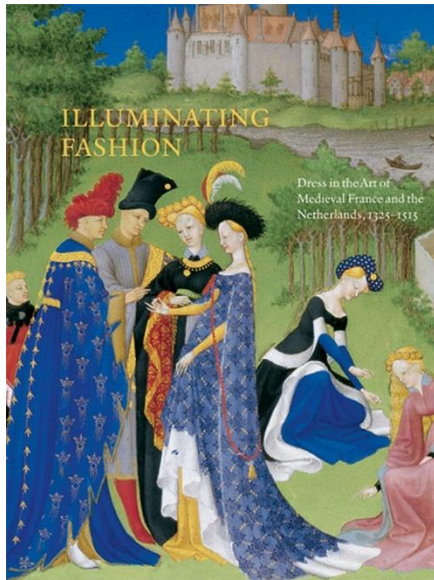


Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands, 1325-1515, by Anne H. van Buren. The Morgan Library & Museum; Giles, dist. by ACC, September 2011. 448 p. col. ill. alk. ISBN 9781904832904 (cl.), \$95.00.



This reference work visually documents identity and material culture through the lens of clothing as signifiers of social relationships captured primarily by illuminated manuscripts and book illustrations. Encompassing 200 years of tumultuous history in which the Hundred Years' War and the Plague raged across late medieval Europe to the dawn of the Renaissance, this book was published in conjunction with an exhibition at The Morgan Library & Museum.

The volume is divided into eight sections. An introduction establishes the context while examining historical conditions, chronology and geography, emblematics of medieval dress, the visual record as well as the nature of the images, and their current usage. A "Pictorial History of Fashion, 1325-1515" composed of seventy-nine plates follows. This album features over three hundred illustrations tracing a Franco-centric (encompassing the territorial Duchy of Burgundy and northern Netherlands) style revolution from around 1325 beginning with the shape of outer garments just prior to the invention of the set-in sleeve to the arrival of Renaissance exuberance when Mary Tudor entered Paris in 1514. A glossary of medieval English and French clothing terms and an appendix of dated and datable works of art categorized by region are useful in interpreting these images and more than supplement the album. Abbreviations, bibliography, indexes of art, and clothing terms conclude the book.

Although there are glimpses of ordinary folk in workaday clothes, there is an emphasis on courtiers and the nobility. Court culture under Charles the Bold regarded the display of splendor as a princely virtue, and the few extant textiles remaining today reflect the sumptuousness of courtly attire. Uncovering the sartorial habits of that time entails using the concept of the 'period eye,' obliging researchers to consider the original social and cultural significance, an idea explored many years ago by Michael Baxandall. This reference work is highly recommended for its organization, accessibility, and the way it visually clarifies the interrelationship between social and cultural and the political, ceremonial, and religious spheres deciphered through clothes that would have been obvious at the time but not so for the modern viewer.

This work was conceived by Anne H. van Buren, a specialist in medieval and Netherlandish art who died in 2008, as a historical fashion study thirty years in the making, utilizing datable art as a working chronology to establish a fashion timeline through which undated works of art may be identified. It is perhaps her greatest contribution and lasting legacy to researchers. Roger Wieck (her assistant at the project's inception), serves as the editor and curator of both *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts* and the accompanying exhibition at the Morgan Library & Museum.

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