



Spotlight on Tours

Medieval Books of Hours from Tours
at Dr. Jörn Günther Rare Books
Basel – Stalden, Switzerland

Spotlight on Tours



Whereas Paris has so long been France's 'capital of the arts' – around 1500 it had to share this title with Tours on the Loire, favoured by royalty and their entourage. Many of them were avid patrons of the arts and books.

Since the second half of the 15th century to the early 16th century, the city of Tours was a renowned centre of manuscript illumination. Four French kings – Louis XI, Charles VIII, Louis XII and Francis I – were served here by the best illuminators.

Jean Bourdichon (c. 1457-1521) had been the pupil of Jean Fouquet (c. 1420-1481) in Tours, where both men painted several masterpieces. They inspired the Master of Petrarch's *Triumphs* (c. 1490-1510), Jean Poyer (c. 1465–1503), the Master of Claude de France (1498-c.1520) and their circles. But it began even earlier....



THE 'DE NULLY DE GROSSEVRE'
HOURS ILLUMINATED IN THE CIRCLE
OF THE JOUVENEL MASTER AND THE
MASTER OF BOETHIUS FRANÇAIS 809.
France, Tours (?), c. 1450-1460.

Manuscript on vellum, 213 x 148 mm,
183 leaves with 17 large miniatures
with full borders, three-sided vine-
leaf borders on each page.

The provenance is uncertain but some
saints (Gatian, Lidorius) in the Litany
point to Tours as city of origin. The
fine Annunciation is attributed to the
Boethius Master. He was also
influenced by Jean Fouquet.



The 'De Nully de Grossevre' Hours
illuminated in the circle of the
Jouvenel Master and the Master of
Boethius Français 809.
France, Tours (?), c. 1450-1460.

The Jouvenel Master was active in Tours for considerable time and is known to have worked with the Boethius Master on several occasions.



ST. JOHN ON PATMOS, detail in:
THE 'DE NULLY DE GROSSEVRE'
HOURS.

The Jouvenel Master (fl. in the Loire valley, c. 1435-1460) is named after Guillaume Jouvenel des Ursins, Chancellor of France for whom he illuminated a copy of Giovanni Colonna's *Mare historiarum* (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 4915).



**CHRIST CARRYING THE CROSS,
in: the 'De Nully de Grossevre' Hours
illuminated in the circle of the
Jouvenel Master**

The Jouvenel style is marked by voluminous figures and luminous colours. Typical of the Jouvenel group also are the foliate borders with natural flowers with green and gold leaves.



**Patron praying at the
Pietà, in: the 'De Nully
de Grossevre' Hours.**

The so-called 'Jouvenel group' received commissions from patrons over quite a large area of France.



ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS,
and detail

in: the 'De Nully de Grossevre' Hours
illuminated in the circle of the
Jouvenel Master
France, Tours (?), c. 1450-1460.

Some of the creative components may have
been passed down between family
members.



BOOK OF HOURS ILLUMINATED BY THE
MASTER OF PETRARCH'S *TRIUMPHS*,
France, Tours, c.1490-1500.

Books of Hours from Tours all share a tall format. The refined quality of painting in this manuscript shows the hand of a great artist whose style emanates close affinity with the work of Jean Bourdichon.

Manuscript on vellum, 240 x 150 mm, 142 leaves, with 4 full-page and 38 small miniatures in *camaieu gris*.



MASTER OF PETRARCH'S *TRIUMPHS*,
DETAIL OF THE EAGLE
ACCOMPANYING ST. JOHN ON
PATMOS,
TOURS, C.1490-1500

The miniatures in this book show a crispness of lines and shadows and are painted in a simple palette of soft grey colours, in *camaïeu gris* style, with some gold and colours sparingly applied.

Yet these elements are most remarkable, together creating a refined style that is the hallmark of the Master of Petrarch's *Triumphs* (c 1490-1510).



ANNUNCIATION TO THE VIRGIN
Book of Hours,
Tours , c. 1490-1500.

The Master of Petrarch's *Triumphs* is named after his illumination in a newly translated copy of Petrarch's *Trionfi* (Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 594), made for Georges I d'Amboise (1460-1510).

The borders show the repeated legend *Parce michi Domine* (Job 7:16, Spare me o Lord), which might refer to a specific commission.



The almost monochrome miniatures in gradations of grey corresponding with few other pigments, such as a saturated blue, yellow-ochre and gold, emanate a degree of translucency and purity, that in some ways remind of stained glass windows.

Manuscript on vellum, 240 x 150 mm, 142 leaves, with 4 full-page and 38 small miniatures in *camaïeu gris*.



The holy scene is represented as a heavenly apparition. The tranquillity suffusing the scene conveys an otherworldly aspect. Such delicately shaded scenes invite close inspection.

Detail of the ANNUNCIATION in the same Book of Hours made in Tours, c. 1490-1500.



DAVID SENDING URIAH TO HIS DEATH

Characteristic in this Master's style are also rather heavy figures clothed in voluminous drapery. The figure of Uriah in shining armour is coloured in purposeful - dramatic contrast.



RAISING OF LAZARUS

The holy figures have softly modelled, fine and gentle faces. These are delicately shaded with slight touches of blush added.

Manuscript on vellum, 240 x 150 mm, 142 leaves, with 4 full-page and 38 small miniatures in *camaïeu gris*.



ST. JOHN BAPTIST AND ST. JOHN EVANGELIST

Book of Hours illuminated by the Master of Petrarch's *Triumphs*, France, Tours, 1490-1500.

Manuscript on vellum, 240 x 150 mm, 142 leaves, with 4 full-page and 38 small miniatures in *camaïeu gris*.



LABARDE BOOK OF
HOURS, IN LATIN, FRENCH
AND OCCITAN.

Illuminated after the
style of Jean Bourdichon
and Jean Poyer.
France, Tours, c. 1490-
1500.

Manuscript on vellum,
208 x 113 mm, 136 leaves,
with 17 miniatures
surrounded by full
borders.



BOOK OF HOURS MADE
IN TOURS FOR THE
SOUTHERN NOBLEMAN
JEAN DE LABARDE.

Labarde's name is added in the text and in the initials *J&B*: Jean married *Brunette Isalguier*. The brown colour refers to his wife's name. *FB/BF* may refer to Foix and Bearn in the south of France, where both families rooted.

Made in Tours, c. 1490-1500, with 17 full-page miniatures.



PENITENTIAL DAVID

The tondo-formed scenes are made after Jean Bourdichon, and show us the holy events as through a window.



ST. LUKE PAINTING THE VIRGIN

BOOK OF HOURS OF JEAN LE VAYER,
SEIGNEUR DE FAVEROLLES SUR CHER.

Illuminated in the circle of Jean Poyer.
France, Tours, c. 1500.

Manuscript on vellum, 185 x 130 mm, 98
leaves, with 19 full-page miniatures, 12
miniatures with labours of the month and 12
symbols of the zodiac.



BETRAYAL OF CHRIST

Lavishly illustrated this is a newly discovered manuscript showing the success of Italian Renaissance influence in France.

One of the most important protagonists of the great art of book painting in Tours was the celebrated Jean Poyer (active c.1483–1503). He was also an acknowledged painter, designer and explorer of new artistic concepts.

Manuscript on vellum, 185 x 130 mm, 98 leaves, with 19 full-page miniatures, 12 miniatures with labours of the month and 12 symbols of the zodiac.



ST. CATHERINE

Poyer's art ripened by what he learned in Italy of Renaissance art. Back in Tours, he was also influenced by the work of Fouquet and Bourdichon.

The artist's oeuvre reveals delicate human realism, as well as a refined use of light and colour. His work evolved from a predilection for hues of lilac to plum, to a lighter, more vibrant, pastel palette applied with fine brushstrokes.



CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

The work of this exceptionally skilled painter, who in his turn influenced the Master of Claude de France, was greatly appreciated in the French and English courts. It is said that when Poyer died (1503), his workshop disintegrated.

Poyer had only few assistants capable of emulating his subtle style and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the artist's hand and those of his talented assistants. They employed the same compositions for different Books of Hours.

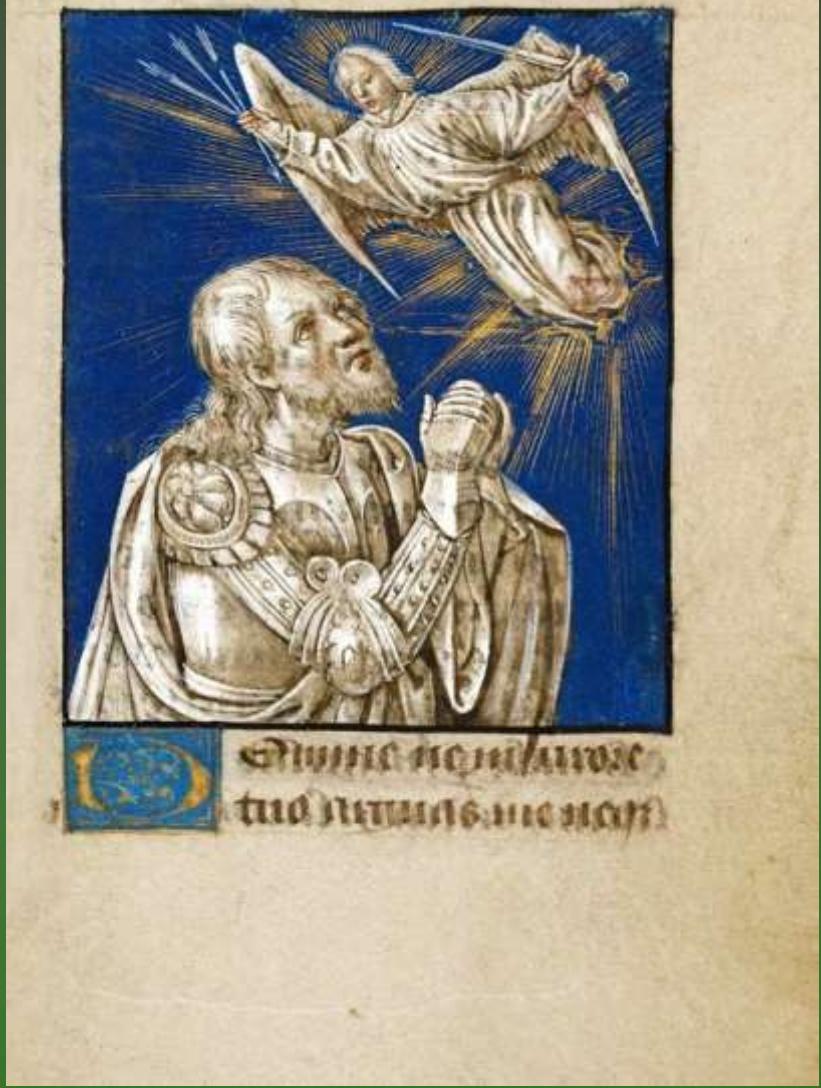
Manuscript, vellum 98 leaves, with 19 full-page miniatures, 24 miniatures with labours of the month and symbols of the zodiac. Illuminated in the circle of Jean Poyer. France, Tours, c. 1500.



BOOK OF HOURS ILLUMINATED BY THE MASTER OF
CLAUDE OF FRANCE AND WORKSHOP.
France, Tours, c. 1500-1508.

The Master of Claude de France was an apprentice of Jean Bourdichon from c.1498 to 1508, and then continued to work in Tours until c.1520. In this manuscript he painted the realistic borders, portraying flowers and insects with botanical precision.

Manuscript on vellum, 173 x 111 mm, 123 leaves, with 11 full-page miniatures and 3 floral borders. Unfinished.



PENITENTIAL DAVID

The eleven subtle pen-drawings with blue grounds and some gold are by a second hand working in the style of Jean Poyer, in: Book of Hours, France, Tours, c. 1500-1508.



CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN



ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS

The rustic men – their clothes in shreds - are portrayed as devotional characters with eyes mercifully turned to the angel above.

Book of Hours, illuminated in Tours in the circle of Jean Poyer, c. 1500-1508.

Manuscript on vellum, 173 x 111 mm, 123 leaves, with 11 full-page miniatures and 3 floral borders.



DETAIL OF SHEPHERDS

Pen-drawings with some touches in rose-red highlighting lips, cheeks and fingertips. Faces are executed with extraordinary precision and show expressive, amiable and gentle characters.

Book of Hours,
France, Tours, c. 1500-1508, with 11 full-page miniatures and 3 floral borders.



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