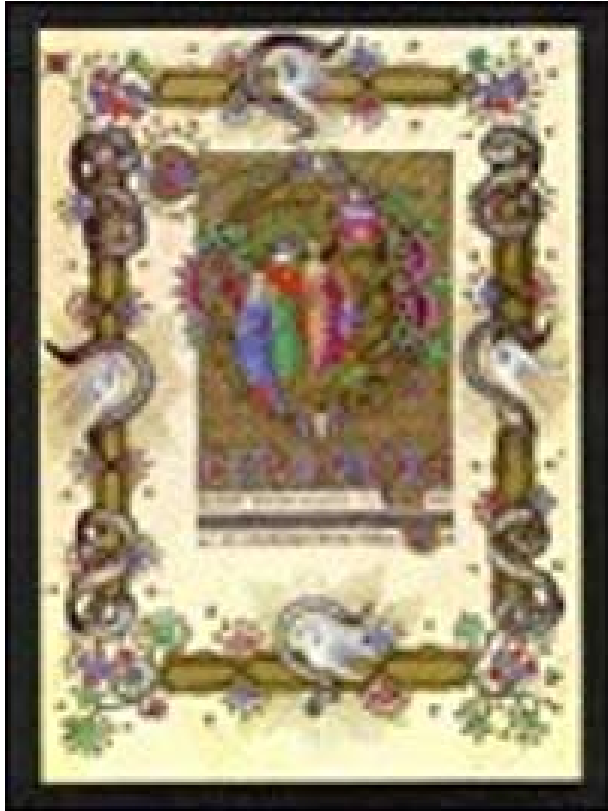


The Visconti Hours: National Library, Florence (Slipcase Edition)



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This extraordinary manuscript, perhaps one of the gayest, most spontaneous and fanciful of Western illuminations, is an exceptionally rich Book of Hours painted by two quite different artists. In the late 1300s, Giovannino dei Grassi and his workshop painted the first folios for Giangaleazzo Visconti, despot of Milan, but the Duke's death in 1402 interrupted the work. Belbello da Pavia completed this dazzling manuscript for Giangaleazzo's son, Filippo Maria, after he became Duke in 1412. As Millard Meiss has pointed out in his Introduction, the imaginative art of Giovannino survives in this book alone, wherein he combines an entirely personal vision of light radiating from saints and prophets - and from the Duke of Milan, as well - with an equally original exploration of the natural world. Moreover, the inventive forms and scintillating colors, the extensive and intriguing use of gold leaf, as well as the silver and lapis lazuli (a beautiful, rare, and expensive shade of blue) that abounds throughout the manuscript, surely make it a unique treasure among treasures. The Visconti Hours will enchant art lovers everywhere with its contrasts and stunning extravagance.