

# THE BERRY APOCALYPSE

85 unique miniatures for the Duc de Berry



New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.133

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*... and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,  
which said: "Write on a scroll what you see" ...*

Revelation 1,10-1,11

The text's unique visual quality allowed for extremely vivid illustrations and inspired important artists of different categories to create splendid works of art.

At the same time, the Secret Revelation is also a book of consolation and admonition, and hence maintained its high popularity throughout the Middle Ages, offering the people stability and hope in troubled times. The crucial importance conferred to this text is also reflected in the fact that still at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Albrecht Dürer used it as an inspiration for one of his first block books, his famous Apocalypse of 1498. Barely any other text of the New Testament symbolizes the divine mystery in a similar way, and as soon as the Seventh Seal is opened, its content is transformed into visionary images. These images tell us about the end of the Old World and the beginning of the New World.

The content of the Apocalypse stimulated medieval artists to work with this text, full of images like no other, in a unique way. Many picture books were created, whose illustrations were much more than decorations added to the text. One of the most extraordinary examples of these picture books based on the text of the Secret Revelation is the Berry Apocalypse.



*Fol. 79v (detail),  
The devil carries  
off some men to  
Hell, illustration to  
Revelation 20,9*

*The front page shows the miniature on fol. 37v: Archangel Michael combats three dragons vanishing in the underworld. This illustration refers to Revelation 12, 7-8.*

The words of the Secret Revelation of John have always possessed a special charisma and fascination. The last book of the New Testament

was deeply rooted in the thinking of medieval society and was therefore a common subject of incredibly rich pictorial realizations.

# THE SECRET REVELATION OF JOHN: VISIONS OF A BETTER WORLD



**E**t vms de septe  
un des vij. angels  
qui auoient les

fiolles plumes des sept der-  
remes plaies parla a  
moy et dist Dien ten se .

# 85 FASCINATING LARGE-SIZE MINIATURES – A UNIQUE VISIONARY PICTURE CYCLE

This precious Apocalypse of the Duc de Berry, singular in its kind, is protected by a dark orange velvet cover with phantastic silver clasps under

the signature MS. M.133 as one of the treasures of the Morgan Library. On 87 folios, it shows 85 full- and half-page miniatures in golden frames,

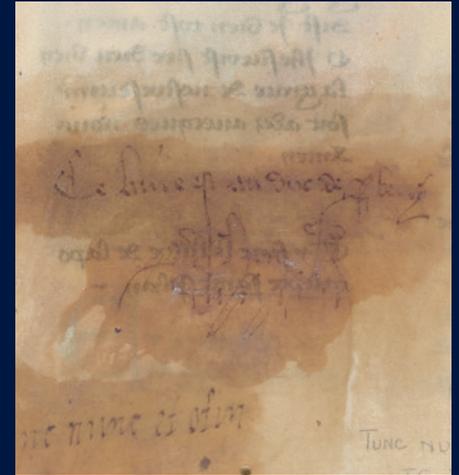
illustrating the biblical text in an exceptional way – a sublime work of art owned by one of the most extraordinary patrons of the arts of all times.



**Fol. 9v** (detail), *The lamb and the book, illustration to Revelation 5, 7*



**Fol. 15v** (detail), *The lamb opening the Sixth Seal, and there was a great earthquake, illustration to Revelation 6, 12-17*



**Fol. 86v** (detail), *The inscription regarding the owner indicates that the manuscript belonged to the library of the Duc de Berry.*

## AN EXTRAORDINARY BOOK FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY BIBLIOPHILE

Millard Meiss, the renowned medieval art historian, stated that the Apocalypse is one of the „most impressing manuscripts from the collection of the Duke of Berry“. The picture cycle based on the Secret Revelation from the collection of the Duke of Berry is kept today in the Morgan Library under the signature MS M.133 and is one the manuscripts richest in imagery in the important collection of this bibliophile of the late Middle Ages.

The manuscript was probably created in Paris around 1410 and its artist was named after his main work: Master of the Berry Apocalypse. On 87 large-sized parchment leaves, there

are 85 vigorous miniatures, which illustrate and reflect the visionary text with extraordinary dramatic expressiveness.

The artistic realization reveals a unique style and iconography and allows the observer to concentrate on the essence of the content. The image scenes focus clearly on characters and events, thus creating a unique picture cycle with extraordinarily visual interpretations of an imaginative iconography and an explicit relationship between text and image. Expressive characters on colourful backgrounds represent the dramatic events and the visionary content in a superb way.

The manuscript shows an important influence from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century illustration groups, and based on that developed its singular style. The text is written in Middle French and the miniatures, placed to the left of the matching text leaf, are often illuminated by rubrics in Latin. The biblical text is followed by extracts of Berengaudus' interpretations of the Secret Revelation.

On folio 86v, an inscription indicates the noble owner of this manuscript, the probably most famous bibliophile of the Middle Ages, Jean Duc de Berry: „*Ce livre est au Duc de Berry Jehan*“.



**Fol. 43v:** The Beast from the Sea, here represented as a male figure, carrying the devil on his shoulder and denominated as the ANTECHRIST. The beginning destruction of the church tower symbolizes the creature's blasphemous nature. Illustration to Revelation 13, 6

# THE COLLECTION OF THE DUC DE BERRY – A LIBRARY OF TREASURES

The manuscript of the Secret Revelation by the Berry Master was part of the probably most important library of the late Middle Ages: the collection of the art lover and bibliophile Jean Duc de Berry. His library comprised more than 300 manuscripts, whose most famous is undoubtedly

determined by three big events: the plague in his youth, the Hundred Years' War and the Papal Schism. Like no other manuscript from his library, the Apocalypse fits into these troubled times and surely served him, especially at the end of his life, as a consolation book as well as

*„If Jean, duc de Berry, did not exist, he would have to be invented.“*

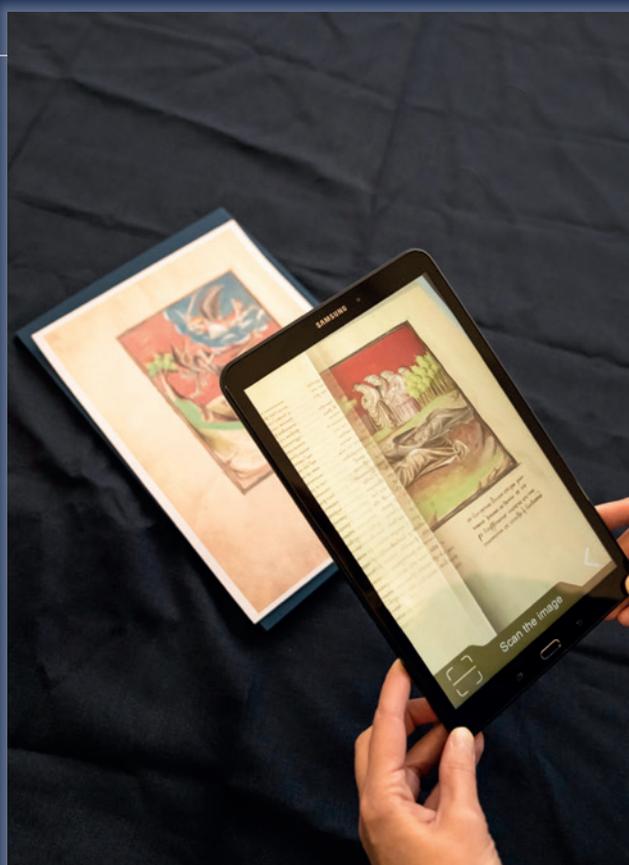
Roger Wieck (Curator and Department Head of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, The Morgan Library & Museum)

the Très Riches Heures, today kept in the Musée Condé in Chantilly. The life of the Duc de Berry was

antithesis and redemptory parousia for the apocalyptic time he was living in.



**Fol. 52v** (detail), *The Announcement of the Judgement – The Hell Mouth*, referring to Revelation 14,09-11



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# THE FINE ART FACSIMILE EDITION

Around 1415, one of the most fascinating manuscripts of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was created in Paris by an artist only known as the master of his greatest work of art: the Berry Apocalypse, which is now being published for the first time as a perfect, true-to-the-original Fine Art Facsimile Edition, worldwide strictly limited to 900 copies only.

## AN INCREDIBLE PICTURE CYCLE ILLUSTRATING THE MYSTERIOUS LAST BOOK OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

True-to-the-original Fine Art Facsimile Edition of the manuscript MS M.133 in the Morgan Library & Museum in New York, limited to 900 hand-numbered copies only. 85 large-size miniatures

**Right:** The cover of the Berry Apocalypse made of orange velvet with silver hinges and a silver clasp, all finely graved. The picture shows the original cover, which has been reproduced exactly in the facsimile edition.

**Below:** The open book shows fol. 21v/22r: The Second Trumpet and the Burning Mountain, referring to Revelation 8, 8-9.

and numerous initials on 87 leaves of 30.2 x 20.8 cm illustrate the unbelievable Apocalypse of the Duc de Berry. The original book cover of dark orange velvet will be reproduced faithfully, including the chased silver hinges and the finely graved silver clasp shaped as the French fleur de lis. A sumptuary box protects the precious edition.

The scientific commentary volume by Richard K. Emmerson studies all aspects of the manuscript, traces back its exciting history and describes all miniatures and initials in detail.



# THE DOCUMENTATION – WITH AUGMENTED REALITY: TRADITION MEETS TECHNOLOGY

This documentation offers for the first time ever new dimensions in the medieval book art. With our brand-new app Living Manuscripts, you can bring the Berry Apocalypse to life. Just download the app and scan fol. 37v in the documentation – you are going to be thrilled!

The four Fine Art Facsimile leaves in the documentation show the same perfect quality as always – please find out yourself and order the documentation today! A total of four Fine Art Facsimile

leaves, including detailed descriptions, will give you an understanding of this masterpiece of French book illumination, illustrating the Secret Revelation in all its vivid colours. A richly illustrated

information brochure presents the phantastic world of 15<sup>th</sup>-century French book illumination and traces back the eventful journey of this manuscript up to our days.



Fol. 18v



Fol. 36v



Fol. 37v



Fol. 71v

The four original facsimile pages in the documentation (from left to right): **fol. 18v** (Seventh Seal opened, revealing seven angels with Trumpets, referring to Revelation 8, 1-2), **fol. 36v** (The woman with child and the dragon, referring to Revelation 12, 1), **fol. 37v** (Archangel Michael defeats three dragons, referring to Revelation 12, 7-8) and **fol. 71v** (John the Evangelist and John the Baptist, referring to Revelation 19, 9).



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