most successful illumination workshops in fifteenth-century France (for an overview, see Jacob 2013). He may have trained with Jean Fouquet, whose Hours of Jean Robertet he completed around 1465 (New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.834). At an early stage of his career, he benefited from the protection of Charlotte of Savoy, Queen of France as the spouse of King Louis XI (r. 1461-1483), although it is unclear whether Colombe was ever actually hired to serve her. Louis de Laval was his best client, who commissioned from him the Hours of Louis de Laval (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 920), sumptuously decorated with no less than twelve hundred miniatures, and historical manuscripts such as Sébastien Mamerot's *Passage d'Outremer* (Paris, BnF, MS fr. 5594; see Avril and Reynaud 1993, 179-180, pp. 328-330). Colombe worked in Bourges almost his entire life, except for the years 1486-1489 when he was recruited to serve Charles I (1468-1490), Duke of Savoy, at his court in Chambéry. The Duke had him complete both the *Très Riches Heures* of Jean de Berry (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65), begun by the Limbourg brothers, and the *Savoy Apocalypse*, begun by Jean Bapteur and Peronet Lamy (Escorial, Royal Library, MS E. Vit. 5). In the aftermath of Colombe's death around 1493, his sons Philibert and François ensured the continuity of the workshop, of which at least seventy illuminated manuscripts survive today (for a list, see Seidel 2014, pp. 197-215). Jean Colombe exercised considerable influence on the development of late fifteenth-century French illumination, and his profusely ornamented style spread widely, not only in Bourges, but also in Troyes and Lyons.

Books of Hours survive in greater numbers than any other type of manuscript from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Prayer Books for private prayer, by the fifteenth century they were copied for a very wide audience indeed, and surviving examples range from some of the most luxurious and famous illuminated manuscripts like the Très Riches Heures belonging to Jean, the Duc de Berry, to more utilitarian examples made for the use of simple merchants. If a family in the fifteenth century owned a book at all, there is a very good chance that the book they owned was a Book of Hours. Book of Hours were often passed down in a family for many generations, and were used, like family Bibles in later centuries, to record family records. The *livre de raison*, or family records, in this manuscript, is direct evidence of its use.

The calendar includes the rare feast of the Miracles of Notre-Dame-de-Déols, commemorating the miracle on May 30, 1187 (celebrated May 31 in the diocese of Bourges), during the war between King Philipp Augustus of France and King Henry II of England. In one version of the story, soldiers were amusing themselves playing dice in front of the Abbey church in Déols (see also Huber, 1935). One of the losers of the game, enraged at his loss, threw a stone at the statue of the Virgin in front of the church. The arm of the baby Jesus broke off, and a flood of blood sprang forth, and the blasphemous soldier was struck down. The church became a pilgrimage site, where the sick were miraculously cured.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

"Fête des miracles de la Bienheureuse Vierge Marie de Déols"

<https://www.laviedessaints.com/fete-des-miracles-de-la-bienheureuse-vierge-marie-de-deols/>  
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