

ANALYSIS OF THE ANJOU BIBLE

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The Anjou Bible is a unique bible manuscript originating from the beginning of the fourteenth century at the court of Robert I of Anjou, king of Naples.

The illuminated bible circulated among royals until the beginning of the sixteenth century. At that time, via the Bishop of Arras, the manuscript ended up at the library of the Arras College in Leuven (Belgium) and since 1970, the manuscript is deposited at the Maurits Sabbe Library of the Theology Faculty of the K.U.Leuven.

The bible contains 338 folios with two full-page miniatures and more than 160 decorated initial and marginal illuminations. Despite the fame and the richness of the manuscript, it has almost never been reproduced or displayed in public.

In May 2008, a conservation and preservation project started offering the possibility to examine the manuscript in the laboratory.

It is obvious that the study of such a precious and delicate work of art has to be done using non-destructive techniques. An extensive series of highly detailed digital photographs with transmitted light and complementary infrared digital photographs were taken.

Non-destructive X-ray fluorescence analysis using mobile Arttax equipment offered an excellent possibility to study the materials and techniques used in the creation of these works of art.

As a result of this research, two folios were supplementary examined with Hyper Spectral Imaging (HSI-SEPIA) in the National Archive in Den Hague (the Netherlands) to reveal possible alternations.

XRF measurements reveal a very rich pallet. Mineral pigments are combined with organic colorants.

For the red colours vermilion, red lead, red earth pigments and organic reds are present in different colour intensities.

Azurite and probably lapis lazuli are used for the blues while the green areas show the presence of copper green, possibly in combination with lead tin yellow.

The use of gold, silver and tin, either as foil or as “paint” raises the splendour of the miniatures executed by the Napolitanian illuminator Christophorus di Orimina.

Although having a long history, the Anjou Bible was now for the first time ever examined in detail.

The combination of highly detailed photographs with transmitted light in combination with the non-destructive XRF analysis not only provides more insight into the craftsmanship of the miniaturist but is also needed to make correct decisions during the conservation restoration project.

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