

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS' PRAYER BOOK DURING LIVE CLASSIC WEEK OLD MASTER GROUP EVENING SALE

29 July 2020



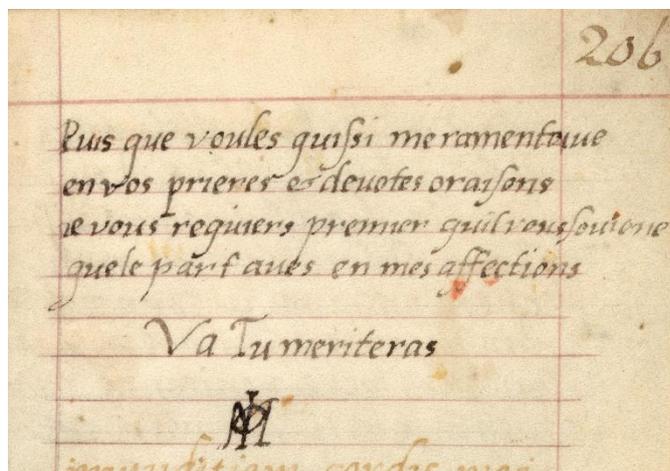
THE PRAYER BOOK OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS, for the use of Fontevraud, made for Louise de Bourbon-Vendôme, Abbess of Fontevraud and given to her grand-niece Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots (1542-1567) and Queen Consort of France (1559-1560), in Latin and French, illuminated manuscript on vellum [Paris, c.1535-1540 (after 1534)]
Estimate: £250,000 - £350,000

London – Mary Queen of Scots prayer book will be offered as part of Christie's Classic Week's Old Master Group Evening Sale, being held live in London on 29 July 2020 (estimate: £250,000 - £350,000).

An unpublished witness to the brilliant patronage of a powerful woman in 16th-century France, the prayer book is illuminated and decorated with an impressive cycle of forty miniatures painted with the utmost subtlety by the Master of François de Rohan, one of the most sought-after artists of the court of King Francis I (r. 1515-1547). This sale presents a rare opportunity for collectors to acquire a significant addition in terms of the very limited number of illuminated manuscripts that can be directly connected to Mary Stuart.

The manuscript was conceived, written, and lavishly illuminated for Louise de Bourbon-Vendôme, abbess and head of the Royal Abbey of Fontevraud (1534-1575). Louise entered Fontevraud as a baby and took the robe at the age of fifteen. In 1521, she became its great prioress and on 23 October 1534, Louise's aunt, Renée de Bourbon, lying on her deathbed, designated her to succeed as abbess.

Between 1558 and 1561, the manuscript was given by Louise de Bourbon to her grand-niece Mary Stuart, who left a signed token of their mutual affection on one of the endleaves, along with her monogram, and her motto, at a time when the Queen of Scots had already become Queen of France and was soon to meet her tragic fate. The inscription in Mary's hand reads: *'Puis que voules qu'issi me ramentoive en vos prieres et devotes oraisons / Je vous requiers premier qu'il vous soviene quele part avés en mes affections'*. She signs it with her anagrammatic motto 'VA TU MERITERAS' and monogram "MΦ" (a variation based on the initial M of Mary and phonetic initial Φ of her husband Francis II).



It is likely that the manuscript returned to Scotland with Mary in 1561. It was in England in the late 18th or early 19th century, when it was rebound by the Edwards family of Halifax, active in Pall Mall (London) and Halifax (Yorkshire). The narrative scenes painted in *grisaille* under translucent vellum are characteristic of the method patented by James Edwards in 1775. It then passed to the Hale family of Alderley, Gloucestershire. Their bookplate in the present manuscript represents the Upper House of Alderley, rebuilt in the 18th-century at the country seat that was purchased by their ancestor, Sir Matthew Hale (1609-1676), Chief Justice of the King's Bench in 1671.

Eugenio Donadoni, Christie's Specialist in Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, London, comments, *"This is a fleetingly rare opportunity to acquire a lavishly illustrated royal prayerbook that was owned and affectionately inscribed by one of the most intriguing figures in Scottish and European history: Mary Stuart, at a time when the Queen of Scots had already become Queen of France and was soon to meet her tragic fate."*

The Old Master Group Evening sale is part of the hybrid [Classic Week](#) driven from Christie's London, featuring a combination of online and live sales running from 1 to 29 July. Further details of this marquee week calendar will be announced Tuesday 2 June.

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About Christie's

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over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Alongside regular sales online, Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

**Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue.*

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

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