

# The Turin-Milan Hours with Miniatures by Jan van Eyck



## A Monument of European History of Art

The Turin-Milan Hours were ordered by a series of art lovers over a period of more than fifty years uniting two leading artistic currents of the southern side of the Alps and thus presenting a true treasure trove of painting styles.

In an era of radical changes, two of the most progressive artistic movements are represented in this work, namely those of France and the Low Countries. While some of the miniatures rank among the most beautiful examples of late Gothic painting in France, others are revolutionary, if not visionary, in style.

The latter were celebrated as the beginnings of old Dutch painting and are closely connected with one famous name, Jan van Eyck.

## The Only Book Illuminated by the Great Jan van Eyck

In the Turin-Milan Hours we find both the earliest as well as the latest works by the genius Jan van Eyck that are known to this day.

They reflect the stunning ability of this artist to assign scenes of everyday life a somewhat greater importance by playing on the effects of light. He also was the first to create life-like portraits. In addition, his paintings render a microscopically precise picture of reality. In Jan van Eyck's miniatures, new techniques abound.

What this exceptional artist achieved at the beginning of his career, has never been created in equal grandeur before him and only the greatest of his successors equalled him in perfection. This makes the Turin-Milan Hours an irreplaceable document in the history of art.

## Originally a Monumental Project

The Turin-Milan Hours were created over a period of 70 years. As of 1380 the highest nobility and their court painters took over the production of the manuscript.

Initially, there was an ambitious project to create an illuminated manuscript of monumental dimensions. What we are talking about here, is the last part of this manuscript, today officially called Heures de Turin-Milan.

The work was commissioned by the Duke of Berry probably before the turn of the 15th century. The first painting campaign was carried out by the Master of the Parement de Narbonne. He planned the succession of pages, executed basic sketches and completed several important miniatures himself. In 1405 the duke had another campaign started under the direction of the Master of John the Baptist.

However, the manuscript was still incomplete at the duke's death in 1416 and was later divided in two parts.

### **An Exciting and Eventful History**

The actual Book of Hours, the Très Belles Heures de Notre-Dame (see page 36 of this catalogue) was passed on to Robinet d'Estampes; the second part consisted of the Heures de Turin on the one hand which burned in 1904 and of which only four leaves remain, today in the Louvre (page 40), and of a Missal, our Turin-Milan Hours, on the other hand.

The unfinished work of the 15th century went to Count John of Holland who inherited it. In 1424, John charged the young Jan van Eyck with the completion of the manuscript. Even this time, completion was not achieved. Jan van Eyck moved to the court of Philip of Burgundy and took the manuscript with him. There the master undertook a second attempt to finish the book, but was interrupted in his work when he died in 1441. Presumably driven by the wish to set a monument to the artist, Philip of Burgundy had the Missal and Prayer Book finished by another Flemish artist in the tradition of Jan van Eyck.

The further destiny of the manuscript is hidden in the mists of time. It seems to have been divided again in the 16th century. The Turin-Milan Hours later belonged to the Count of Aglié who passed it on to the Princes of Trivulzio who finally donated it to the Museo Civico in Turin.

### **One of the Most Exciting Books of the Middle Ages**

The significance of this work lies mainly in the fact that many of the most important impulses which were later to influence the pictorial arts of the Late Middle Ages, appear here in conjunction with another.

It seems obvious that the artists who worked on it were perfectly aware of its unique importance, as they undertook the most daring artistic experiments to achieve the effects which we still deeply admire today.

### **The Fine Art Facsimile Edition**

The Turin-Milan Hours have been published in a unique limited edition of 980 copies world-wide. Combining the most qualified craftsmanship according to medieval models and the most up-to-date techniques, we have been able to reproduce an illuminated manuscript which meets the very highest requirements. Each of the 252 pages has been reproduced true to the original in the format of 28.4 x 20.3 cm, including the 28 pages of miniatures in intensive colours and the text in Latin. The codex is bound in green velvet and decorated with fine gold embossing. The headband was hand sewn.

### **The Commentary Volume**

The scientific commentary provides access to the work and offers an insight into the latest results of recent research carried out on the occasion of the reproduction of the manuscript in a facsimile edition.

It includes contributions of the following international experts: Prof. Dr. James H. Marrow, Princeton University, New Jersey; Dr. Silvana Pettenati, Directrice of the Museo Civico d'Arte Antica Torino; and Prof. Dr. Anne H. Buren, Tufts University, Boston, Massachusetts. In addition, the commentary volume contains all miniatures of the original monumental manuscript in a black and white illustration section including comprehensive descriptions.

Both facsimile and commentary are presented in a protective case of acrylic glass.

### **Documentation Kit**

A documentation folder containing two full-sized leaves from the facsimile edition and an illustrated 20-page information brochure is available for information upon request.