

## Materiality Analysis

### The Importance of the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux

During the medieval period, religion was a key component in the lives of many. Those who could afford either creating or having a professional create a personal bible or combination of psalms would do so as a way to display their devotion to God. This is particularly prevalent in Jeanne d'Evreux's Hours, the Queen of France between 1325-1328. This lavishly decorated and small text was used directly by Jeanne d'Evreux and was filled with full-page paintings as well as religious sections of texts. This historic prayer book illustrates what a wealthy and royal person during the early 14<sup>th</sup> century might use daily to pursue a heavily religious life. The importance of this manuscript can be broken into two distinct parts: the religious aspect and the intended audience.

There are four main components for analysis of the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux in terms of the importance of the intended audience: the language, origin, owners and illustrations. Though the manuscript is mostly known for the drawings and paintings, the language distinctly illustrates who Jean Pucelle, the author and a Parisian illuminator, intended on writing the text for. The texts are written in Latin, mainly because they are just sections of religious text, but the Latin language is also important in defining the people who would be able to read the text. During the medieval era, Latin was only really spoken by those who work in the church or those wealthy or educated enough to read it. If the text was also in French, then it could be ascertained that lower class citizens would have the ability to read it, lowering its prestige. Through the use of language, the intended audience is really only anyone who can understand Latin, such as Jeanne d'Evreux, therefore it is for those who could afford to take classes or lessons about the Latin language. Overall, the language and the author of the text relate to illustrate how the text is intended for the wealthier part of French society.

Furthermore, the origin and owners of the text also illustrate the importance of the audience in the creation and understanding of the manuscript. Firstly, the origin of the text is in France, particularly in Paris as it was written by a well known author and artist, Jean Pucelle, for the Queen of France who lived right outside of Paris. Though the book was created for Jeanne d'Evreux, after her death in 1371, King Charles V was granted the book. In addition, the timeframe during which the manuscript was made, 1324-28, illustrates that really only nobility or the rising bourgeoisie could have afforded it (Hindman, Marrow 2012, pg. 1). Through both the origin and the ownership of the text, it can be determined that the book was meant for use by royalty and/or the wealthy of France.

Finally, the importance of the audience is also prevalent through the actual illustrations in the manuscript. The illustrations are heavily detailed and even replicate other historical and religious paintings. Additionally, the plentiful amount of colors, such as blues, greens, reds and even golds, used suggests that a lot of additional work went into the creation of this manuscript (See image 2). The colors, as well, seem to not only add a stylistic presence, but also illustrates the importance of the images and add to the tone of the text presented with the images. For example, the red could be used for either luxury or for blood. The darker the color, the darker the theme, and the same goes for lighter colors. Though the images are used to aid in the visualization of the religious texts and psalms, the actual components of the images illustrate how the book was made for the wealthy. The scenes depicted in the images also illustrate the lavish lifestyle of the wealthy at the time as most of the images show extravagant castles, churches, clothing, and people. The book is very small and some of the images on the borders are also very small, further illustrating how much work and detail went into the creation of this text (See image 1). Jean Pucelle almost seemed to show off while creating this text through the pure artistry used in the drawings and paintings, which was intended to almost impress the Queen.



Image 1: Folio 167v, The Cloisters Collection 1954



Image 2: Folios 61v-62r, The Cloisters Collection 1954

In addition to the importance of the intended audience of the manuscript, the religious aspect of the manuscript is depicted through its content and size. Though it is a book of hours, this manuscript is mainly composed of paintings, but does have a fair amount of religious texts intertwined with the images. The religious texts tend to be common prayers, hymns and just scriptures intended to personally inspire or stimulate the Queen religiously. The images accompanying the texts are visual references to either famous religious depictions or are illustrations of what the text is representing. The religious images are not always positive, though, such as images depicted Jesus Christ's crucifixion or images of skulls or even monsters in the borders, such as in image 3. These more negative religious images are present to remind the reader of how important religion is and to illustrate what Jesus died for. Through the content of this manuscript, it is obvious how important religion was not only to the Queen, but also to the wealthy during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Finally, the minute size of the text also illustrates its religious importance. It is 3 7/8 x 2 13/16 x 1 1/2 inches in total, including all 209 folios. This allowed the text to be easily carried around and accessed by the Queen throughout the day, illustrating her devotion to religion.



Image 3: Folio 159v, The Cloisters Collection 1954

In all, the language, origin, owners and illustrations of the the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux combine to depict the intended audience the manuscript was created for, whereas the content and size of the text illustrates the importance of religion in the creation of the text and to the wealthy and royals of the time. The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux is an excellent example of a religious manuscript with more than just religious importance, it can also act as a source for academic and intellectual analysis of its material.

### Works Cited:

Hindman, Sandra, and James H. Marrow. *Books of Hours Reconsidered*. 1. Print.

### Reflection (200 words)

I found that it was fairly difficult to revise and expand aspects of my materiality analysis of the Book of Hours of Jean d'Evreux mainly because I had looked at all the materiality aspects of the book of hours. I decided that the best option would be to just go through each aspect and look for anything that was not defined properly or that didn't really have enough analysis. I found that I did mention and partially analyze the coloration of the images, but I realized that there was another aspect to the colors that I had forgotten to analyze: how it affects the tone of the passage. Now I have two different views about how colors affected the images. I then went into more detail about the images themselves and what they represent. I split this analysis into two parts: the first about the religious images and the second about how the images depict a rich a lavish lifestyle. Through this part of my analysis, I was able to look at how the images affect both aspects of my argument: the importance of religion and the intended audience. Although I thought that expanding my analysis would be hard, I found a few sections that required a little more detail in analysis, which lead me to several new viewpoints of color and the images themselves.