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THE ROYAL PSALTER OF SAINTE CHAPELLE

Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 1186



MINIATURES AS RADIANT

Psalters used to be the richest illuminated manuscripts in the history of book art. The Royal Psalter (Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, Ms. 1186), dated 1230 and presumably created for Blanche de Castille, the mother of King Louis the Saint, is no exception in this respect. Originated at a time when Paris became the most important center of manuscript production in Europe, inspired by the luminosity of gothic cathedral windows, this codex with its ornate miniatures and luxurious gold decoration is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful creations of French book illumination in the 13th century. For the first time this fascinating artwork is now published as a true-to-the-original Fine Art Facsimile Edition.



Fol. 105v (detail), Initial E.

The title page shows a detail of fol. 16, the Annunciation.

Rich gold applications, beautiful ornaments, innovative drolleries, masterly decorated miniatures: Psalters were not only one of the most popular biblical texts of the Middle Ages, but also the most richly illuminated manuscripts of their time – especially with this masterpiece, richly decorated with gold, whose brilliant colours bear witness of a great wealth.

A MASTERPIECE OF FRENCH GOTHIC INSPIRED BY THE SPLENDID CATHEDRALS OF THE TIME

The fantastic pictorial worlds of the Psalter shine in red, blue and green, complemented by three-dimensional shimmering gold leaf. The 27 full-page miniatures of the Psalter are composed with raffinesse: the biblical scenes are depicted in medaillons,

which are artfully connected to each other. The influence of Gothic architecture on book illumination is evident - the decorative composition as well as the colour and the luminosity of the miniatures are reminding the spectator of the unbelievable windows of French cathedrals.

This radiant Psalter was probably created for Blanche de Castille, the mother of the French King Saint Louis.

RADIANT MINIATURES OF GREAT VIRTUOSITY

The magnificent Psalter, consisting of 192 folios in the format of 28 x 22 cm, is decorated with 27 full-page miniatures, as well with 24 medaillons in the calendar part – they depict the zodiac signs and symbolic scenes for each month. The detailed Psalms part also contains many richly gilded illuminated initials as well as countless ornaments and drolleries such as small dragons, dogs, birds and other fantastic creatures, which often romp over the text field on the edge of the folios. Precious leaf gold lets almost every folio of the Psalter shine.

The illustrations bear witness to the great virtuosity and innovative power of the artists involved. On the basis of stylistic features, the manuscript can clearly be attributed to the Paris school of book art.

AS A CATHEDRAL'S WINDOWS



Fol. 20: Baptism of Christ in the river Jordan (above); the Temptation by the devil (below).

A ROYAL MANUSCRIPT

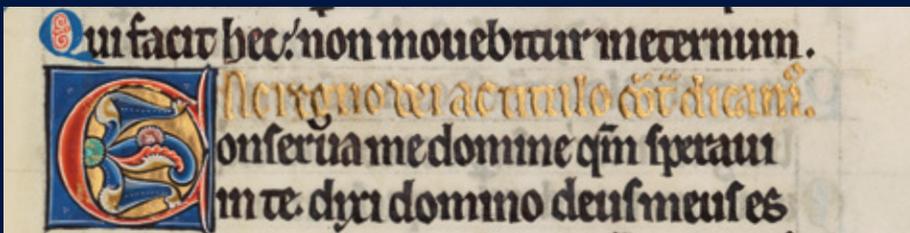
Based on the abundant features of the Psalter and the opulent use of gold, it can be concluded that the Psalter was made for a lady from the nobility. It is not clear whether the Psalter was originally given to Blanche directly, or was passed to her. As a user of the psalter, however, a woman was foreseen, as the title in a prayer on Folio 190r, with the words "miserrimam peccatricem" ("the very poorest sinner"). Said woman, possibly Blanche de Castille, is portrayed

on folio 122v in a splendid historiated initial, which shows her praying in front of an altar.

KEPT IN THE SAINTE-CHAPELLE FOR CENTURIES

The importance of this manuscript can be seen in its history and furnishings. Since 1335 it has been preserved in the treasury of the Sainte-Chapelle and brought to the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal only at the end of the 18th century. In order

to protect the cover, one of the few testimonies of Roman book binding still preserved today, a "chemise" (presumably made by Charles V), a splendid fabric embroidered with golden fleur de lys. For the first time, such a "chemise" will also be reproduced in the facsimile. In the 19th century, a protective jewellery case was also created for representative storage, which as a perfect replica will protect the edition together with the "chemise".



Above left: fol. 40r (detail), Initial C.



Left: fol. 122v (detail), A Lady, praying.

The miniature presumably shows Blanche de Castille, who ordered this manuscript.

Right: fol. 1v. The first miniature of the Psalter is also the most puzzling. Three monks are devoted to astronomical studies: the middle one holds an astrolabe towards the sky, while his companions perform calculations and record the results. The theme of this miniature is very surprising, especially in the context of a religious manuscript. This miniature could be a kind of author's picture for the following calendar.



GOLDEN SHINY IMAGES, INSPIRED BY GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE



Left: Fol. 170, Christ as the Judge of the World, separating the Righteous and the Accursed.



Right: Fol. 13v, Noah's Ark (above); Abraham and Isaac (below).

The open volume shows fol. 9v and fol. 10; left: The Fall of the Angels; right: God creates Eve from Adam's Rib.



THE FINE ART FACSIMILE EDITION

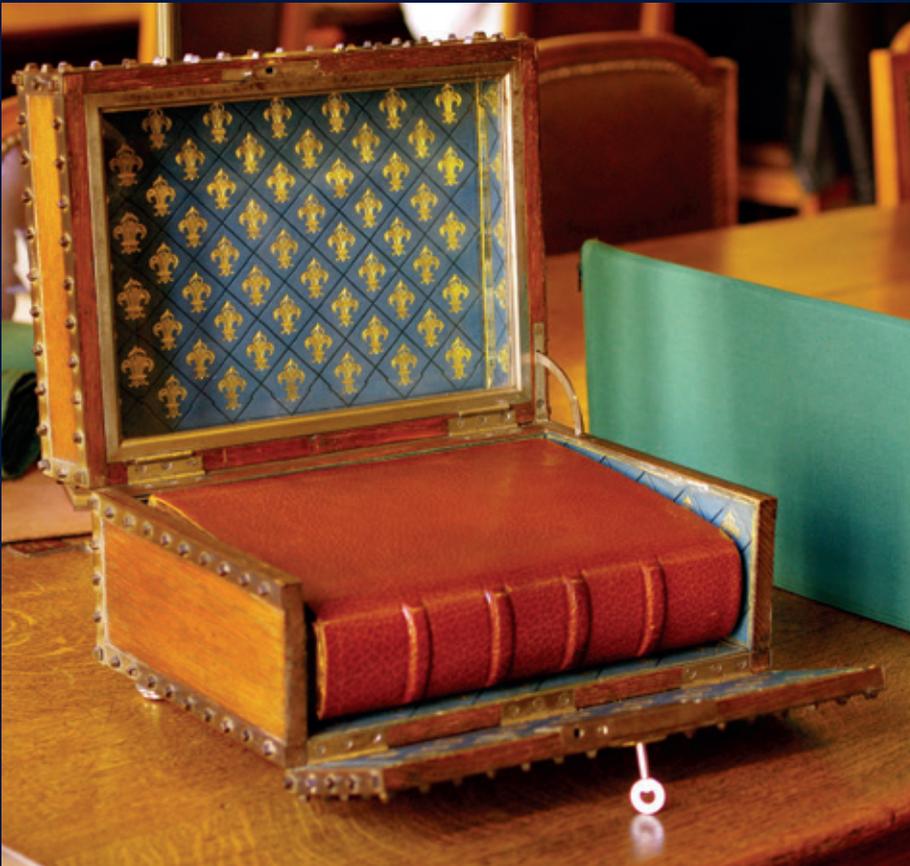
A masterpiece of Gothic Art, one of the most beautiful Psalters of French book illumination and a unique object in a jewelry box and with a noble "chemise": the splendid Royal Psalter of the Sainte-Chapelle is edited as a perfect, original facsimile edition for the first time.

LUMINOUS PICTURES INSPIRED BY GOTHIC GLASSES

True-to-the-original Fine Art Facsimile Edition of manuscript MS 1186 of the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal in Paris. 27 full-page miniatures, numerous

inhabited and historiated initials and innumerable drôleries illustrate the fantastic Royal Psalter on 192 folios in the format of 28 x 22 cm. The cover of the original - an original Romanesque cover with rich blind embossing,

which has lasted the centuries, is faithfully reproduced. The "chemise", commissioned by Charles V, as well as the magnificent cassette made in the 19th century, will also protect the valuable facsimile as authentic replicas. The academic commentary examines all aspects of the manuscript, its incredible history and explains all the miniatures and initials in detail.



Top left: A book in a "chemise". Your personal edition of the Royal Psalter will be protected like this – because for the first time ever, such a "chemise" is reproduced as a faithful replica. On the **top right** is a part of the "chemise" of the Royal Psalter: it is made of precious golden satin and richly decorated with royal lilies. The red parts are used to hold the book covers. For protection against light and environmental influences, the chemise is now stored behind glass in the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal.

Left: The original in the fantastic wooden box. The box from the 19th century made of fine wood is protected on all edges by fittings; inside, it is covered with blue velvet and elaborate embossing; the gold-embossed lilies of the French monarchs give it a regal look. The box will protect the Facsimile Edition, the replica of the "chemise" will be kept in the lid.

THE DOCUMENTATION KIT: EXPERIENCE THE GOLDEN MINIATURES OF THE ROYAL PSALTER!

Discover for yourself the superb quality of this Fine Art Facsimile Edition from Müller & Schindler: order the documentation kit for this edition today! Three true-to-the-original

facsimile pages including a detailed description bring you closer to this masterpiece of French book illumination with its bright colours and lavish use of gold. The richly illustrated

information brochure offers you a glimpse into the fantastic world of French Gothic art and traces the history of the manuscript to the present day.

The three facsimile leaves in the documentation: fol. 1v (left; Astronomical Studies), fol. 30 (center; Initial "Beatus vir", King David) and fol. 169v (right; Last Judgement).



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