



Ricketts 145 (1v)

12. Book of Hours

Florence (use of Rome), early 16th century

Ricketts 145

217 leaves; 9.5x7cm. (5.5x4cm.); vellum

Italian Gothic script; in Latin; three decorated initials

19th-century morocco binding

By the late fifteenth century private devotional books were becoming more and more the products of printing presses and less the work of scriptoria and artist's shops. Ricketts 145 is an example of the kind of books that were still being commissioned by wealthy individuals who preferred the beauty of hand illumination and script to that of printed woodcuts and mechanical type. This small Book of Hours exemplifies what could not be achieved with mass production.

The script of Ricketts 145 is an even, vertical Italian Gothic, accented with display lettering. Each of the eleven lines of text on the tiny pages measures 5mm (1/8 in.) high. Large red and blue capitals at the left margins are embellished by delicate purple and red scrolls framing the letters by creating a linear backdrop and culminating in spirals, often with Pommée crosses at the ends. In the first ten quires (1r-95v), the red scrollwork sweeps into tendrils, hearts, flowers, or leaves, but becomes less elaborate throughout the rest of the book. The purple linear ornament is consistently more simple.

Six miniatures, eight medallions, and three decorated initials comprise the total illumination in Ricketts 145. A small miniature opens each office, the largest ones measuring only 5x3.5cm. A two-page spread of illumination opens the Office of the Virgin which is the longest office in the book (2v-96v). The Annunciation (1v) shows Mary and the Angel Gabriel kneeling in a courtyard with a view into a bedroom in the background. A dove descends upon the Virgin from the upper left corner. Two putti flank a coat of arms in the border below. Opposite this scene is a seated Virgin wearing a blue robe and holding the Christ Child (2r). A portrait medallion of Abraham appears in the right border; two angels hold another coat of arms at the bottom.

The Office of the Dead (96r-163v) is announced by a half-figure skeleton with a crown and scythe. King David playing a harp il-

illustrates the first folio of the Penitential Psalms (164r-195v); a simple gold cross introduces the Office of the Cross (196r-201v); and the private prayers begin with an image of the Virgin standing before a staircase. Aside from its lack of a calendar, the structure of Ricketts 145 is in keeping with a traditional Book of Hours.

Coats of arms of the Pandolfini and the Buondelmonte families (Ricci, 639) appear on the first two leaves suggesting that the book was probably commissioned in honor of a marriage between these wealthy Florentine houses.

The Florentine origin of the Lilly manuscript is further supported by the style and iconography of its illumination. Both Office of the Virgin miniatures are strikingly similar in iconography and figure type to miniatures in a Book of Hours commissioned by Lorenzo de Medici in 1485 from Francesco d'Antonio del Cherico, a leading Florentine miniaturist (Florence, Medicean-Laurentian Library, Laurentian Ashburnham 1875). One significant link between the Lilly and the Medici iconography is at the opening of the Penitential Psalms in the image of the aged King David playing a shield-like, Y-shaped harp held at his chest. An elderly David is depicted playing an identical harp in a late fifteenth-century psalter attributed to Boccardino Vecchio (Florence, San Marco Museum, Psalter 542). Boccardino was a late fifteenth- early sixteenth-century illuminator primarily active in Florence during the years 1509-23. His figure types relate to the Ricketts 145 Annunciation, Virgin and Child, and King David miniatures, which share some of the same characteristics of pose, facial expression, and linearity of form. The Lilly figures of Abraham, St. Bonaventure (?), the severed head of Goliath, the Man of Sorrows, and the double portrait of Anna and Joachim also show traces of Boccardino's influence. However, although the Ricketts 145 artist seems to have been familiar with Boccardino's work, the miniatures are of a lesser quality and cannot be attributed to the master himself.

A portrait medallion of a nimbed Franciscan saint holding a skull appears below the skeleton miniature at the Office of the Dead (96r). This saint may be St. Bonaventure who is often represented as a figure intervening between death and the living (Roig, 66). Another Franciscan, St. Bernardine of Siena, is also referred to in Ricketts 145. Two small medallions in the borders of the Virgin miniature pages (1v and 2r) contain Bernardine's monogram of the Holy Name of Jesus (IHS) surrounded by rays of light, an emblem

he used when preaching, implying the owner's special devotion to this saint.

A simple burnished gold Latin cross and a small image of a nimbed Christ as the Man of Sorrows displaying the stigmata on his hands and chest introduce the Office of the Cross (196r).

A portrait of a young girl standing before a staircase marks the opening of the personal prayers (202r), the final office in Ricketts 145. Although this figure has been read as male and identified as Christ (Olschki, 72), there is evidence suggesting otherwise. The accompanying double portrait of a woman wearing a green mantle and an aged bearded man in a medallion at the bottom of the page helps to determine the figure's identity. If it were Christ, the couple might be interpreted as Mary and Joseph, but the woman wears a green robe rather than the traditional blue of the Virgin. It is more likely that Joachim and Anna, parents of the Virgin, are shown looking up at their daughter at the time of her Presentation in the Temple. The staircase or ladder to heaven is a common motif in the lives of the saints and, in this later period, the stairs are an allegory of the Virgin who becomes a stairway for the ascent to God (Casse, 69). Many of the private prayers refer to the Virgin, as well.

Stylistic consistencies throughout Ricketts 145 seem to confirm that only one artist was responsible for both illumination and decoration. For example, the same minute line drawing and subtle color changes are found in both borders and miniatures. The face and body types of the two putti on folio 1v are almost identical to the infant Christ in the Madonna and Child miniature (2r).

PROVENANCE

Leo S. Olschki, Florence, 1908; Susan Minns Sale, New York to J. Martini, 1922; acquired by C.L. Ricketts from Martini, 1922; Lilly Library, 1961

L.S.