NEWS FROM THE GETTY

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GETTY EXHIBITION RECONSTRUCTS
15TH-CENTURY MANUSCRIPT
THAT WAS "LOST" FOR OVER 300 YEARS

A Masterpiece Reconstructed: The Hours of Louis XII
At the Getty Center, October 18, 2005–January 8, 2006

LOS ANGELES—A new Getty exhibition will reassemble for the first time one of the
greatest French manuscripts of the 15th century, created by Jean Bourdichon (1457–
1521) for Louis XII. The handmade prayer book had been “lost” for over 300 years
when its pages were dispersed and forgotten at the end of the 17th century.

A Masterpiece Reconstructed: The Hours of Louis XII, at the Getty Center, October
18, 2005–January 8, 2006, will bring together surviving text and images that have
resurfaced around the world over the past 30 years, including three miniatures that
were recently acquired by the Getty.

Illuminated for the king of France in 1498/99, The Hours of Louis XII is
considered to be one of Bourdichon’s masterpieces. It is believed that the artist
created the book in honor of the king’s coronation, filling it with 36 beautifully
decorated full-page miniatures that were meant to inspire and guide private devotion.
The exhibition features 15 of the 16 leaves rediscovered thus far and nearly all of the

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manuscript's text. A dozen related works from the period are included to establish the book's aesthetic and cultural context. *A Masterpiece Reconstructed* complements the Getty's 2005 Premiere Presentation *Painted Prayers: Books of Hours from the Morgan Library*, which runs concurrently.

The dispersed pages of *The Hours of Louis XII* have been brought together at the Getty Center from institutions around the world. They have never been exhibited together as a group, and many of the individual works have not been put on public view before. The exhibition thus offers a rare opportunity to see most of the book's contents reunited, and to explore the exceptional variety of subjects once found within its pages. This is in contrast to most manuscripts shows, which usually feature bound volumes open to a single page. *A Masterpiece Reconstructed* follows a tradition of Getty exhibitions focusing on disbound manuscripts.

The exhibition will help illustrate the degree to which illumination began to resemble independent painting in the 15th century. Bourdichon himself was a court painter to four successive French kings and produced significant paintings, in addition to manuscripts, for his royal patrons. One of the miniatures on view is a portrait—*Louis XII of France Kneeling in Prayer, Accompanied by Saints Michael, Charlemagne, Louis, and Denis*—now held in the Getty's collection. This depiction of the king in parade armor is probably based on an official court portrait painted by Bourdichon and likely served as the opening image of the original manuscript.

The works also reveal the various stylistic techniques developed and used in illumination during the period. In *The Presentation in the Temple*, Bourdichon demonstrates the close-up view, a key innovation of European painting in the second half of the 15th century. By depicting a profile of Mary kneeling before the altar in half-length, the reader effectively stands beside her and look over her shoulder to view the presentation of her infant son. This effect brings the viewer physically closer to the book's narrative. Another highlight is *Bathsheba Bathing*, which presents a large image of the naked Bathsheba with shimmering hair and glowing skin. Portrayed as a temptress, her voluptuous figure is meant to appeal as much on a sensual as a
spiritual level. She is a kind of Renaissance “pin up.” Both The Presentation in the Temple and Bathsheba Bathing were recently acquired by the Getty.

A Masterpiece Reconstructed: The Hours of Louis XII has been co-organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. After its presentation in Los Angeles, the exhibition will travel to the U.K. in February 2006.

RELATED EXHIBITION

* FALL 2005 PREMIERE PRESENTATION

Painted Prayers: Books of Hours from the Morgan Library
October 18, 2005–January 8, 2006

This Premiere Presentation features 58 of the Morgan Library's finest manuscripts and printed books made in France, England, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain between the 13th and 16th centuries. Included are such masterpieces as The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, The Hours of Henry VIII, and The Farnese Hours. This exhibition is organized by the Morgan Library, New York, which is closed for renovation, enabling these works to be shown for the first time in Los Angeles. The exhibition was previously at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, and the Saint Louis Art Museum in Missouri.

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The J. Paul Getty Trust is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that features the Getty Conservation Institute, the Getty Foundation, the J. Paul Getty Museum, and the Getty Research Institute. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs are based at the Getty Center in Los Angeles.

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Additional information is available on the Getty Web site at www.getty.edu.