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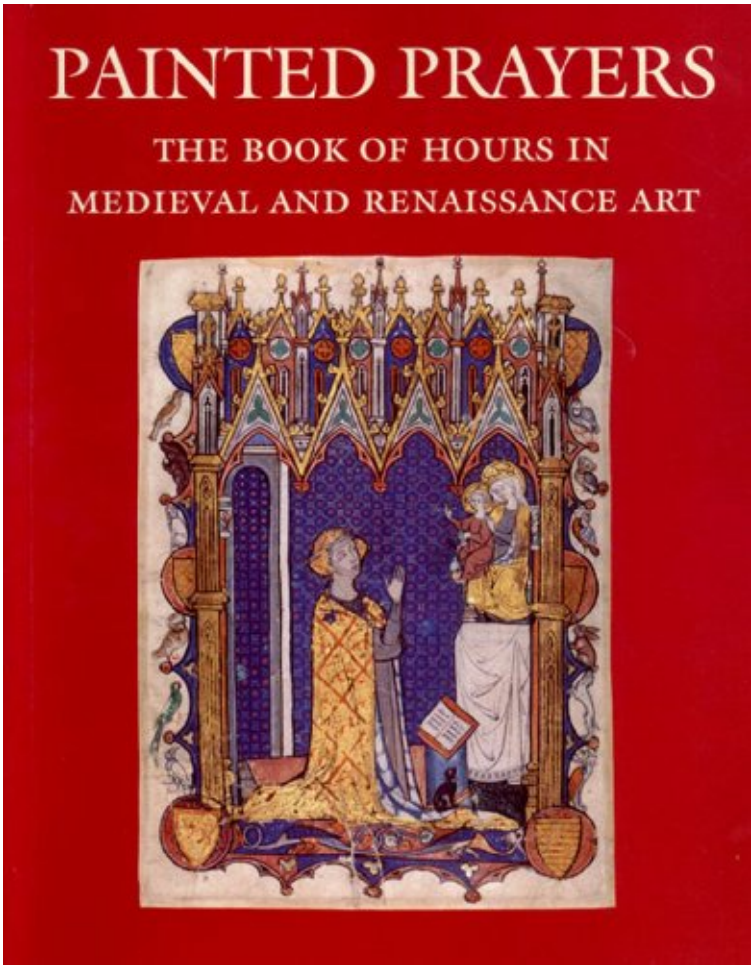

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Painted Prayers: The Book of Hours in Medieval and Renaissance Art

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introduction, calendar, Gospel Lessons, Hours of the Virgin, Pentitential Psalms etc., the core of the book is the descriptions of the illustrations themselves. These description provide a variety of information - bits of biography of the artist, history of the manuscript (confirmed and confirmed), information regarding the style, the imagery etc. The "chapter" material provides samples of the texts, the development of the specific portion of the Book of Hours, etc. This provides the overall context for the materials.The indices provide access by manuscript, artist, early owners; an appendex provides the outline of the major offices by incipit (first phrase) to place individual illustrations in the overall context of the prayer hour.Don't be intimidated - the text is easily followed but one unfamilar with the prayer book content or with illuminated manuscripts. But you can also enjoy the book simply going through the pictures - like a stroll through a museum without a docent or tape.

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.

.com If this sparkling book contained only its crystalline reproductions of illuminated manuscripts, it would satisfy most lovers of these charming miniatures. But Roger S. Wieck, curator of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City, is the most entertaining of authors. His enthusiasm for what he dubs "the Medieval best-seller" is thoroughly infectious. "Books of Hours linked church and home," he writes. "The entire celestial court, God and his cosmos, could be held within the palms of one's hands." Wieck has turned his scholarly, historical material into a page-turner. Given the hypnotic beauty of the manuscripts themselves, with all their flayings, blessings, betrayals, and epiphanies, Painted Prayers should be a bestseller in its own right.From Kirkus sNotes Wieck (curator of medieval manuscripts at the Pierpont Morgan Library), ``The Book of Hours was the bestseller of the late middle ages." Heavily, often gorgeously, illustrated prayer books commissioned by the wealthy, they got their name because they contain a sequence of 37 prayers to the Mother of God intended to be recited throughout the course of the day. From the Morgan Library collections Wieck has drawn some 100 examples, reproduced in color. Much of the work is stunning, including a straightforward portrait of a meditative Christ, and a 1440 painting of a Bosch- like Mouth of Hell. The miniaturists who provided paintings for the books also decorated borders and even filled entire pages with abstract designs as well as with the tiny, precise figures of devils, angels, sinners, and saints. They also relied on their own world for inspiration for backgrounds, providing some wonderful views of medieval peasants and landscapes, castles and churches. Wieck provides a deft survey of the subject, and the illustrations, still fresh after six centuries, glowing with color and a fervent sense of faith, offer a unique glimpse of another time. -- Copyright 1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.About the AuthorRoger S. Wieck is Associate Curator of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts at The Piermont Morgan Library, New York. He is the author of Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life and Late Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, 1310-1525, in the Houghton Library.