

Materiality Analysis

Heroes & Monsters

The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux



"Jean Pucelle: The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux (54.1.2)". In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-. <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/54.1.2> (December 2011)

The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux is a prayer book that was illuminated by French artist Jean Pucelle. It was composed in Paris, France during the twelfth century, between the years of 1324, and 1328. The book has 209 pages written on single folios of vellum and is very elaborate; it includes twenty five full page paintings, several images, and illustrations. Jean Pucelle originally created the book for the queen of France at the time, Jeanne d'Evreux. The book was to be used for private devotion throughout her day. After her death in 1371, King Charles V received the book. When King Charles V died, Jean, the Duke of Berry and the king's brother, added the book to his collection. The original copy belonged to many different owners before it was sold to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, New York in 1954. The book is still housed in the museum's Cloisters collection today. Although the book's history is well documented, the book itself tells a lot about its past. If the book's history and primary purpose was not certain, it could be determined from the composition of the book, its content, and illustrations and paintings included in the book.

Composition



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The composition of the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux gives insight into the book's past. The prayer book was written on single folios of vellum, parchment made from the skin of a young animal such as a calf. The use of vellum was popular during the medieval period, but it is not commonly used today. This suggests that the book was composed during the middle ages. The book pictured above has no binding; the binding was most likely severely damaged after several years of enduring wear and tear while encasing the manuscript. The lack of binding suggests the book's old age, as well.

The book's dimensions are 3 1/2 x 2 7/16 in. As seen in the photograph above, the book is hand size and would have been difficult to use for a large audience in a public setting. Because of the book's small size, it can be determined that it was a personal prayer book. Also, the book is written in Latin. Most of the laity, common people, during the medieval period could not read Latin. It would have been read to them in church by a priest. Only the highly educated, such as religious officials and royalty, were literate in Latin and could read the prayers by themselves. The Latin is an indication that the book was for the personal use of someone of high status.

It was unlikely that a family among the laity owned a bible which is why the book of hours was so popular. Due to a lack of funds and accessibility, each member of a family probably used one book of hours and no one would have gotten a personalized book of hours. A personalized book of hours meant that not only did the family have the money to purchase a book of hours for more than one family member, but they could also afford to have it created especially for that person. Someone with a personalized book of hours was from a family of great wealth and therefore high social status. This is more evidence of the book of hours belonging to Jeanne d'Evreux, who was queen of France and had one of the highest social statuses and the greatest acquired wealth in her kingdom.

Content

The content in the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux shows the purpose of the book. The following images are pages from The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux.



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This image is a calendar page for the month of November.

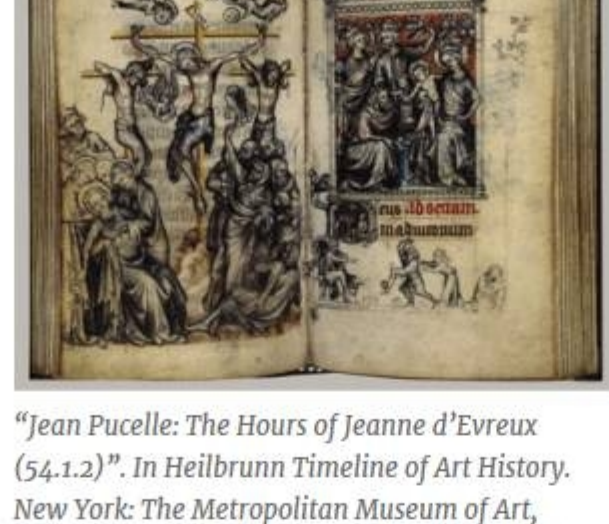


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The text is from the Office of Saint Louis.



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The image above is from the life of Saint Louis; it pictures him washing the feet of a poor man. The one on the bottom is the crucifixion of Christ.

The images shown above are all typical contents of a book of hours. This particular book contains more than a calendar and stories of Saints, but it probably does not contain everything a normal book of hours contains. A book of hours for personal use could be personalized to include only certain prayers and contents of a book of hours. This shows that the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux is a book of hours that was personalized for one specific person.

Although the laity did not own bibles, there was most likely a bible in the royal family's possession. A bible would not have been used as frequently as a book of hours among members of the royal family since bibles were not used for private worship, but for worship with a larger audience. Jeanne d'Evreux's book of hours was personalized for her private worship, so it might not include all of the things that a regular book of hours contains. Other than the calendar and the saints' lives, it is possible that her book of hours contains the following: a calendar, the four Gospel Lessons, Hours of the Virgin, two prayers to the Virgin, the Penitential Psalms and Litany, the Office of the Dead, Numerous Suffrages.

Illuminations



"Jean Pucelle: The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux (54.1.2)". In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-. <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/54.1.2> (December 2011)



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The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux contains many beautiful illustrations and paintings, referred to as illuminations, that give details about the book's creation, as well. A book with such colorful and detailed images would be more distracting among a larger audience. This book would more likely be for personal use because it uses its illuminations to capture the reader's attention and draw the reader to the text. There are twenty five, full page paintings accompanied by drawings of moments from the life of Christ and the life of Saint Louis. The artist used a style called grisaille. Grisaille is a technique where the artist uses shades of gray to create the image. There are other colors used in the illumination, including reds, oranges, and blues. There are colorful characters drawn in the margins of the book. Common people from everyday life such as beggars, street musicians, women, and bishops from the clergy are a part of the illustrations. Animals such as dogs, apes, and rabbits were drawn, too. There are also the fantastical creatures like little, red devils and demonic creatures. These images and paintings add aesthetic to the book. It makes it more appealing and entertaining to read.

Something interesting about the illuminations in the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux is that they are all related. The margin images are a contrast to the other illuminations in the book of hours. The paintings are moments from the lives of St. George and Jesus Christ. Some examples of these paintings are the crucifixion of Christ and St. Louis washing the feet of the poor. The paintings depict significant moments in Christianity whereas the margin drawings are not directly related to Christianity. Although this is a book of hours, the margin drawings allude to a more secular lifestyle rather than a religious one. There are images of beggars and musicians in the margins. It seems to be drawings of people and animals one would encounter while in a city on a normal day. It is unlikely that these images would have been included in the margins of regular book of hours since the drawings have no religious affiliation. These drawings are more evidence of the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux being a personalized book of hours.

Reflection

There was not much that I wanted to improve in the materiality analysis. The only thing that I needed improvement on was citing pictures. I cited all of the pictures I used incorrectly in the first materiality analysis. I only used the link to the website I got the pictures from instead of an actual, correct citation for each picture. The citations were the only errors I had noticed at first. As I read through the materiality analysis, I changed a few words and rewrote some sentences to vary sentence structure and improve the overall structure of the paragraph. For expansion of the paper, I focused mainly on the content section. There was not much information in this section as opposed to the other sections. I expanded on this section by offering suggestions of other content that might have been included in the book of hours. I added a paragraph to composition as well. One of the comments that I was given on the graded materiality analysis was to expand the illuminations section and be more specific about the images in the book. I thought this was a good suggestion and that it would enhance my argument, so I added a few extra sentences to the illuminations section.

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