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Book of Hours (Use of Rome)

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment

Southern Netherlands (most likely Bruges), c. 1450

Six full-page miniatures in the late style of the Masters of the Gold Scrolls with full borders

ii (paper) + i (parchment flyleaf) + 106 folios (f. 88 blank) + i (parchment flyleaf) + ii (paper), complete as is, but possibly lacking an Office of the Dead at the end (from which the present frontispiece may have been transferred) (collation 1²⁺¹ [f. 1 inserted, frontispiece] 2⁸⁺⁴ [ff. 14, 15, 18 and 22 inserted, 3 miniatures and opening leaf of text] 3-4⁸ 5⁸⁺¹ [f. 42 inserted, miniature] 6-9⁸ 10⁶ [last blank] 11-12⁸⁺¹ [ff. 89 and 106 inserted, miniature and last leaf of text]), ruled in pale brown ink, (justification 48 x 30 mm.), written in a small gothic book hand with 14 lines in brown ink, rubrics in bright red, capitals touched in red, 1-line initials throughout alternately blue or burnished gold with penwork in red or dark blue, 2-line initials throughout in burnished gold on red and blue grounds with white tracery, seven large initials (mostly 4 lines high, one 3-line) with marginal sprays of colored flowers and burnished gold leaves, FIVE VERY LARGE INITIALS (5-line) with 3-sided bar baguettes and FULL ILLUMINATED BORDERS or flowers and acanthus leaves in color and gold infilled with black penwork, SIX FULL-PAGE MINIATURES in arch-topped compartments WITHIN FULL BORDERS, some wear, some minor rubbing and dust-staining, blank margin cut away from f. 90, slight cockling towards the beginning. Bound in nineteenth-century black morocco gilt (probably French), marbled endleaves, in a brown cloth case. Dimensions 92 x 60 mm.

A jewel-sized Book of Hours small enough to fit in one's pocket. Six full-page miniatures and abundant borders typify Bruges book illumination before and around 1450, here by the Masters of the Gold Scrolls. Already the domesticity of Netherlandish art is clearly apparent, with interiors set in low rooms with tiled floors and silvered lattice windows. At a dozen removes, this is a miniature version of the world evoked by the Van Eycks and Rogier van der Weyden, in which sacred history is replayed in the bourgeois setting of the southern Netherlands.

PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was made in Bruges or conceivably Ghent, to judge from the characteristic decoration as well as the calendar, which singles out in red Saints Bavo and Donatian, patrons of those two adjacent towns. The text is for male use ("famulo tuo", f. 37v). The spelling of "ewangeliste" (ff. 5v and 11v) may suggest a Flemish-speaking scribe.
2. Cutting at the front from an early twentieth-century English or American bookseller's catalogue, in which it was no. 527.
3. Acquired privately in North America.

TEXT

ff. 2r-13v, Calendar, sparse but including the principal southern Netherlandish feasts in red (and Saint Thomas Becket, 29 December, mistakenly described as apostle);

ff. 15r-17v, Hours of the Cross;

ff. 19r-21v, Hours of the Holy Spirit;

ff. 23r-34v, Mass of the Virgin, including the Gospel Sequences;

ff. 34v-41v, *Obsecro te* (in male form) and *O intemerata*;

ff. 43r-87r, the Hours of the Virgin, Use of Rome;

ff. 90r-106v, the Penitential Psalms and Litany, followed by short prayers.

ILLUSTRATION

The subjects of the six full-page miniatures are:

f. 1v, the Mass of the Dead (possibly transferred to its present position from the Office of the Dead, which may once have been at the end of the manuscript);

f. 14v, the Crucifixion;

f. 18v, Pentecost;

f. 22v, the Virgin and Child enthroned, attended by angels;

f. 42v, the Annunciation; and

f. 89v, the Last Judgement.

This is a jewel-sized book, which would be classified as miniature if the margins were not so wide (the text block is less than two inches high by hardly an inch across). The miniatures fall within the late style of the Masters of the Gold Scrolls, characteristic of book illumination in Bruges in the second quarter of the century, often with pinkish red grounds lit with a mass of liquid gold tracery, as in the pictures here on ff. 14v and 89v. This style, in turn, developed around the mid-century into that of the Masters of the Beady Eyes (*Maîtres des yeux brides*), also found in Ghent, of which the present manuscript is a good example. Already the domesticity of Netherlandish art is clearly apparent, with interiors set in low rooms with tiled floors and silvered lattice windows. At a dozen removes, this is a miniature version of the world evoked by the Van Eycks and Rogier van der Weyden, in which sacred history is replayed in the bourgeois setting of the southern Netherlands.

Friedrich Winkler first identified the Gold Scrolls Master in 1925. Later it was recognized that many hands worked in this style and the name was changed to the Gold Scroll Masters. By 2016, Gregory Clark had identified 140 manuscripts, mainly books of hours, in the style of the

Gold Scrolls Masters, illustrating their immense popularity in the second quarter of the fifteenth century in the Southern Netherlands (see Clark). The group of illuminators and the style derive their name from the sumptuous backgrounds, often colored in red, that are filled with delicate gold scrolls. Their activity stretches from the 1420s to the early 1450s.

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