

**The Pertengo Hours**  
**Book of Hours, Use of Rome, in Latin**  
**Southern Netherlands, Bruges**  
**c.1500**



*c.88 × 62mm (parchment); ii (paper) +195 + ii (paper) manuscript leaves on parchment; 16 full page miniatures and 25 smaller illuminations; some wear and flaking of pigments, e.g. in some Signs of the Zodiac, usually visible only with a magnifying glass; some leaves a bit cockled; one quire near the beginning coming loose; the binding with very minor wear; generally in very good condition throughout.*

**Provenance:**

GIUSEPPE MAURIZIO TURINETTI, CONTE DI PERTENGO of Turin: bought in Venice in 1747 and rebound for him with his arms; inscribed “Del Conte di Pertengo / 1747” and “Comprato in Venezia lo / 26 aprile 1747 Zechini [?] 2” (fol.1r.);  
 Private collection, Germany

The manuscript is lavished with sixteen full-page miniatures surrounded by full borders (each facing a page with a matching full border and a six-line initial) and 25 smaller illuminations. The manuscript is named after Count Pertengo of Turin, who owned the book in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and who had it rebound with its armorial binding. The intimate size of this book testifies to its function as a private prayer book called a Book of Hours, which was made up of a set of prayers to be recited at 8 particular times of the day – mirroring the 8 monastic hours chanted by monks in monasteries.

Preceding the prayers is a calendar, which is illustrated with signs of the Zodiac and 12 occupations of the Month. With the inclusion of the calendar, the reader would know what occasion or which saint to pray to that day, and the saints included here would have been tailored to the patron's wishes. This Book of Hours was most likely made in Bruges for an Italian member of the Franciscan Third Order: the calendar does not suggest a patron from any particular region, although the translation of Donatian (30 August) is a feast characteristic of Bruges; the litany, however, includes the following sequence of monks and hermits: Francis (of Assisi), Benedict, Anthony (of Padua), Bernardino (of Siena), Elzarius, and Louis (of Toulouse). Elzarius (Eleazar) is an exceptionally rare saint: he was Count of Ariano in the Kingdom of Naples, ambassador of King

Robert of Anjou, and member of the Third Order of St Francis; he died in 1323 and was canonized in 1369. As the calendar includes saints Bernardino (20 May), Dominic (5 August), Clare (12 August), and Francis (4 October), and the litany includes Clare, a connection with the Franciscans in Italy seems certain. Erik Drigsdahl informs us that an almost identical litany occurs in a manuscript sold at Sotheby's, 8 July 1974, lot 89, whose catalogue description states that it has a litany "including a number of Franciscan saints". The hypothesis of an Italian patron is supported by the book's Italianate script and its later provenance and other details that define the mode of production, such as the very fine vellum used for the text pages, the thicker vellum used for the inserted leaves with miniatures also suggest that the production of this book of hours was directed towards export to Italy.

The artist responsible for the illuminations worked in a traditional style based on models from the 1460s and 1470s, the Golden Age of Flemish manuscript illumination, when naturalistic 'scatter borders' were introduced and the so-called Master of Mary of Burgundy emerged as the most inventive and sophisticated illuminator in several generations. The scene of the Flight into Egypt, for example, is based on the miniature showing the same subject by Simon Marmion in the Berlaymont Hours, of c.1470–75 (reproduced in T. Kren and S. McKendrick, *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe* (Los Angeles and London, 2003), fig.12c): in both the Virgin is rendered in profile, wearing a head scarf topped by a sunhat. The source for the illuminations of the Annunciation and the Three Living and the Three Dead is the Master of Mary of Burgundy. The pictorial programme and the mise-en-page clearly indicate that the artistic origins of the miniaturist are to be found in the southern Netherlands, and therefore presumably in Bruges or Ghent. The illumination shows close links with a group of small-format Books of Hours that were produced by a team of painters who collaborated with the so-called Master of the Prayerbook of c. 1500. The small-scale miniatures are of narrative character and include a variety of details that enliven the images. A striking detail in the manuscript is the frequent rendering of flies on the inner fields of the initial letters marking the beginnings of prayers. Corresponding to contemporary practise in illumination, motifs are often repeated: for instance the architecture of the stable in the scene of the Adoration of the Magi corresponds to the one rendered in the miniature of the Nativity. More unusual subjects like the motif of the Three Living and the Three Dead are also rendered by an artist who was obviously skilled and experienced.

### ***Physical Description***

The manuscript is foliated in modern pencil i-ii, 1-197; occasional traces of 17th- or 18th-century foliation in ink at the fore-edge on the top horizontal ruling; two cancelled blanks at the end, and perhaps also at the beginning (the structure of the calendar is uncertain); the collation apparently: 1<sup>8-2</sup> (1st and 2nd blank leaves cancelled; fols.1–6), 2<sup>8</sup> (fols.7–14) | 3<sup>8-2</sup> (central bifolium missing; fols.15–22) | 4–20<sup>8</sup> (fols.23–171), 21<sup>8+1</sup> (last leaf inserted; fols.172–180) | 22<sup>8</sup> (fols.181–189), 23<sup>8-2</sup> (7th and 8th blank leaves cancelled; fols.190–195), plus inserted leaves as fols.15, 18, 23, 29, 41, 61, 73, 78, 83, 88, 93, 101, 107, 116, 137, and 181, each blank on the recto and with a full-page miniature on the verso; vertical catchwords in most quires; fols.1r–2r, 14v, 17v, 22v, 60v, and 192r–195v are ruled, otherwise blank; ruled in pale pink ink for 17 lines of text per page, the ruled space c.49×32mm; written in a very regular fine Italianate rounded gothic bookhand in brown ink, rubrics in pale pink; SIXTEEN FULL-PAGE MINIATURES SURROUNDED BY FULL BORDERS of naturalistic fruit, flowers, insects, etc., as if scattered on a solid yellowish ground, EACH FACING PAGE WITH A MATCHING FULL BORDER AND A SIX-LINE INITIAL usually enclosing a naturalistic fly or flower; one eight-line HISTORIATED INITIAL WITH A THREE-SIDED BORDER; the calendar with TWELVE MINIATURES DEPICTING THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE MONTHS occupying the lower margin of versos, forming part of a three-sided border, facing TWELVE ROUNDELS DEPICTING THE ZODIAC SIGNS on the rectos, incorporated into a three-sided border; two 3-line initials in gold on a square red field, to a gospel reading and a prayer (fols.35v, 178r); similar 2-line initials throughout to psalms, collects, hymns, etc.; similar 1-line initials throughout to verses; similar line-fillers throughout, especially in the

litany of saints.

The **binding** is sewn on five bands and bound in brown calf probably in 1747, the covers stamped in gilt with the Turinetti arms (quarterly, 1 and 4 a half eagle, crowned, turning away from the partition, 2 and 3, a tower, surmounted by a coronet; these arms are as found, for example, carved in stone on the Palazzo Madama, Turin). within a gilt frame; the spine compartments each with a gilt saltire cross; the edges of the leaves gilt; decorated endpapers; in a modern fitted box of patterned paper and brown calf lined in silk, the spine titled in gilt “Heures”; signed in gilt “Alain Devauchelle”.

### **Text**

[Item 1 occupies quires 1–2]

1. (fols.2v–14r) Calendar.

[Items 2–3 occupy quire 3]

2. (fols.16r–17r) Devotion to the Holy Face: “Salve sancta facies ...”.

3. (fols.19r–22r) Hours of the Cross, lacking prime and terce, and parts of matins and sext.

[Items 4–10 occupy quires 4–21]

4. (fols.24r–28v) Hours of the Holy Spirit.

5. (fols.30r–40v) Mass of the Virgin.

6. (fols.42r–106v) Hours of the Virgin “... *secundum usum Romanum* ...”; with (fols.108r–115v) variants for Advent and other liturgical seasons.

7. (fols.117r–136v) Seven Penitential Psalms, litany of saints (fols.128v–131r), petitions, and (fols.135r–136v) the first three and last three of the usual ten collects.

8. (fols.139r–173v) Office of the Dead, Use of Rome.

9. (fols.174r–180v) Prayers “Obsecro te” and (fols.178r–180v) “O intemerata”, both using masculine forms.

[Item 11 occupies quires 22–23]

10. (fols.182r–191v) Psalter of St Jerome.

### **Illumination**

The calendar (fols.2v–14r) has twelve Occupations of the months and corresponding Zodiac Symbols (except that Scorpio and Libra have accidentally been swapped), some of them with highly unusual and inventive compositions:

1. January. A man in a domestic interior warming himself at a fireplace. Aquarius.

2. February. Two men coppicing trees. Pisces.

3. March. A man taking a break from digging by drinking from a gourd. Aries.

4. April. An elegantly dressed man strolling in the countryside, a branch over his shoulder, followed by a servant. Taurus.

5. May. A man out hunting on horseback, with a falcon on his wrist. Gemini: a very unusual depiction, with a man playing a pipe to serenade a woman at a window.

6. June. A man mowing grass with a scythe. Cancer.

7. July. A man reaping tall wheat with a sickle. Leo.

8. August. Two men threshing with flails in a barn, the bottom of its doorway blocked with a piece of wood to prevent the grain blowing away (the origin of the word “threshold”). Virgo.

9. September. A man broadcasting seed in a ploughed field. Scorpio.

10. October. One man carrying a basket into a chamber where another man treads grapes in a large vat. Libra.

11. November. Pannage: a man knocks acorns from a tree to feed his hogs. Sagittarius.

12. December. A man in a barnyard burning the bristles from a hog before butchering it. Capricorn.

The subjects of the full-page miniatures are:

1. (fol.14v) Christ as *Salvator mundi*: half-length full-face figure of Christ holding an orb and blessing.
2. (fol.17v) The Crucifixion, with John, the Virgin, and another Holy Woman to one side of the Cross; a large group of mounted soldiers arriving in the background on the other side.
3. (fol.23v) Pentecost: the Virgin seated, the apostles kneeling, in a church interior; the Dove above them, and also in the lower border.
4. (fol.29v) The *Virgo lactans*: the Virgin half-length, with the infant suckling at her left breast.
5. (fol.41v) The Annunciation: the Virgin seated in a vaulted interior; Gabriel pointing to the Dove above her head.
6. (fol.62v) The Visitation: the Virgin and Elizabeth greet one another on a bridge, in a setting reminiscent of Bruges.
7. (fol.75v) The Nativity: the Virgin adoring the infant, who lies on the edge of her cloak; golden rays descend from heaven.
8. (fol.79v) The Annunciation to the Shepherds: two shepherds look up at the angel who appears to point to a stable in the background.
9. (fol.84v) The Adoration of the Magi: the Magi bring their gifts to the Virgin and Child.
10. (fol.89v) The Presentation in the Temple: the Virgin presents the Infant, who stands on the altar.
11. (fol.94v) The Massacre of the Innocents: King Herod and soldiers look down at two infants wrapped in swaddling clothes on the ground between them.
12. (fol.102v) The Flight into Egypt: the Virgin carries the infant and rides the ass, Joseph carries a bundle on a stick.
13. (fol.108v) The Coronation of the Virgin: the Virgin kneeling, with God the Father to one side, wearing a papal tiara; Christ to the other side, blessing; the Dove above.
14. (fol.117v) David in Penitence: kneeling in a courtyard, looking up at heavenly rays of golden light.
15. (fol.138v) The Three Living and the Three Dead: at a roadside cross, the three well-dressed young men on horseback are startled by three naked corpses, each holding a gold spear.
16. (fol.182v) St Jerome in the wilderness kneeling in front of a Crucifix, his lion behind him.

One historiated initial:

(fol.175r): The Virgin and Child of the Apocalypse, half-length, on a crescent moon.