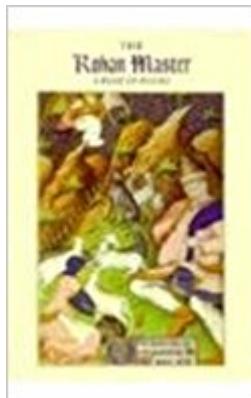


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The Rohan Master A Book Of Hours



Synopsis

This powerful and breathtakingly beautiful Book of Hours was designed in the fifteenth century by one of the greatest masters of expressionism in France at the time, and executed by him (together with members of his workshop) for a royal patron. A relatively unknown masterpiece, it emerged from artistic obscurity in 1904 to widespread acclaim and critical appreciation. As Millard Meiss points out in his Introduction: "The Rohan Master cared less about what people do than what they feel. . . . Whereas his great predecessors, the Bouicaut Master and the Limbourg, excelled in the description of novel aspects of the natural world, he explored the realm of human feeling." And, in his explorations, the Rohan Master disclosed a way of viewing and visually depicting reality (replete with familiar biblical figures, saints, angels, devils) and the emotions of simple men and women - suffering, elation, fear, melancholy, and hope - in a manner that is both original and powerfully moving. From the first folio of this remarkable and often startling manuscript to the final plate, the entire range of human emotions is compassionately but uncompromisingly explored. Named after the Rohan family, whose arms appear in this manuscript, this distinctive artist earned himself a place as one of the greatest manuscript illuminators of the early Renaissance.

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Customer Reviews

This powerful and breathtakingly beautiful Book of Hours was designed in the fifteenth century by one of the greatest masters of expressionism in France at the time, and executed by him (together with members of his workshop) for a royal patron. A relatively unknown masterpiece, it emerged

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Millard Meiss (1904-1975) est l'un des grands représentants de l'école d'histoire de l'art américaine influencée par Panofsky. Ses travaux ont porté sur l'art italien du Trecento et du Quattrocento, avant qu'il ne se consacre totalement à l'étude de la miniature française. Thomas, The Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France. Thomas, The Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France.

I too am biased (I'm a historian of Italian Renaissance art), and while the as yet unknown master who illustrated the Rohan Hours meets none of the usual criteria for "beauty" in 15th-century painting (say, the style of Fra Angelico's angels or Botticelli's maidens--both of these painters produced fine book illustrations), there is no question that he was a brilliantly inventive, keenly expressive artist. His illustrations for the standard repertoire of Christian Bible stories totally push the envelope of what was usual within a book's pages. He combined achingly precise realistic description with a total freedom in the scaling and placement of figures, and a luxuriant decorative sense, creating powerful images that virtually burst from the page. Gestures, facial expressions, accessories from hair to drapery, seem driven by powerful currents generated from the prayers to which they give shape. A Renaissance original, with a refined, if bold, technique.

This is one of many fine reproductions produced by the Geo. Braziller company. This particular manuscript is a 15th c. book of hours generally considered to be a masterpiece in the book-art community. It's a very nice reproduction. My personal opinion, of course, colors my perception of the quality of the art of the Rohan hours. Frankly, I think the art in the Rohan Hours is of medium quality; its miniatures are certainly emotional, but the technique is rougher than most of the books of

this era that are considered to be "masterpieces." Individuals who find the art charming, of course, would give this book a higher star rating, because it has all the usual nice qualities of a Braziller publication. There is an essay detailing the history and discussing some of the manufacture information , followed by lots and lots of pictures of manuscript pages accompanied by a short paragraph detailing the actions of the people in the pictures. The color reproduction is nice. I own it; it's a pleasant enough book. I don't mean to discourage a lover of the illuminated manuscript from buying this book. However, you should also be aware that the art of the Rohan Hours isn't quite as finely done as you might expect.

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