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Books Of Hours (Phaidon Miniature Editions)



Synopsis

Originally an addition to the end of the Psalter or Book of Psalms, the first separate Book of Hours known in England was attributed to the artist William de Brailes between 1230 and 1260. By the end of the 13th century the Book of Hours had become a favourite prayerbook of ordinary people throughout Western Europe and in the years that followed its popularity spread. Often small and highly decorated, these books provide an insight into the daily life of the Middle Ages.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A very small book containing 85 color plates of miniatures culled from various books of hours. The plates are reproduced at or near their original size, giving an idea of just how truly small most of these pictures actually are. The plates come from the best manuscripts owned by several museums. Most of the art is Franco-Flemish from 1475-1525, but there are a few earlier works and/or Italian works represented, as well. There is very little text. This book is intended, I believe, to provide just enough information to pique the curious. The art is splendid, though, and a better, more portable visual reference could not be found. I liked this book so much that I bought two copies; one to use as a reference when painting, and another to just enjoy perusing.

Lovely tiny book with absolutely gorgeous illustrations from real medieval books of hours, with jewel tones and lovely compositions. The binding should be different to allow it to more easily open fully.

I'm an art student, and we often study books of hours, but it's always just slides, so we don't get to hold an example. This little book is a wonderful example of the actual books of hours from this time period. It really gives you an appreciation for the craftsmanship of the artists; the intricate detail is so delicate and tiny, and it's clearly printed in this book. I highly recommend it!

I have found this book to be an extraordinary value. For a pittance it is filled with gorgeous, albeit tiny, reproductions of high quality and great beauty. While the text is minimal, the content is maximal, outlining the structures and purposes of Books of Hours, with rigorous concise-ness. It is a treasure and a fantastic introduction including notes on stellar works that can be explored further through the collections that own them. Can't recommend it enough for artists seeking visual reference material and source notations. The tiny scale makes it fantastic portable inspiration! I purchased several larger, academic tomes on related topics at the same time but this little gem is my favorite (so far).

In this tiny book are brought together a limited choice of the most exquisite medieval miniatures from 1230 (artist William de Brailes) until 1522. Other important artists are Jan Van Eyck, Jean Fouquet, and Simon Bening. Of course in large manuscripts most of the illuminations could hardly be called miniatures but were full blown paintings, so to speak, with their own set of aesthetic rules. The format of the Books of Hours are ideal to study miniatures. You will find in this little book (approximate the same size as the miniatures included) an amazing collection of breathtaking miniatures with very vivid and beautiful colors. It's eye candy, I agree, but that made the Books of Hours popular in the Middle Ages. Let's face it, the success of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages depended - for a substantial part - upon the cultural wealth that was displayed in churches and cathedrals, in the Vatican and its sumptuous Library, and in the Books of hours with their initials decorated with burnished gold. Indeed, you could say that the luminous colors of the miniatures in this collection are making the Dark Ages less dark.

This book precisely fits a particular niche in the needs of someone teaching Medieval books, remarkably inexpensive. Buy Two! There are dozens of excellent books on illustrated books of the pre-printing press late Medieval period, but, for what I had in mind, they all had one huge drawback. They were huge! They were classic art books, with quarto, or even folio sized pages, and glorious, oversized full color illustrations, and lots of great explanations. But, what I wanted was something

which would be a reasonable facsimile to the true Medieval books of hours, psalters, and breviaries that I see in the Cloisters in NYC. I needed something I could pass around to a group during a class on the books of hours. I was so frustrated (I did see an ad for a facsimile of a Medieval illustrated Breviary, which cost close to 10,000 dollars. And they didn't even have the good sense to post a picture. To make a long story short, this volume is precisely what I wanted, at a ridiculously low price. I agree with the reviewer who noted that the book should be able to lie open, flat. I suggest that the cost of this book is so small that I would consider buying a second copy, and rebinding my first copy, so that it does lie flat.

The book is very small-about 4"x5", and the pictures themselves are even smaller, but they are all reproduced at their original size. One negative is that the plates (pictures) aren't described on the page with the pictures-however, a description of what each one is about IS listed in the back of the book. BUT, I still give it a 5 because the pictures/plates are EXTREMELY beautiful and exquisite! There is so much detail, it's incredible. The colors and designs are deep and complex. I DO use a small magnifying glass to look at them, and as I mentioned, a description of each plate is available in the back of the book. At such a low price, this item is definitely worth buying if you love art and/or medieval times. I'm glad I bought it. It amazes me how much detail, time, and effort must have gone into the making of such impeccable miniatures.

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