

Jaroslav Folda, *Crusader Manuscript Illumination at Saint-Jean d'Acre, 1275—1291*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976. 231 + xxix pp., 299 illus., \$35.00

Luba Eleen

Volume 4, Number 2, 1977

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1077367ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1077367ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (print)

1918-4778 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Eleen, L. (1977). Review of [Jaroslav Folda, *Crusader Manuscript Illumination at Saint-Jean d'Acre, 1275—1291*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976. 231 + xxix pp., 299 illus., \$35.00]. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 4(2), 109–112. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1077367ar>

Saint-Luc, en Phocide, la Dormition de Daphni, en Attique, et Sainte-Sophie de Monemvasie, en Laconie, restent authentiquement grecs par l'admirable condensation et la claire lisibilité des masses.

La deuxième partie de *L'école grecque*, que nous résumerons sous le titre de « formes », est très originale dans l'antithèse qu'elle fait ressortir entre les formes de l'architecture grecque et celles auxquelles les architectes byzantins ont accordé leurs préférences. Alors que Constantinople et les églises bâties dans son orbite expriment la structure des voûtes dans l'articulation extérieure des masses et montrent une conception plastique des façades et des murailles enveloppantes, la volumétrie extérieure d'une église grecque n'exprime qu'imparfaitement son articulation structurale. Seule l'église de Gravanica, en Vieille Serbie, plus macédonienne que byzantine, réalisera l'expression parfaite de masses externes moulées sur les masses internes. « La Grèce préfère les surfaces unies, les lignes droites, les angles nets. » Cette observation liminaire de Gabriel Millet est particulièrement suggestive pour nous qui lisons cette architecture à travers la notion moderne d'espace, non pas comme inclusion d'une masse imposante de volume comme Constantinople l'apprit à la fois de l'Iran et de Rome, mais comme composition de plans, ainsi que l'ont recréée Mondrian et le Bauhaus. J'avais été préparé à relire les analyses si fines de Millet et leur délicate sensibilité artistique grâce aux photographies d'églises grecques prises par un architecte grec-montréalais de grand talent; frappé ainsi de voir comment un œil d'architecte capte par la photo ce réseau d'arêtes qui répartit les plans de lumière et les plans d'ombre d'une église dans la campagne ensoleillée de la Grèce. Très logiquement la Grèce a donné la préférence au « parement cloisonné » sur les parois arasées, bâties davantage par des ingénieurs du mur que par des joailliers de la paroi à Constantinople. En Grèce, les briques, au lieu de feuilleter le mur, enchâssent chacune de ses assises uniques dans la nostalgie du bel appareil isidome de la Grèce antique, comme à Kaisariani, près d'Athènes, au début du XI^e siècle. Puis l'ornement céramo-plastique s'empare des carreaux et l'on obtient ces étonnants décors de lettres, ou pseudo-caractères coufiques, de palmettes, de rosaces, de signes stellaires et de dents de scie, comme à Merbaka, en Angolide, et à la Kato-Panaghia d'Asta. Ce traitement du mur comme damier de jeux géométriques subtils a eu sa correspondance dans l'architecture française de Perret aux églises du cardinal Verdier dans la région parisienne. Ce qui est étonnant dans *L'école grecque*, ce n'est pas tant que l'ouvrage reste un répertoire insurpassé d'analyses de monuments, mais qu'il a si peu vieilli. Certes, notre conception actuelle des frontières d'écoles exige davantage de décroisement et nous préférierions une présentation plus synthétique de l'architecture. Mais les quelques retouches proposées par Richard Krautheimer lui-même au système suivi par Millet pour dégager l'originalité de l'école grecque sont très minimes (voir la note 42, p. 352 de *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Harmondsworth, 1965) et l'ensemble demeure intact dans la pureté — et la modestie — de l'intelligence.

PHILIPPE VERDIER
Université de Montréal

JAROSLAV FOLDA. *Crusader Manuscript Illumination at Saint-Jean d'Acre, 1275–1291*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976. 231 + xxix pp., 299 illus., \$35.00.

One of the notable contributions of the twentieth century to our gradually unfolding understanding of mediaeval art has been the discovery of previously unknown centres of manuscript illumination. Of these new finds, the most remarkable, without doubt, was the definition by Hugo Buchthal in *Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Oxford, 1957) of the schools of illumination functioning in the parts of the Holy Land conquered and settled by the Crusaders. Buchthal showed that manuscripts of high quality were produced for local and visiting patrons in Jerusalem in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and in St. Jean d'Acre later in the thirteenth century. Jaroslav Folda, following in Buchthal's footsteps, now has delineated the last phases of Crusader illumination in Acre between 1275 and 1291, the date of the fall of the city to Moslem forces.

Folda, like Buchthal, has proved himself to be a formidable detector of previously unnoticed works. He also shows a broad understanding of the historical setting in which the artistic activities of the colony evolved. His study of the manuscript illumination begins with a most interesting chapter on "Saint-Jean d'Acre as a Cultural Centre of the Latin Kingdom in the Thirteenth Century." Here Folda exhibits some of his chief virtues as a scholar: he is exhaustively thorough, displays a comprehensive knowledge and careful use of primary and secondary sources, and a pleasing enthusiasm for Acre, its history, and its works.

Buchthal had shown in the earlier book that there existed a Crusader tradition in manuscript illumination, persisting for more than a century and a half, and characterized by certain constant stylistic and iconographic traits. The Crusader style could not be traced to a single source, but synthesized elements of Byzantine, Italian, and French usage. In iconography, too, the mixed ancestry was revealed, with perhaps a stronger reliance on Byzantine models; but Buchthal also showed that the illuminators began to include details that reflected their visual experience of the Levant. Furthermore, in the third quarter of the thirteenth century the Acre workshop evinced a new interest in secular texts. Two texts in particular, both historical, seemed to attract local knightly patronage: the *Histoire Universelle*, the earliest vernacular World Chronicle, and, most appropriately for the Holy Land, the *History of Outremer* by William, Archbishop of Tyre, who had recorded the deeds of the Crusaders up to 1184.

The greater part of Folda's study deals with works that are stylistically quite unlike those described by Buchthal. Coexisting with illuminators employing the mixed Byzantine-Italian-French style that had become by then a Holy Land tradition were at least two artists whose mode of expression was purely French. Folda has isolated a number of manuscripts around a single personality. This artist, obviously trained in Paris, is connected to Acre by a colophon in a manuscript now in Chantilly (Musée Condé, MS. 590), a French translation of Cicero's *De Inventione* together with the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. A passage in the prologue specifies Acre to be the place of origin and gives 1282 as the date; it also provides the names of the translator, John of Antioch, and the patron, William of St. Stephen, a member of the Hospital at Acre. On the basis of this



FIGURE 1. *The Crusaders Take Antioch*. Folda, Pl. 123.

information and some additional bits of evidence, Folda suggests that the artist had semi-permanent associations with the Hospitallers at St. Jean d'Acre, and designates him the "Hospitaller Master."

Using similarity of style and scribal and workshop practice as criteria, the author has assigned to the Hospitaller Master six additional manuscripts produced in Acre, and has dated them on the assumption that the artist underwent a development in style. These manuscripts are the following: a volume of Old Testament selections in French (Paris, B.N., MS. nouv. acq. fr. 1404, ca. 1280–81); the last seventeen miniatures in a copy of the *History of Outremer* begun by an artist working in the traditional Crusader style and described earlier by Buchthal (Paris, B.N., MS. fr. 9084, late 1286);¹ two complete volumes of the *History of Outremer* in Boulogne-sur-Mer (Bib. Mun., MS. 142, ca. early 1287, Figs. 1 and 2) and Florence (Bibl. Medicea-Laurenziana, MS. Plu.LXI.10, ca. late 1290/early 1291); an edition of *Les Faits des Romains*, (Brussels, Bibl. Royale, MS. 10212, 1287–88); and a fragment consisting of two folios with drawings for the *Credo* of Jean, sire de Joinville, ca. 1288–90 (incorporated into Paris, B.N., MS. lat. 11907, fols. 231–232).²

The style of these manuscripts is primarily linear: slender, insubstantial figures are clad in simplified drapery arranged for the most part in vertical panels. When the draperies are pulled across the figure they do not reveal the shape of the body or form a jutting contour, but gather in a simple cluster of converging lines; the lower edge of the cloth often falls into a characteristic keyhole pattern (Fig. 2). The childlike faces, usually seen in a three-quarter view,

are delineated by the simplest of line drawings. Folda draws our attention to a number of traits which serve to distinguish this master: the forward contour of the face in the three-quarter position tends to be flat rather than rounded, and the artist also has a taste for occasional profile views. He uses a particular mannerism to depict the hair of the male figures, shaped into a loop around the ear. He has a liking for scenes of knightly combat, and is an expert on arms, armour, and heraldic devices.

The Acre manuscripts also are identifiable by certain atelier characteristics. They tend to be made of thick, off-white vellum, oily on the hair side and with an irregular surface on the skin side. The dark brown ink often is flaked in a peculiar pattern.

Panel miniatures, rather than historiated initials, are the Hospitaller Master's usual way of presenting his scenes, and he uses simple, rectangular frames. In the copy of the *History of Outremer* begun by another artist but completed by the Hospitaller Master (Paris, B.N., MS. fr. 9084), the latter is influenced by the earlier master's use of double-width panels,³ which he continues to use in the first *History of Outremer* entirely by his hand (Boulogne-sur-Mer, MS. 142). Although, for the most part, the Master clings tenaciously to the habits brought with him from Paris, there are occasional hints that he has been influenced by Crusader art. These are mainly iconographic: in several battle scenes represented as taking place in citadels (Fig. 1), he uses a bird's-eye view evidently learnt from such a model as the *Histoire Universelle* produced in Acre ca. 1285 (London, B.M., Add. MS. 15268). He sometimes reveals that he has had a first-hand experience of the sights of the Orient, as when he depicts fairly accurately turbans and Palaeologan hats or when he shows an understanding of the game of chess played in the manner of the East.

Folda introduces another manuscript in an attempt to trace the earlier phases of the Hospitaller Master's career in Paris, before his trip to the Holy Land. This is the *censier*, or rent-roll, of the Abbey of Ste. Geneviève (Paris, Archives Nationales, Pièce S 1626⁴), dated — by inscription — to the last quarter of 1276. This manuscript is indeed in a style similar to that of the other works attributed to the Hospitaller Master: most of the stylistic attributes described above also are to be found in the *censier*. Yet there are subtle differences. Figure proportions are stockier in the books made in Acre, the contours of the faces more curved, the pen lines coarser, the eyes slightly rounder, the colour stronger and more varied. The relation of the picture space to the frame is somewhat different. Folda notes these variations and explains them as an "evolution" in the development of the artist after his voyage to Acre.

The author's preoccupation with individual artistic personalities also leads him to hypothesize a complex relationship between the Hospitaller Master and the illuminator responsible for the only other manuscript in the French style attributed to Acre in this period, a copy of the *Histoire Universelle* in Paris (B.N., MS. fr. 20125). This book has the atelier characteristics of the other manuscripts in the Acre group, and the same general stylistic features, but is obviously by another hand: the drawing, while finer, is more careless, especially in depicting the features of the face; the drapery is defined not only by line, but shadows are indicated as well, in a wash of an intermediate tone.

¹ Buchthal, 92–93, 153, pls. 135f, 136.

² See Lionel J. Friedman, *Text and Iconography for Joinville's Credo* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pls. I–IV.

³ Buchthal, pls. 135f, 136b–d.



FIGURE 2. *The Coronation of Baldwin I*. Folda, Pl. 127.

Folda assumes that this somewhat inferior artist is the "pupil" of the Hospitaller Master, their relationship exemplified by motifs used by the pupil which the author calls "quotations" from the Master's work, such as the image of a king enthroned with crossed legs, or mourning figures at a death-bed.

A final chapter, "The Acre School and the West," deals with the influence in Europe of the Hospitaller Master during and after the activity of the atelier in Acre. Certain manuscripts from Paris and Northern France, many of them of secular texts, exhibit stylistic and, in some cases, iconographic similarities to the work of the Master, but lack the colour and workshop characteristics of the Acre works. These, Folda assumes, reflect, directly or indirectly, the dominance of the Master. He also introduces three books made in Italy, in which he sees the influence of the Master in the iconography.

Folda's stylistic analyses are detailed and precise. When we add to these the evidence of shared workshop practices he has presented, it is difficult not to accept the attribution of the majority of works grouped together under the name of the Hospitaller Master. The high-quality and clearly printed photographs provide confirmation for these judgments. When, however, the author insists on providing his master with a biography, the argument is less substantial. Folda is searching within too narrow a context when he assumes that all of the works in a similar style must be by one master, or by those taught or influenced by him. The Hospitaller Master did not emerge fully formed *ex nihilo*; he had predecessors and contemporaries, and these also had followers.

There is no reason, for example, to assume that the Acre artist responsible for the *Histoire Universelle* (B.N., MS. fr. 20125) was a "pupil" of the Master. The many ways in which his style differs from that of the latter all have precedents in Paris or North French illumination of the third quarter of the thirteenth century. Since the workshop

characteristics and iconography of his manuscript confirm its attribution to the Holy Land, the obvious conclusion is that he, like the Master, was a French-trained artist who journeyed to the East.

Introduction of the *censier* of Ste. Geneviève as an early, pre-Acre work of the Master is also symptomatic of Folda's tendency to create arbitrarily structured careers. His explanation of the many differences between the *censier* (1276) and the earliest dated Acre illuminations (1282) as attributes of an individual "evolution" is questionable. It is difficult to accept that an artist would change in so many ways. A likelier explanation is that the *censier* illuminator and the Master were fellow members of the same Paris workshop.

We await the appearance of the late Robert Branner's book on Paris illumination for a more complete view of the milieu in which the style of these artists was formed, but there are several individual works that help to define the stages leading up to their activity. Folda correctly sees the ultimate source of the *censier*-Acre style in the Old Testament Picture Book in the Morgan Library (New York, Morgan Lib., MS. M. 638), produced ca. 1250.⁴ But how does the style of the Picture Book, with its relatively simple, yet robust, volumetric, and monumental figures, become transformed into the delicate, flat, abstract manner of the Hospitaller Master? Folda seems to be of the opinion that the latter style originates with the Master, and is first seen in the *censier* of 1276. There are earlier works, however, which demonstrate that the simplifying and flattening process antedates the *censier*. The first two examples are English, but stem from centres which generally are regarded as French-influenced.

The *Douce Apocalypse* (Oxford, Bod. Lib., MS. Douce 180) contains one miniature in a style very close to that of the Hospitaller Master.⁵ It is the historiated initial introducing the French translation of the Apocalypse text, which depicts the future Edward I and his wife Eleanor kneeling before the Trinity, together with scenes of St. John the Evangelist. The figure style displays most of the idiosyncracies associated with the Hospitaller Master. It is this very miniature that provides the evidence that the manuscript was made before 1272, the date of Edward's accession (he and Eleanor are uncrowned). Although the manuscript as a whole has been studied thoroughly, the Edward miniature has not attracted much attention, and it is entirely possible that it is the work of a French artist.⁶

Not so another English manuscript with affinities, albeit more distant, to the Acre style. The *Cuerdon Psalter* (New York, Morgan Lib., MS. M. 756), probably from Canterbury, ca. 1262, usually has been described as "Anglo-French."⁷ Its abstract treatment of drapery and linear

⁴ Sydney C. Cockerell and John Plummer, *Old Testament Miniatures* (New York, n.d.), 57.

⁵ See Otto Pächt and J.J.G. Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, III (Oxford, 1973), 43, no. 469, pl. XLIII, for recent bibliography and a photograph.

⁶ George Henderson, "Studies in English Manuscript Illustration," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXXI (1968), 122, points out that the miniature accompanies the French text, which may have had a different date and history than the Latin text and the full-page illustrations.

⁷ See *Art and the Courts: France and England from 1259 to 1328* (exhibition, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 27 April – 2 July 1972), no. 24 and I. 56.

depiction of the childlike faces have been regarded as a flattened, English interpretation of the style of the St. Louis court atelier. It is possible, however, that this process of simplification had already taken place in France, and that the *Cuerdon Psalter* reflects the antecedents of the *censier*-Acre style. If so, it takes us back yet another decade.

A Paris manuscript of 1250 confirms that the flat, simplified style does indeed have French roots. In the *Vie et Histoire de Saint Denys* (Paris, B.N., MS. fr. 1098),⁸ such details as the figure proportions, the pen-drawn faces, the settings — and the positioning of the figures within them — foreshadow these items in the work of the Hospitaller Master. Some of its figures are clad in garments arranged in stiff, flat, elongated panels, having a certain similarity to the Master's depiction of folds. Other examples of drapery in this manuscript are not unlike the slightly more modelled forms of the Master's associate, responsible for the *Histoire Universelle* (B.N., MS. fr. 20125). In fact, the latter book displays an even closer concurrence with the *Vie de St. Denys*, confirming its artist's independent derivation from earlier Paris styles of illumination.

Once the possibility is admitted that the *censier*-Acre style was not unique, and that not all of the manuscripts showing its traits are necessarily by one hand, other attributions to this hand also come into question. The most important of these is the fragment with drawings of Joinville's *Credo*, incorporated into B.N., MS. lat. 11907. Folda admits that the usual test of workshop qualities does not apply here, since the vellum and ink are different, and that the poses are more graceful and the figures more monumental. He ascribes these and other dissimilarities to the natural differences between a drawing and a finished painting. If we accept that the style of the Hospitaller Master was more widely distributed than Folda has allowed, the ascription of this work to the Master is questionable.

Folda bases many of his conclusions upon iconographic arguments. Sometimes his reasoning is convincing, as when he demonstrates that the Hospitaller Master first completed an edition of the *History of Outremer* begun by another illuminator (B.N., MS. fr. 9084) and then used it as the model for his own complete version of the same text (Boulogne-sur-Mer, MS. 142). It is also true, however, that certain of his discussions of iconography betray a methodological weakness. For example, the two examples noted above of "quotations" from the Master's work by the second French artist in Acre do not stand up: the motifs which he has noted as links between the two illuminators — a king enthroned with crossed legs, and the gestures of the mourners around a bier — are universal, occurring often, for example, in the Morgan Picture Book.⁹ Indeed, the gestures of the mourners in the two Acre manuscripts are quite dissimilar.

Examination of iconography in a wider context, that of the transmitted traditions of entire cycles, also is not entirely satisfactory. The treatment of the *Histoire Universelle* (B.N., MS. fr. 20125) is a case in point. The author disagrees with Buchthal's contention that it was made in

Paris; his proposal of Acre as the place of origin is acceptable, in the light of the codicological and stylistic evidence. But then Folda goes on to suggest that the manuscript resembles certain other Acre books because it has been influenced by three of them simultaneously, as well as by a common model. Most of the examples proving interdependence are unconvincing. Surely the greater part of the coincidence between the three versions of the *Histoire Universelle* discussed by Buchthal and the additional example introduced by Folda can be explained by the common model.

Folda's text is clearly written for the most part, despite a tendency to obscure the main point with a profusion of detail. The book is well presented and abundantly documented. Each manuscript is listed in a catalogue of admirable thoroughness, and almost all of the miniatures are reproduced. The plates are carefully labelled, so as to facilitate ease of consultation. Despite the criticisms noted here, the book is an important contribution to our knowledge of Crusader life and art, and of French late-thirteenth-century illumination, and it will undoubtedly take its place as a standard reference work in these areas.

LUBA ELEEN
Erindale College
University of Toronto

HERSCHEL LEVIT. *Views of Rome Then and Now: 41 Etchings by Giovanni Battista Piranesi and Corresponding Photographs and Text by Herschel Levit*. New York. Dover, 1976. xxvi pp., 82 illus., \$6.00 (paper).

The prints of Giovanni Battista Piranesi combined the archaeologist's passion for accurate observation with a love of grandeur, mystery, and fantasy. Herschel Levit chose forty-one plates by Piranesi, largely from his *Vedute di Roma* (1748 ff.), and photographed the same views in order to contrast eighteenth-century Rome with the contemporary city. The etchings and the photographs are reproduced side by side with comments by the author. They are introduced by a brief biography of Piranesi and notes on his style and methods of work.



FIGURE 1. G.B. Piranesi, *Temple of Vesta*. From Levit.

⁸ Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Manuscrits, *Vie et Histoire de Saint Denys* (Paris, n.d.).

⁹ See, for example, Cockerell and Plummer, *Miniatures*, 141 (fol. 29v) and 69 (fol. 11v).