



Painted Prayers: The Book of Hours in Medieval and Renaissance Art

Roger S. Wieck

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Featured here are some of the finest examples of illuminated pages from medieval and Renaissance Books of Hours. A "bestseller" for three hundred years, the Book of Hours was a devotional work that almost everyone owned and virtually knew by heart. The 107 glorious illuminations included in this volume are from The Pierpont Morgan Library's collection, one of the world's richest collections of the hand-painted book. Roger Wieck's comprehensive text explores two key elements of Books of Hours: the magnificent illuminations and the texts. Mr. Wieck also introduces these volumes to the general reader, with a discussion of their iconography, the artists who illuminated them, and their role as a religious text in the lives of their owners. As a collection of both stirring words and inspiring images, the Book of Hours thus comprised a series of "painted prayers." The illuminated pages shown here range from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries and come from all the major manuscript-producing countries of Europe. Mr. Wieck's text offers explanations and translations of key passages from the various "Hours," psalms, Gospel lessons, hymns, litanies, and private prayers found in a typical Book of Hours. We see its evolution from illuminated manuscripts to the early printed editions of the same texts, leading us from the piety of the Gothic era to the culture of the Renaissance. More Books of Hours survive from the late Middle Ages than any other cultural artifact. Medieval life--and death--cannot begin to be understood without examining these illuminated treasures.

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