SPLENDOUR OF THE BURGUNDIAN NETHERLANDS

Southern Netherlandish Illuminated Manuscripts in Dutch Collections

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Fig. II.3.4
Throne of Grace (fol. 13v)

24 BOOK OF HOURS

In Latin and Dutch (Premonstratensian use)
Probably Ghent, c. 1440-1450
Illumination: Master of Marguerite d'Escornaix (Masters of Guillebert of Mets group)
Enschede, Rijksmuseum Twenthe, Inv. no. 292

Only two full-page miniatures remain from what must originally have been a finely illustrated book of hours. Painted on single folios inserted between the text pages, the illustrations of this manuscript were quite vulnerable and could be easily detached from the volume. The Hours of the Virgin follows an undetermined liturgical variant, while the calendar, which is sparsely filled, includes feasts for Ghent written in black ink.[1] The Office of the Dead is for the use of the Premonstratensian Order, which complicates the problem of the destination of the work. The original patron may have been linked to the important Norbertine Abbey of Tronchiennes (Drongen), located west of Ghent.

The page layout has luxurious, spacious margins, and an abundant decoration enhances and discreetly structures the text folios. The first page of each major section is framed with bar borders, dragons and multi-coloured vine and acanthus leaves. Full-page miniatures probably introduced the main sections: an Annunciation would have accompanied the Hours of the Virgin, a Crucifixion would have introduced the Hours of the Cross, and the Office of the Dead was also quite probably enhanced by an illustration. Unfortunately they have all disappeared, and one must construct a mental image of the manuscript to appreciate its original quality.

The two miniatures that remain can be attributed to one of the last members of the group known as the Masters of Guillebert of Mets, whom we propose calling the Master of Marguerite d'Escornaix,[2] with reference to his principal work, the Hours of Marguerite of Gavre-Escornaix now in Brussels.[3] In the miniatures in Enschede one recognizes the round, doll-like faces that characterize this illuminator. His repertoire also includes the multi-coloured acanthus leaves and the imaginary floral motifs that decorate the margins of the miniatures and some text pages.

The *Last Judgement* (fig. II.3.5) is notable for its narrative richness, which recalls that of a folio by the same artist in Cleveland.[4] If the trumpet-blowing angels have disappeared, St Michael, wearing a robe, quarrels vigorously with the devil who appears for the first time in this context in a manuscript in the Mets group. The composition of the *Throne of*

Grace (fig. II.3.4) faithfully follows a Metsian model,[5] copying not only the structure but even the folds in the garments. Only the monumental throne decorated with pinnacles appears to be new. It evokes, however, an older, venerable model, that of the thrones of the prophets designed by André Beauneveu in the famous Psalter of Duke Jean de Berry.[6]

Fig. II.3.5
Last Judgement at the beginning of the Penitential Psalms (fols. 90v-91r)

1 Macarius twice (10 April and 9 May), Remigius and Bavo (1 October), Walburgis (4 August). This insistence on Gantois saints suggests that, even if the book was not destined for use in Ghent, the calendar may have been based on a model from there, but that the local saints were downgraded by inscribing them in black ink.

2 Vanwijnsberghe & Verroken 2017, vol. 1, pp. 455-456, vol. 2, pp. 677-678 no. 25

3 Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, Ms. IV 1113; cf. Smeyers 1998, p. 250, fig. 22; Brussels-Paris 2011, pp. 162-164, no. 16.

4 Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art, The Jeanne Miles Blackburn Collection, Ms. 1999.130; cf. Cleveland 1999, no. 43, fig. on p. 46.

5 Aschaffenburg, Hofbibliothek, Ms. 7, fol. 13v; New York, Morgan Library & Museum, Ms. M.46, fol. 7v; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. n.a.l. 3112, fol. 1v, cf. Brussels-Paris 2011, p. 165, no. 17.

6 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. fr. 13091; cf. Paris 2004, p. 104, no. 42; http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84546905.