

Book of Hours (Use of Rome)

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment

Italy, Florence, c. 1480-90

3 miniatures by Mariano del Buono and his Workshop

184 folios, complete, mostly in gatherings of 10 (collation: i², ix²), pastedown and flyleaf at front and at back, lacking only one folio between folios 114 and 115, written on fine vellum in dark brown ink, ff. 1-169 written in a rounded (humanist) Italian bookhand, on 15 long lines and ff. 173-184v in a later Antiqua script, light plummet ruling, (justification, 60 x 45 mm), some catchwords, rubrics in burnished gold leaf or liquid gold, numerous 1-line initials in blue or burnished gold leaf with penwork in blue or red, 2-line initials in blue or burnished gold leaf with elaborate blue or red penwork and floral and foliate ornaments extending into the margin, four 3-line initials in blue or burnished gold leaf with red or blue penwork extending well into the margin, one 4-line initial in blue with red penwork extensions, seven 4-line painted initials, in pink, blue and green paint on burnished gold leaf grounds, with floral or white tracery infill, 3 historiated initials in excellent condition, each one flanked with ornamental flowers and burnished gold leaf discs, on fine hairline stems, extending in the inner margin. Sixteenth-century chagrin (or galuchat ?) binding, gauffered and gilt edges, with a strap and pin closing mechanism, one strap missing, strap adorned with a St.-James shell shaped metal catch. Dimensions 109 x 74 mm.

With its fine historiated initials, skillful calligraphy, and gold leaf rubrics and decoration, this Book of Hours is attributed to the prolific Florentine illuminator, Mariano del Buono di Jacopo (1433-1504). Similarities with a dated Book of Hours in the Yates Thompson Collection of the British Library (MS 23) bolster the attribution to the artist and help fix a date in the mid-1480s. Its diminutive size and the feminine use for its prayers suggest that the first owner was a devout woman, perhaps a lay member of a religious community in Florence.

PROVENANCE

1. There are no traces of previous ownership. However, the features of the text and illustrations, as well as the liturgical use of Rome, secure a place of origin in Italy. It is not so easy to specify where in Italy based on the calendar. Saint Blaise, venerated especially in Florence, appears twice, but other saints, many of the various religious orders—Monica, Clare, Dominic, Francis—simply point to a devout user. The small scale of the manuscript shows that it was intended for the private devotional use of an individual, most likely a woman (confirmed by the feminine use of the prayers). On stylistic grounds, both the historiated initials and the colorful painted initials can be linked to Florence. Extensive gold leaf initials, coupled with rubrics written in burnished gold leaf, confirm that, in spite of its relatively sparse decoration, the manuscript was indeed a deluxe commission.
2. Private Collection, USA.

TEXT

ff. 1-12v, Calendar, in brown and red, in Latin, including Saints Blaise (June 1 and Feb. 3), Brigit (Feb. 1), Thomas Aquinas (Mar. 7), the Forty Martyrs (Mar. 9), Anselm bishop and confessor (Mar. 18), Joseph of Nazareth (Mar. 19), Translation of Monica (April 9), Peter martyr, O.P (April 29), Monica (May 4), Ubaldu conf. (May 16), Peter Celestine (May 20), Pius pope and martyr (July 11), Mary "ad nives" (Aug. 5 in red) and Dominic (Aug. 5), Clare (Aug. 12 in red), Louis of Toulouse (Aug. 19), Nicolas of Tolentino (Sept. 10), Francis (Oct. 4 in red) [Ursula and the] 11,000 Virgins (Oct. 21), Catherine virgin and martyr (Nov. 25 in red).

ff. 13- 68v, Hours of the Virgin, use of Rome (rubric: *Incipit Officium Beate Mariae Virginis secundum consuetudine Romane curie*); with Prime (f. 39v), antiphona "Assumpta es" and capitula "Que est ista"; None (f. 49v), antiphona "Pulcra es" and capitula "In plateis";

ff. 69-111v, Office of the Dead, use of Rome, ending with prayers in Italian ff. 111-111v: *Per uno buono morto. Oratio*, incipit, "Inclina domine aurem tuam...", followed by: *Per una donna morta. Oratio*, incipit, "Quesumus domine per tua pietate...";

ff. 112-135v, Penitential Psalms and litanies, including "Pater Augustinus," Jerome (in gold) and among the 14 virgins and widows, Giustina, Ursula and companions, Ann, Monica, Elizabeth (of Thuringia?), Brigit;

ff. 135v-137, Seven verses of St-Bernard;

ff. 137-149, Prayers of Saint Brigit, incipit, "Hec sunt quindecim collecte sive orationes illius per clarissime virginis, beate Brigide...";

ff. 149-153v, Hours of the Cross;

ff. 154-169, Prayers in Latin and Italian, including feminine forms on f. 156v, "[...] io indegnissima..."; f. 157v, "[...] me peccatrice endegna del corpo..."; first prayer (f. 154), rubric, *Oratio*, incipit, "Domine Yhesu Christe filii dei..."; rubric (f. 158v), *Oratio devota a maria virginem*, incipit, "Sancta Maria madre del nostro signor...";

ff. 169-171v, blank;

ff. 172-173v, Beginning of the Gospel according to John (different and somewhat later hand);

ff. 173v-174v, "Trinitas. Agios Soter Messias. Sagator. Saboath...";

ff. 174v-176v, "Oratio Sancti Augustini";

ff. 176v-183, "Letanie di nostra donna canticum Ambrosi et Augustini".

ff. 183-183v, Prayer, "Deus celi celorum."

ff. 184-184v, blank.

ILLUSTRATIONS

f. 13, *Virgin and Child*,

f. 69, *Death as the Grim Reaper*,

f. 112, *King David*.

Prefacing the major sections of the text, three historiated initials, each with bust-length figures, comprise the cycle of this Book of Hours, a cycle that is typical of Italian Books of Hours. The first, a lovely and serene *Virgin and Child*, introduces the Hours of the Virgin. The second, *Death as a Grim Reaper*, introduces the Office of the Dead. The third, *King David holding his Psaltery*, introduces the Seven Penitential Psalms and litanies.

The style of the initials suggests the attribution of the manuscript to a Florentine illuminator, Mariano del Buono di Jacobo (b. 1433; d. Florence? November 19, 1504). This work of this artist and his workshop is vast and includes humanist texts, as well as liturgical works, and Books of Hours. He must have had a large workshop. Among his most famous productions there is a manuscript of Plutarch's works (Modena, Bib. Estense, MS lat. 429), executed early in his career, in 1469. Later works include a copy of Virgil's *Aeneid* (Florence, Bib. Med. Laurenziana, MS Plut. 39.6) and Nesi's *De moribus* (Florence, Bib. Med. Laurenziana, MS Plut. 77.24) dedicated to Piero de Medici in 1484. Books of Hours include a work in Waddesdon Manor (MS 16), as well as the Hours of Agostino Biliotti in the London (British Library, Yates Thompson, MS 23). The finest of the initials in our manuscript, the miniature of King David, portrays an exotically garbed old man with bushy drooping eyebrows, a down-turned moustache with a full beard, and very finely modeled grayish-white wisps of hair. He is extremely close to the miniature of David playing his psaltery (f. 147) in the Hours of Agostino Biliotti, which not only bolsters the attribution but suggests a comparable date in the mid-1480s. Similar also in the Yates Thompson manuscript is the Virgin in prayer at the Nativity (f. 15) to our Virgin in Prayer.

Mariano del Buono was most likely trained by Bartolomeo Varnucci. His career is well documented by many archival sources and dated manuscripts, and it is to be assumed that he ran a large workshop with the assistance of which he accomplished his numerous orders. At least the initial of David in the present manuscript should be ascribed securely to his hand rather than to that of one of his assistants. In all probability further research may identify the very fine and distinctive scribe and calligrapher.

LITERATURE

Garzelli, A. *Miniatura fiorentina del Rinascimento 1440-1525*, 2 vols., Florence, Giunta Regionale Toscana, 1985.

Galizzi, Diego. "Mariano del Buono," in M. Bollati, ed. *Dizionario biografico dei miniatori italiani secoli IX-XVI*, Florence, Bonnard, 2004, pp. 727-29.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Hours of Agostino Biliotti, London, British Library, Yates Thompson MS 23

<http://www.british->

[library.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8146&CollID=58&NStart=23](http://www.british-library.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8146&CollID=58&NStart=23)