



THE VERY RICH HOURS OF THE DUKE OF BERRY EXHIBITION AT THE CHÂTEAU DE CHANTILLY

7th June to 5th October 2025, Jeu de Paume

A LANDMARK EXHIBITION CELEBRATING THE RESTORATION OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS MANUSCRIPT, DISPLAYED LIKE NEVER BEFORE.

A seminal work of medieval art, *the Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry* are among the most prized possessions of the Musée Condé at the Château de Chantilly. Honouring the wishes of its donor, the Duke of Aumale, this fragile and priceless manuscript cannot be exhibited outside the Château de Chantilly, where it is conserved in a secure environment away from public view. The exhibition at the Jeu de Paume will present this extraordinary book — the world's most celebrated medieval manuscript — for a period of four months, from June to October 2025. Recently restored, its legendary calendar can now be displayed unbound, while exceptional loans from national and international collections will place this remarkable work within its historical context, revealing its enduring influence from the 15th century to the present.

Due to its extreme fragility, *the Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry*, featuring 121 exquisite paintings, is seldom exhibited publicly. Thanks to a major restoration project, twenty-six pages from its remarkable calendar will now be displayed together for the first and probably the last time in many years, offering a comprehensive view of its paintings, their evolution over time, and their elegant layout.

Chronicling the discovery and history of this masterpiece, this landmark exhibition will also reveal its many different facets through a selection of prestigious loans. Drawing on the latest national and international research, insights from conservators and cutting-edge analysis by the French Museums Research and Restoration Centre (C2RMF), it offers a fresh perspective on an outstanding work, with the broader aim of inspiring future generations.

A DISCOVERY IN PROGRESS

In December 1855, a manuscript once belonging to Duke Jean of Berry (1340-1416), the son, brother and uncle of kings of France, resurfaced in Genoa. When he learned of the manuscript, the Duke of Aumale (1822-1897) instantly grasped its importance, purchased it and hired the leading experts of the day to begin a study of it. Completing this fascinating survey, major works from the same workshop will also put this unparalleled production within its broader context.

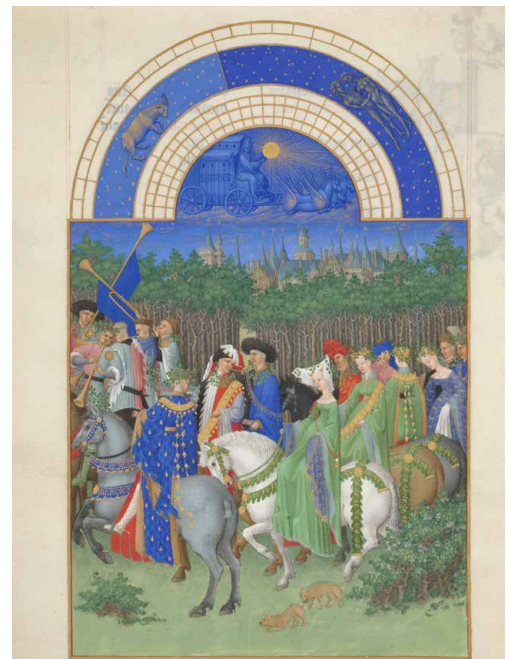


January in the calendar of the *Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry*
Paris and Bourges, 1411-1485
© RMN-Grand Palais - Domaine de Chantilly - Michel Urtado

Known by its 15th-century name, the *Very Rich Hours* is a remarkable prayer book created around 1411 for Jean I, Duke of Berry, brother of King Charles V, by three talented young artists from Nijmegen: the Limbourg brothers, Paul, Jean and Herman. Nephews of the painter Jean Malouel (circa 1370-1415), they worked alongside the most skilled copyists and illuminators of their time. Both patron and painters died in 1416, leaving the manuscript unfinished.

A succession of illuminators subsequently worked on the manuscript throughout the 15th century, including Barthélemy d'Eyck around 1440, for the Royal Family, and Jean Colombe around 1485, for Charles I of Savoy, who inherited it. This masterpiece, now considered one of the most remarkable books of its time, retains its unity while blending Flemish, French, Italian, Eastern and classical influences, which have been gradually brought to light by specialists in the field.

Since its acquisition by the Duke of Aumale and his commissioning of early reproductions of the work, the book has gained international acclaim as a masterpiece of medieval art. It continues to shape a romanticised and idealised vision of the Middle Ages in the popular imagination.



May in the calendar of the *Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry* Paris and Bourges, 1411 - 1485
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THE CENTREPIECE OF THE EXHIBITION: A UNIQUE INSIGHT INTO THE *VERY RICH HOURS*

Following its restoration, twelve unbounded leaves of the *Very Rich Hours* will be placed on public display. These six bifolia, containing the calendar, will be presented vertically for viewing on both sides. Each unbound bifolium will be housed in a specially designed climate-controlled case created by conservators.

The manuscript itself, the centrepiece of the exhibition, will be presented in its own display case. **Every two weeks, the book will be turned to a new double page.** Visitors can also explore the entire book using digital flipbooks.

The restoration, performed with the expert help of leading specialists, offered an unparalleled opportunity to scrutinise the work, revealing each stage of its creation, down to the smallest brushstroke. An audiovisual presentation will bring to life these extraordinary findings and scientific images from analyses produced by the C2RMF.



Christmas Mass in the *Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry*, Paris and Bourges, 1411 - 1485
© RMN-Grand Palais - Domaine de Chantilly - Michel Urtado



Fall of the Angels in the *Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry*, Paris and Bourges, 1411 - 1485
© RMN-Grand Palais - Domaine de Chantilly - Michel Urtado

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Discovering the manuscript

The exhibition tells the story of how the manuscript came to enter the collection of the Château de Chantilly and the reasons for its enduring popularity, from its purchase to the present day.

The Duke of Berry: prince, patron and bibliophile

This exhibition offers visitors a glimpse into the life of a prince, Jean of Berry, and his role as a political figure, patron of the arts and builder, and places it within the broader context of early 15th-century France. The exhibition's highlights include the tomb effigy of the Duke of Berry from Bourges Cathedral and exceptional loans from the Musée du Berry and the Municipal Library of Bourges. Together with numerous other loans, these works offer a glimpse into the opulent world of medieval France's most lavish patron.

Princely library

Thanks to a unique partnership with the National Library of France, a significant portion of the Duke of Berry's extensive medieval library, one of the most celebrated of its day, will also be on display. Dozens of manuscripts complete the Château de Chantilly's own collection, offering a fuller picture of the prince's opulent lifestyle, refined taste and intellectual pursuits. Other prestigious institutions, both in France and abroad, are also lending their support to this unique exhibition, recreating one of the world's most beautiful medieval libraries, where illuminated manuscripts take centre stage.

A collection of Books of Hours

For the first time since his death in 1416, all surviving Books of Hours commissioned by the Duke of Berry will be brought together from collections in Chantilly, Paris, Brussels and New York.

Creating the *Very Rich Hours*

The exhibition examines the pivotal role of the Limbourg brothers in creating this book and introduces the principal artists who contributed to it, exploring their unique styles and inspirations. Most of the surviving works by the Limbourg brothers will feature in the exhibition.

An inspiring manuscript

The manuscript was an instant sensation, and many of its designs were replicated in illuminations produced by the artists themselves or their contemporaries. The *Very Rich Hours* has left an indelible mark on the history of art, inspiring countless masterpieces, many of which will make the journey to Chantilly.

A global icon

The exhibition explores the reasons behind the manuscript's international fame, from its creation to the present day, in a display combining literature, visual arts and cinema.



Jean de Cambrai, *Mourner of the Duke of Berry*, Bourges, Musée du Berry
© Musée et Patrimoine Historique de la Ville de Bourges



Jean de Cambrai, *Tomb effigy of the Duke of Berry*, Cathedral of Bourges
© Olivier Rolland

SECOND CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN

Adopting an illumination from the *Very Rich Hours* helps safeguard this medieval masterpiece, often called the 'Mona Lisa of Manuscripts'. In preparation for the 2025 exhibition, the Musée Condé at the Château de Chantilly is restoring the manuscript to prevent further deterioration of the parchment and paint and to repair its binding.

All the illuminations of the months in the calendar have been adopted, except September, which is the subject of a [crowdfunding campaign](#). A new campaign invites you to adopt nine other remarkable artworks, which will be showcased, one after the other, during the exhibition.

Zodiac Man

This image, found in no other book of hours from this period, is among the most celebrated of the manuscript's 121 paintings. It will be publicly exhibited from 7th to 17th June 2025.

Paradise and the Annunciation

From 18th June to 1st July 2025, visitors can admire this illustration, notable for its round shape, found only once in the manuscript, and the unique inclusion of four depictions of Adam and Eve within a single image.

The Magi

Available for public viewing from 2nd to 15th July 2025, this double page, rich in detail and symbolism, perfectly exemplifies the themes explored in medieval illustrations.

The Fall of the Rebel Angels opposite Psalm 6

On display to the public from 16th to 29th July 2025, these two pages present themes and motifs commonly explored in the Middle Ages. Painted by various artists, including the Limbourg brothers, Jean Colombe and the Master of Sarrasin during the 15th century, these works demonstrate a rich diversity of medieval styles and interpretations.

Christ on the Mount of Olives, Christ Led Before the Judge

This double page, a later addition, which will be shown to the public from 30th July to 12th August 2025, is a testament to the Limbourg brothers' remarkable abilities, demonstrating their mastery of a wide range of artistic techniques, symbols and colour palettes.

Crucifixion and Death of Christ

On public display from 13th to 26th August 2025, this double page, created by different artists over more than 70 years, is a remarkable grayscale that perfectly conveys the solar eclipse said to have occurred at the moment of Christ's death.

Temptation of Christ

Presented to the public from 27th August to 9th September 2025, this page, which depicts the Château de Mehun-sur-Yèvre, is one of the earliest surviving 'architectural portraits'.

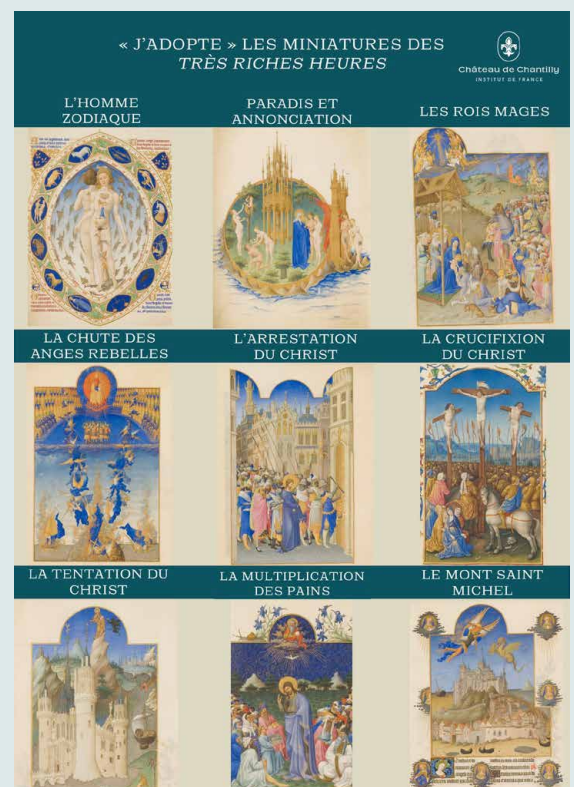
The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes

On public view from 10th to 23rd September 2025, this painting and its frame of snails and larks' feet is the only one finished during the Limbourg brothers' lifetimes and under their supervision.

Mont Saint Michel

On public display from 24th September to 5th October 2025, this illustration portrays the Mount and its tides as they appeared during the Duke's lifetime. Remarkably similar to what we see today, it is a powerful testament to the preservation of this historical site.

Become a benefactor by adopting an illumination from the *Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry*. <https://soutenir.domainedechantilly.com/enltrh/~mon-don>



CURATORS

Mathieu Deldicque, Lead Heritage Conservator, Director of the Musée Condé and the Musée Vivant du Cheval, Château de Chantilly.

Marie-Pierre Dion, Principal Conservator, Libraries, Musée Condé, Château de Chantilly.

— **Exceptionally, the exhibition is being organised in partnership with the French National Library (BNF).**

PATRONS

The *Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry* Project is supported by the Fondation Etrillard.

Patrons of the *Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry* calendar months

Amis du Musée Condé (January), Lionel and Ariane Sauvage (February), Bsip – Lydie Naneix (March), Charlotte Kramer (April), Kazumi Mashita (May), Ville de Nimègue (June), Kate Agius (July), Panhard International (August), Les Enluminures (October), Alice Goldet (November), Caroline Guerrand (December).

Adopters of the manuscript illuminations (not unbound)

Bsip – Lydie Naneix (Zodiac man).

Leading donors

Académie des Beaux-Arts, Jean-Marie and Betty Eveillard, Fondation Etrillard, Fondation La Marck, Friends of the Domaine de Chantilly, Hubert et Mireille Goldschmidt, TEFAF Museum Restoration Fund, Daniel Thierry, Sotheby's.



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A TACTILE DEVICE FOR ACCESSIBLE ART AND CULTURE

Making culture and art accessible to people with disabilities is central to the Château de Chantilly's mission. The Valentin Haüy association has digitally modelled the September illumination from the *Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry* and 3D printed it on a polyurethane plate, bringing the artwork to life for people with visual impairments. **As an educational tool designed for people who are blind or visually impaired, this tactile device is a gateway to the Château de Chantilly's cultural programme, now and in the future.** This project was made possible thanks to the support of the Ministry of Culture and the Banque Populaire Foundation.



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CATALOGUE

The exhibition catalogue is published by In Fine Art Editions.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Ticket sales will open on 25th January 2025, with a limited daily capacity.

PRESS CONTACT



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