



Spotlight on Hours to Watch



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Manuskripte und seltene Bücher

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No country in the world is as famous for watching (the) hours as Switzerland!
Large or small.... we, at Jörn Günther Rare Books in Basel, have it all.

Above you see Basel's town hall clock (1511) and next to it, the smallest Book of Hours (c. 1530)
we have had so far - now, since a few years, in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.
[See the wonderful video the Met produced on that book.](#)



It is as they say "here in Switzerland time ticks nobly....".
Basel's town hall clock is even older than the smallest Book of Hours
illuminated by Simon Bening....

In medieval times, the tolling of the tower bells indicated the time.

Sculptures of Emperor Henry II (d. 1024) and his wife Kunigunde (d. 1040)
are placed above the Basel Rathaus clock.



Following his illustrious predecessor Charlemagne (d. 814), the Holy Roman Emperor Henry II, named Henry the Exuberant (973-1024), empowered the bishops to become the pillars of government.

To win over the bishop of Basel, Adalbero II (d. 1025), he generously supported the impoverished diocese and acquired eternal merit as patron of the Basel cathedral, renovated in 1019.



Centuries later, Henry II and his wife Kunegundis were still commemorated, here as patrons of the diocese of Bamberg. Honoured by the arms of Veit Truchsess von Pommersfelden, prince-bishop of Bamberg (1501-1503).

Hand-coloured woodcut on the verso of a miniature of Paul Volckamer and Sebald Schreyer before St. Sebaldus. Leaf from the Bamberg Breviary, 14 October 1501 (available at Dr. Jörn Günther Rare Books).

censa ignis suffossa: ab inceptatione
 uultus tui p[ro]p[ri]um. **L**iat manus tua
 sup[er] uirtutem dextere tue et sup[er] filium
 hominis quem confirmasti tibi. **E**t
 n[on] discedimus a te uiuificabis nos:
 et nomen tuum inuocabimus. **D**ne
 ds uirtutum conuertere nos: et ostende
 faciem tuam et salui erimus.



cultate deo
 adiutori
 nro: uibi
 late deo ia
 cob. **S**um
 te psalmu
 et date tym
 panum:
 psalteriu
 iocundum cum cythara. **B**ucinate
 in neomenia tuba: in insigni die sol



163
 pylissima
 domina
 deprecata
 re pro no
 bis. ut
 mereamur benignissimo filio tuo
 domino nro ihesu xpo et tibi reddere
 hostiam laudis.
Domine labia mea aperies. **E**t
 os meum annuntiabit laudem tua.
Ds in adiutorium meum inten
 de. **D**omine ad adiuuandum
 me festina. **G**loria patri et filio et
 spiritui sco. **S**icut erat in princi

Dyson-Perrins Psalter,
 with calendar,
 canticles, and Hours
 of the Virgin.
 Manuscript
 illuminated by the
 workshop of the
 Bible Moralisée.
 France, Paris, c. 1250-
 1260.

As bishops and clergy gained more power, the Church of Rome
 determined much of daily life. Eight times a day (and night), the church
 bells would summon the clergy to prayer.
 For laics who felt the need to follow their example, the clerical prayers
 were too long and difficult, so a new book was needed.



The bells tolled at the following prayer times:

Matins or vigils: at night, ca. 2 a.m.

Lauds at Dawn: about 5 a.m. (earlier in summer, later in winter).

Prime at First Hour: ca. 6 a.m.

Terce at Mid-Morning, 3rd Hour: ca. 9 a.m.

Sext at Midday, 6th Hour: ca. 12 p.m.

None at Mid-Afternoon, 9th Hour: ca. 3 p.m.

Vespers: about 6 p.m. ("at the lighting of the lamps")

Compline: about 7 p.m. (before retiring)





Dyson-Perrins Psalter,
with calendar and
Hours of the Virgin.
Manuscript
illuminated in the
workshop of the *Bible
Moralisée*. France,
Paris, c. 1250-1260.

152 x 105 mm. 230
leaves, vellum. With
10 historiated initials
and 24 calendar
illustrations.

The Liturgy of the Hours began to appear in the 13th century, first in Psalm books. They were adapted for a public of wealthy laypeople. A calendar of the year would usually precede the other texts in order to indicate which saintly feasts were to be celebrated. This new kind of book soon became popular as the "Book of Hours".



This early 13th-century Psalter-Hours is a hybrid book, containing the Psalms followed by the Hours of the Virgin and the Office of the Dead. It also contains brilliant illuminations by a Parisian artist of the workshop responsible for the royal commissions of the *Bibles Moralisées*, the most outstandingly illuminated codices in Europe of that time.

Dyson-Perrins Psalter, with calendar, canticles, and Hours of the Virgin. Manuscript illuminated by the workshop of the *Bible Moralisée*. France, Paris, c. 1250-1260.

152 x 105 mm. 230 leaves, vellum.

With 10 historiated initials and 24 calendar illustrations.



Donaueschingen
 Psalter-Hours.
 Illuminated manuscript
 likely made in Brabant,
 possibly Brussels,
 c. 1250-1275.

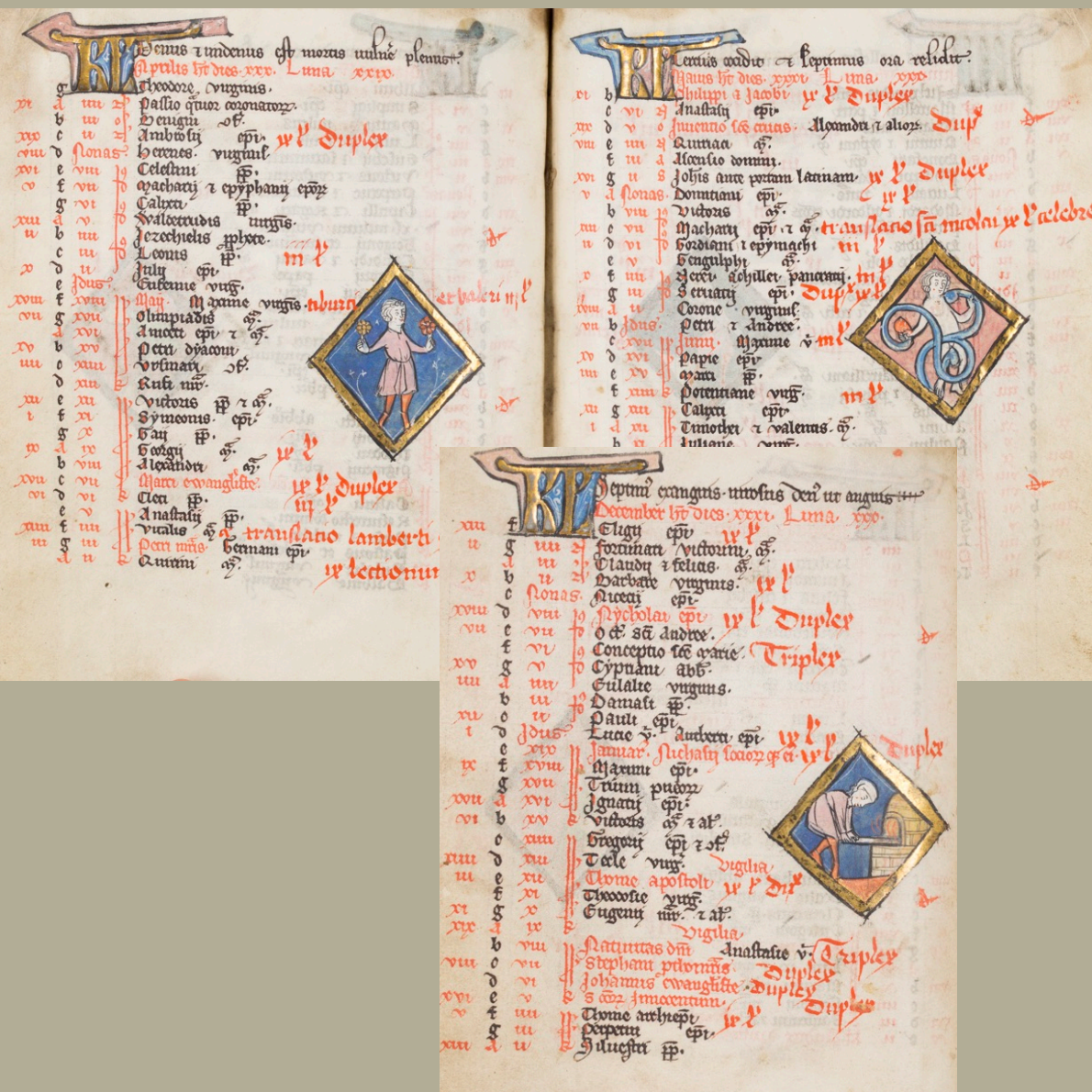
131 x 95 mm,
 316 leaves, vellum. 13
 historiated initials, 12
 calendar illustrations,
 and 7 full-page
 miniatures.
 Later adapted for use in
 Cologne

The prayers of the hours were said in honour of or asking for help and support from the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, and a selection of saints. Wealthy patrons commissioned illuminators to add series of illustrations. This Brabantine manuscript opens with a series of full-page illustrations, each containing two scenes from the life of Christ.



Donaueschingen
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These illuminated books were first geared to a public of lay nobility and the miniatures were intended to help the viewer to contemplate the depicted devotional subject -mainly scenes from the youth or passion of Christ and the Virgin Mary. It was "food" - so to speak - for the soul and for the eyes. The better the artist, the better the meaning of the images would be conveyed.

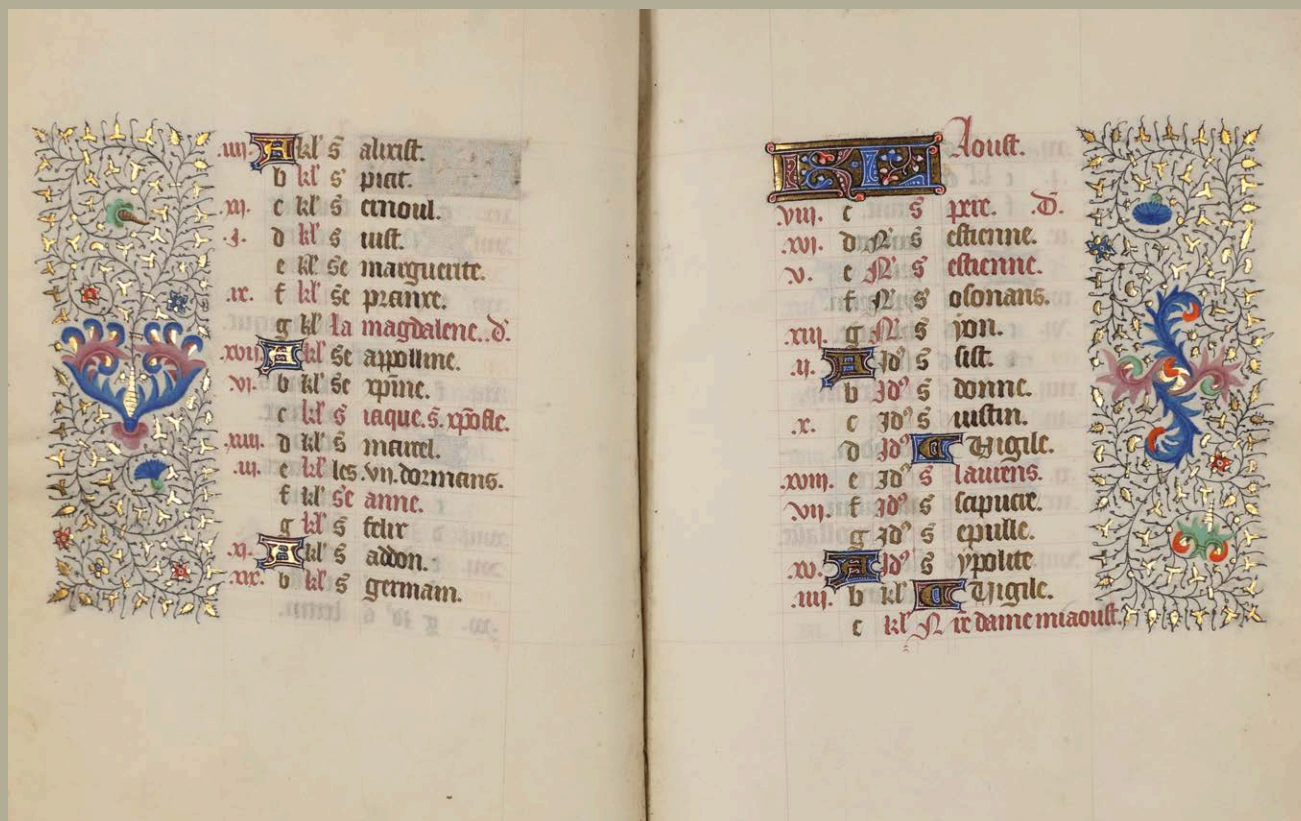


In the calendar that usually opens a Psalter-Hours or a Book of Hours, the days celebrate feasts of saints and martyrs.

The names of the most important feasts would be highlighted in another colour of ink, like red or even gold. Others are called "duplex" or "triplex", double or triple important.

The greater feasts were thus styled because chants before and after the Psalm readings were "doubled" or "tripled", i.e. twice or thrice repeated on these days.

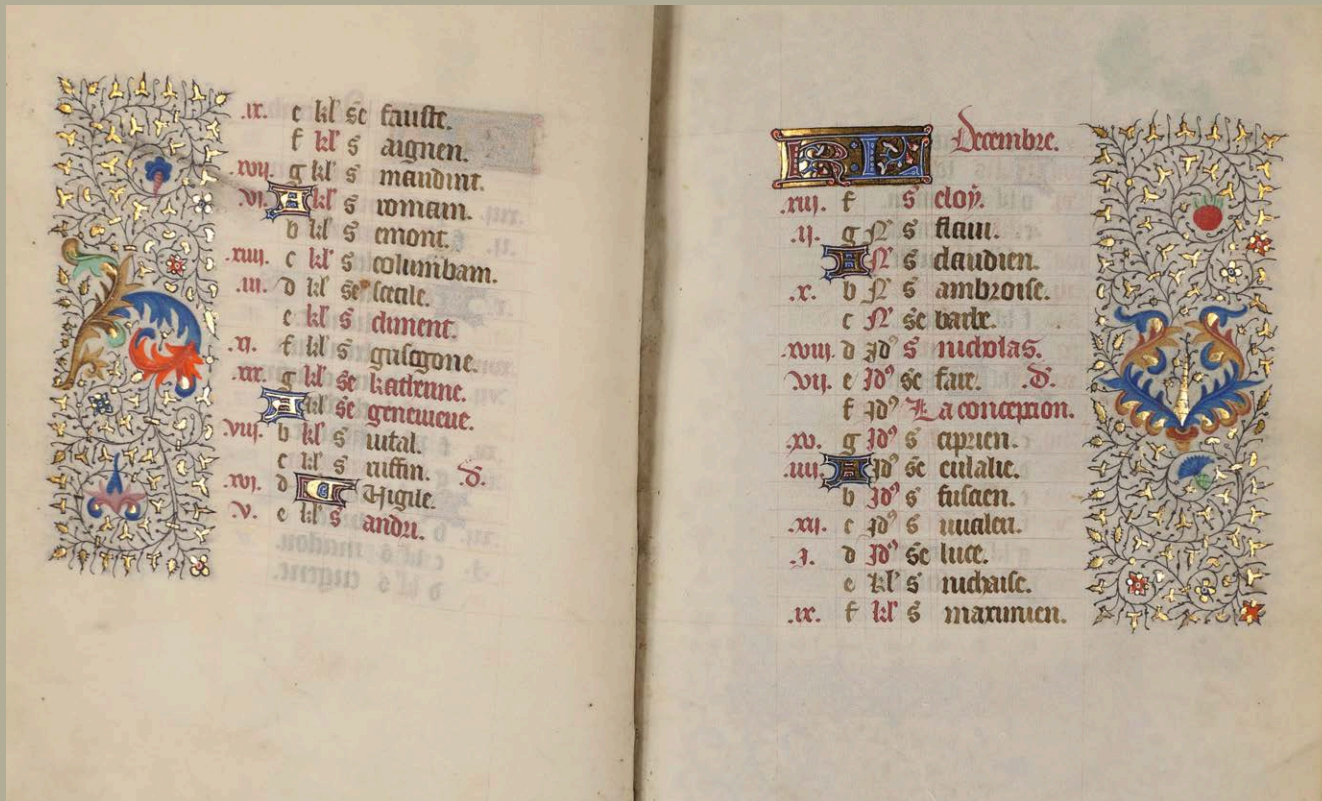
The colour of ink and the wording show the ranking and the grading of the feasts.



Gallimard Book of Hours,
use of Paris.
Manuscript in Latin and
French, illuminated by the
Harvard Hannibal Master,
the Talbot Master, and
another Parisian artist.

France, Paris,
c. 1415-1425.
185 x 130 mm, 242
leaves, 22 miniatures

Calendars served to organize time, dividing it into days and months. Although the names of the months are the same as those we still use, the numbering of the days was based on the ancient Roman system of *kalends* (from which the word *calendar* derives). The large letters 'KL' above each month are abbreviations for this Latin word.



In the calendar used in Paris, one would find St. Geneviève on the 3rd of January, the day she supposedly died. As she is the patron saint of Paris, she is also celebrated on the 26th of November, a day which commemorates the miraculous healing of the city swept by fever – thanks to St. Geneviève's relics.

Gallimard Book of Hours,
use of Paris.
Illuminated by the Harvard
Hannibal Master, the Talbot
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France, Paris, c. 1415-1425.

Within the Roman system, *kalends* was the first day of the month; *nones* fell either on the fifth or the seventh day, and *ides* came eight days after *nones*. Months had the same number of days as in our system, but they were not numbered sequentially from 1 to 30 or 31. Instead, one counted backwards, or more precisely, one counted how many days before the next *nones*, *ides*, or *kalends*.

This was determined by using the Roman numerals and abbreviations listed in columns to the left of the names of saints. And, there is much more to say about medieval calendars.....



Luke, "*In illo tempore
 missum est angelus
 Gabriel*" (At that time the
 angel Gabriel was sent...)

John, "*In principio erat
 verbum*" (In the beginning
 the word...)

Gallimard Book of Hours,
 use of Paris.
 Manuscript in Latin and
 French, illuminated by the
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The texts of prayers and themes of illustrations in Books of Hours were based on the stories of the Life of Christ that were written by the four Evangelists, John, Matthew, Luke, and Marc. Abbreviated stories of their Gospels would often be included, following the calendar and preceding the different Hours.

The demand for these books was crucial to the development of Gothic illumination.



Evangelist Mark

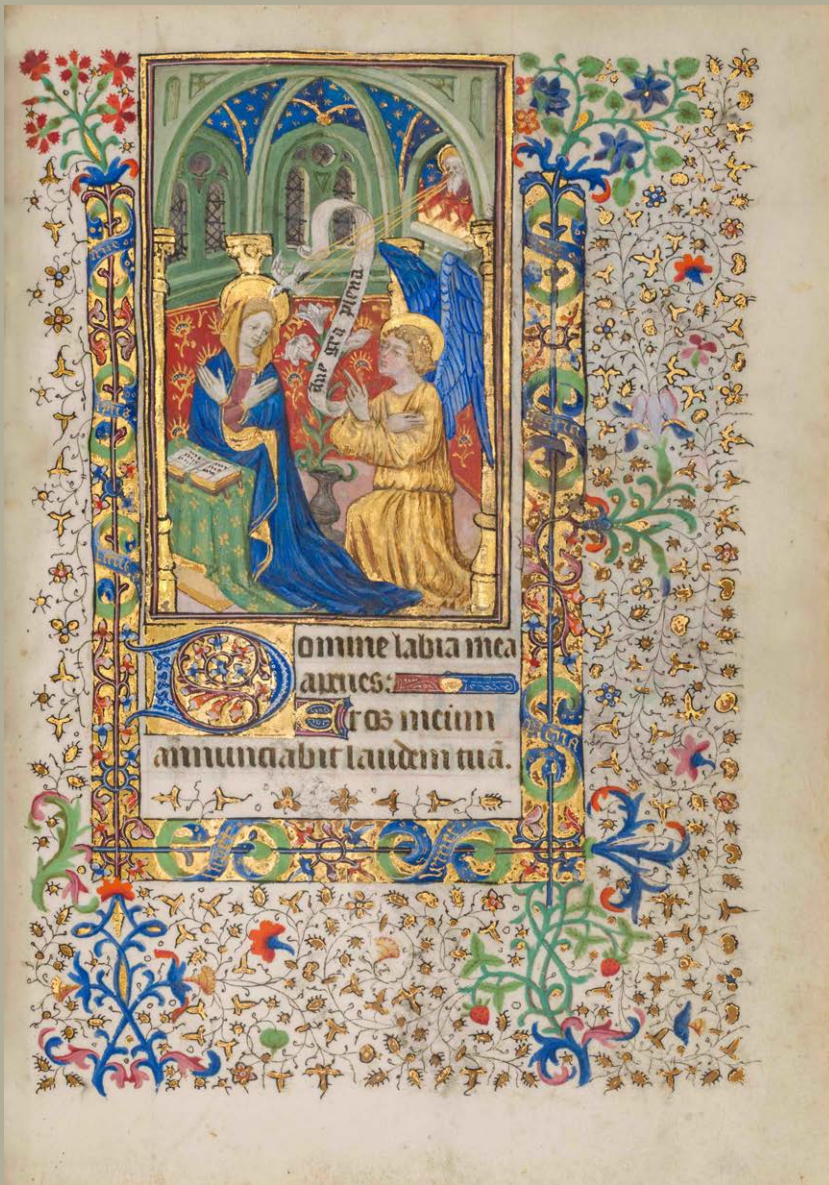
Nativity,
preceding the
prayers for Prime

The lavishly decorated texts could vary in content according to their patron's desires.

Gallimard Book of Hours, use of Paris. Manuscript in Latin and French, illuminated by the Harvard Hannibal Master, the Talbot Master, and another Parisian artist. France, Paris, c. 1415-1425.

185 x 130 mm. 242 leaves, vellum. 22 miniatures, and 2 historiated initials, all with full borders.

The first known owner (but not the first patron) was Florentin Gallimard from St. Séverin (15th-century inscription).



In the Catholic faith, structured prayer plays an important role.

Clergy and laics would benefit from saying the morning and evening prayers from the Liturgy of the Hours – at lauds and vespers. These come from a larger set of prayers designed to be said throughout the day, known as the Divine Office. Nuns and monks would pray every office, or Hour, of every day. This practice dates back to the 6th century.

The Divine Office may be difficult to learn at first, as it changes daily and there are weekly cycles, seasons, propers, commons, and special offices.

The Hours of the Virgin, prayers devoted to the Virgin Mary, were at the heart of the Book of Hours. These prayers were often introduced by a miniature of the Annunciation.



The virgin Mary, is called *stella mundi*, *stella maris* (star of the world, star of the sea), as she represents shining beauty.

Pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol,
(Fair as the moon, bright as the sun)

Many prayers compared the world to a sea, full of dangers, full of predators, where big fish eat the small ones – similar to our world where the humble and the weak, often fall prey to the powerful.

Winds, storms, ebbs, and flows change the sea constantly. In the same way, the world is shaken by dangers: we live, therefore, in perpetual insecurity!

Yet, if we follow *Maria illuminatrix* sive *stella maris* – see the star on her blue cloak in the Gallimard Hours – she will guide us on our way.



Annunciation to
Shepherds at Terce

Last Judgement at
the Penitential Psalms

Details show this outstanding book was made for use in the French capital. The calendar includes the names of saints venerated in Paris, and the Offices of the Virgin and of the Dead are written for Paris use. Parisian artists collaborated in the illustration: the first series of 12 miniatures was executed by the Master of the Harvard Hannibal.

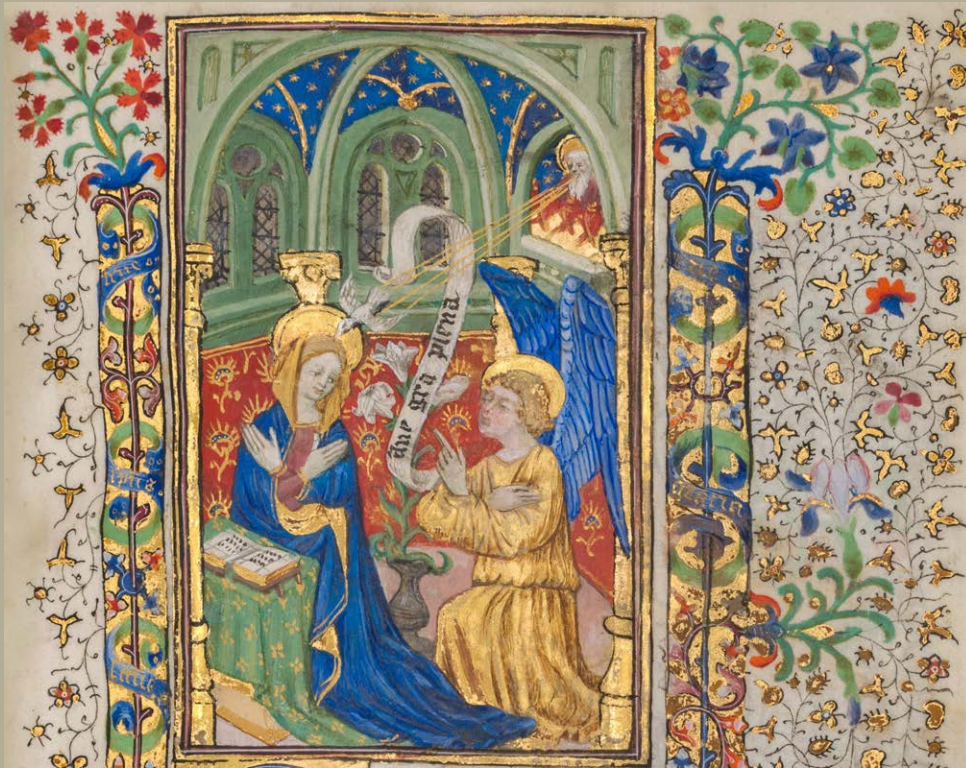


The seven miniatures that accompany the Hours of the Cross and of the Holy Ghost are by the Talbot Master, active in Paris early in his career, but later working in Rouen.

The outstanding quality of his work in this Book of Hours as well as his collaboration with the Harvard Hannibal Master suggest that this manuscript was executed in the first quarter of the 15th century.

Three pages in the book were left unfinished, two of which were unfinished drawings. They were then painted decades later by another, likely Parisian, artist.

Mocking of Christ
at the Hours of the Holy Cross.



Dynamic or acquiescent, moving or still, these illuminated Hours never cease to amaze and inspire.

The pope, bishops, and clergy may have dominated medieval life, however, it was up to the artists and the public to determine what was valued as the beauty of art.

In a modern bestseller, titled *Time Sanctified* (Wieck, et. al.) the use and practices of Books of Hours are explained.

In *Now and Forever: The Art of Medieval Time*, the same author explains how time was visualised in all of its transcendent beauty.



Large or small, intricate, flashy in design or made of the most valuable materials – Swiss watches continue to fascinate a worldwide public and are seen as one of Switzerland's trademarks.

However, the finest of the *Hours to watch* are available at Dr. Jörn Günther Rare Books in the heart of Basel – only a three to five minute walk from the Basel town hall and its cathedral.



Not surprisingly, the Book of Hours has been called "a cathedral in pocket size".

On the 11th of October 2019, Basel celebrates the consecration of its cathedral in the presence of the Holy Roman emperor a thousand years ago.



The flourishing of Basel and its Franco-Germanic border region can be traced back to that period.

All of this will be visualized in the exhibition

Gold and Glory: Gifts of Eternity,
Kunstmuseum / Historisches Museum
Basel (11 Oct. until 19 Jan. 2020).



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