

and experience. As student exercises they are fine, after which they should either have been filed or destroyed—the desirable result is identical—so that librarians will not be deprived of the privilege and the necessity of making selection judgments based on the curricula and much consultation with their faculty. In no other way can a library collection be tailor-made for its own institution, and in no other way can a librarian and faculty know enough about the books within their library to stimulate students to use them.—*LeRoy Charles Merritt, University of California.*

Medieval Book Paintings

Medieval French Miniatures. By Jean Porcher. [Translated by Julian Brown] New York, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. [1960]. 276p. 184 illus. (94 in color). \$25.00.

This splendid book with its store of information and superb illustrations is a welcome addition to the collection of recent publications on medieval book paintings prepared by experts for the general reader.

Jean Porcher is the distinguished Chief of the Department of Manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale, probably the largest and certainly one of the finest collections of medieval books in existence. His comments are based on manuscripts that were displayed in three exhibitions for which he was responsible. These included not only the National Library's own treasures but volumes borrowed from other institutions, mainly French provincial libraries but also a few from the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. Some Americans who were in Paris in the summers of 1954, 1955 and 1958 viewed these magnificent displays and brought home the catalogs that described them. The present book can stand alone but it is also a valuable complement to the catalogs—M. Porcher points out the relations between groups of manuscripts and connects book painting with contemporary influences, theological and political as well as artistic.

This book is not as comprehensive in scope as were the exhibitions. The author chose to limit his remarks to works produced in the area of present-day France from the 10th to the 15th centuries, thus omitting the Merovingian and Carolingian periods. On the other hand, he includes descriptions and illustrations of some important manuscripts which could not be displayed in Paris, notably three books which once belonged to Jean, Duke of Berry, whose name represents the quintessence of book collecting. Two of these manuscripts are in the Cloisters in New York (the *Heures de Jeanne d'Evreux*, executed by Jean Pucelle, and the *Belles Heures*, made for the Duke by the Limbourg Brothers) and the third is the famous *Très Riches Heures* in the Musée Condé at Chantilly, also painted by the Limbourg Brothers for the Duke but unfinished when he died in 1416.

In the Romanesque period, French miniatures reflect a combination of influences from the artistically superior productions of England, Germany, and the Mediterranean area, but by the 13th century the roles were reversed. Throughout the Gothic period artists of other areas looked to France for inspiration, particularly Paris, whose flourishing university made it the intellectual as well as the artistic center of Europe. Eventually there developed an "International Style" in which artists from the Low Countries and Italy played important parts. Some of the most beautiful books ever made were produced in France during the 14th and 15th centuries—they are also among the finest examples of any form of medieval art.

M. Porcher associates the development of book painting in the Romanesque period with the state of learning in the monasteries, and in the Gothic period with the patronage of the nobility and a literate laity. He contrasts the majesty of Romanesque figures with their more human Gothic counterparts and attributes this change in technique to change in spiritual conceptions.

The relation between book painting and other arts, such as ivory carving, enameling, and stained glass windows, is presented—for example, the close resemblance between a series of paintings in a 12th century *Life of Christ* in the Pierpont Morgan Library and a window at Chartres.

One of the most difficult tasks for the book

historian is to trace the works of individual artists since a book or miniature was seldom signed. M. Porcher has been able to establish identification in many cases not only through relationship in style but by the evidence of contemporary records such as owners' inventories, city tax lists, etc. Among the most talented artists whose works are identified are Honoré (end of the 13th century), Jean Pucelle (early 14th century), the Limbourg Brothers (turn of the 14th century, Hollanders by birth but Parisian by training), and Jean Fouquet (died ca. 1480), "the most accomplished exponent of French illumination at its height".

M. Porcher traces the gradual adoption of perspective in French miniatures but when the technique was finally perfected it resulted in the loss of the individuality of the miniature. By deserting the plane service it became merely a panel painting placed be-

tween covers. No longer was the miniature an integral part of page design in which script, border decoration, and illustration were harmonized. But by then large numbers of books were being printed and no longer were manuscripts a necessity although limited production of them continued for some time.

The transition from manuscript to printed book was gradual. Some fine copies were printed on vellum and decorated by an illuminator. A little later when printed books included woodcut illustrations, these were often hand-colored. Because France achieved the greatest height in manuscript production its complete capitulation to mechanical bookmaking was difficult and took a long time. But when it finally did it again rose to eminence with its beautiful printed books of the 16th century.—*Bertha M. Frick, School of Library Service, Columbia University.*

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