



*Medieval Art in Motion: The
Inventory and Gift Giving of
Queen Clémence de Hongrie*

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In 1887, J.M. Richard published *Une Petite nièce de Saint-Louis: Mahaut, comtesse d'Artois et de Bourgogne (1302-1329)*, a comprehensive study of the archival material related to the only female peer of the realm in late Capetian France, the redoubtable Mahaut of Artois (b. 1268, d. 1329). As heiress of her father, Robert II, Count of Artois, a nephew of Louis IX, and regent for her husband, Otto IV, Count of Burgundy, Mahaut exercised an exceptional degree of autonomy and organized her administration of her lands along the newly centralized model of her royal cousins, as work by Christelle Balouzat-Loubet has shown. Richard was able to document and dissect the material richness of Mahaut's life through inventories, legal documents relating to her dispute with her nephew, and estate account books. She was a big spender, and Richard's groundbreaking work opened the first window onto the complex and constantly shifting networks of things, people, and places that shaped, and were shaped by, the life of a medieval aristocratic woman.

In the nearly half-century since Richard's contribution, studies of medieval patronage, ownership, and gift-giving have abounded, some focusing on women, many more on their male peers. However, only in recent decades has art historical scholarship turned vigorously toward the treasure-trove of inventories and testaments left by Mahaut's contemporaries and equals or superiors, such queens of France as Marie of Brabant, Philip IV's second wife (Tracy Chapman Hamilton), Blanche of Navarre, second wife of Philip VI (Brigitte Buettner and Marguerite Keane), and Jeanne d'Evreux (Joan Holladay). A variety of factors have driven this renewed attention to the things that medieval aristocratic women commissioned, bought, owned, and gave away. The foundational work of Susan Groag Bell concerning women book owners set the course for a whole generation of feminist medieval scholarship, while developments in anthropological and cultural theory around the relationships and identities between people and material objects have also played a major role in shaping the discourse. Mariah Proctor-Tiffany's long-awaited and meticulously researched and argued book makes an important contribution to the growing body of scholarship that sits at the nexus of archival art history, feminist cultural history, and the development of object- and thing-based theoretical models for the practice of art history.

Proctor-Tiffany opens the book with a historical anecdote that in a sense prefigures her entire argument: she introduces us to the young Clémence de Hongrie (1293-1328), a princess-bride, departing the Angevin

court at Naples in the summer of 1315 with her retinue and her trousseau, consisting of precious manuscripts, jewels, and sumptuous clothing, bound for marriage to the king of France, Louis X. Along with these riches, most of which were lost in a catastrophic storm at sea on the way to France, Proctor-Tiffany notes that Clémence herself—her body, her lineage, and her potential fertility (all bound up in one another)—constituted a valuable diplomatic offering, a gift of a special kind, but a gift nonetheless, an assertion she supports by quoting Clémence’s contemporary, Petrarch, who described Clémence’s departure “amidst tears and weeping as a rare and select object of distinction” (17).

By no means does this decrease Clémence’s importance as a patron, owner, collector, and giver of things, but it does resonate with the theoretical underpinnings of Proctor-Tiffany’s approach in recent anthropological and art historical treatments of gifts as extensions of personhood, articulations of invisible relationships between people, and as carriers of a network of meanings stretching far beyond individual places, times, or settings.

The first chapter presents Clémence’s biography and genealogy as a backdrop to her activities as a recipient, purchaser, owner, seller, and giver of things. In particular it looks at her patronage of large-scale works of memorial stone sculpture commemorating her great-grandfather, Charles I d’Anjou, her short-lived son Jean I de France, and possibly her own *gisants*, and a donor image of herself with Louis X and their son for the chapel of Saint Louis at Saint-Denis (now lost). These large, permanent, and public monuments, Proctor-Tiffany convincingly argues, were part of Clémence’s larger strategy of insisting upon her Capetian, queenly identity in the face of the reversals she suffered when first her husband, and then her infant son perished in quick succession in 1316. The loss of status associated with these deaths put Clémence in an awkward position, not helped by her apparent disagreements with her younger brother-in-law, Philippe V. In the tangled web of French court politics, she took the wrong side in the legal dispute between the redoubtable Mahaut (Philippe’s mother-in-law) and her nephew, Robert d’Artois.

This introduction neatly stages the subsequent chapters that examine the contents of Clémence’s testament and the posthumous inventory of her goods (both included in full as appendices, in the original language with a helpful English glossary of technical terms). Chapter Two takes a broad geospatial approach, situating the objects in Clémence’s collection in terms of their independent material components’ origins. These range widely from sub-Saharan Africa for elephant ivory, copper, and gold, to Myanmar for diamonds, to Scotland for freshwater pearls, and Cape Comorin for the more highly-esteemed saltwater variety. In addition, the incorporation of coats of

arms into works commissioned or collected by Clémence supports Proctor-Tiffany's assertion that her strategy, as a buyer and keeper of goods, was to articulate a system of relationships between herself and select royal and aristocratic lineages of Italy, France, England, and the Holy Roman Empire. Finally, Proctor-Tiffany gives us an account of the incredibly diverse players in the network of exchange that generated and dispersed Clémence's collection, the artists and dealers with whom Clémence interacted and who were recruited to perform the inventory of her goods after her death, and the buyers and legatees of her goods, who ranged from her sister dowager queens to a washerwoman in her employ. What emerges is a surprisingly modern-looking system, even including a sort of luxury-goods mall, the Halles des Champeaux, where shoppers of means could purchase everything to groom or adorn the body, from crowns and combs to fancy shoe ornaments.

The account of the Halles des Champeaux is just one of the surprising, lively gems of historical information embedded in this book. Proctor-Tiffany's data-driven approach is far from dry. For example, in Chapter Three, she breaks down the objects in the inventory both by type and by value, revealing that jewels and precious objects of goldsmithery made up more than half the objects, constituting a fungible as well as wearable repository of wealth. The jewellery Clémence wore, along with her considerable wardrobe of richly brocaded silks, announced her special status (sumptuary laws were strictly enforced in late Capetian Paris, as Proctor-Tiffany reminds us), but also gave her a highly transportable source of collateral when she needed a large sum of money to pay her household debts (as she often seems to have done). In addition, Proctor-Tiffany shows that Clémence exercised a great deal of discretion in curating her material possessions—not only did she consistently opt for the richest, most refined materials (gold, precious gemstones, state-of-the-art enamel, silk, ivory), but also for the most elegant motifs—specifically coats of arms and animals associated with nobility (stags, lions, horses, lapdogs).

In subsequent chapters examining Clémence's substantial collection of luxury manuscripts and her bestowal of elegant and costly gifts to both institutions and individuals, Proctor-Tiffany further advances her argument that Clémence, like other high-status women, used her control of goods in a masterful exercise of soft power. In a sense, every object she collected and subsequently pawned, sold, or gave away, even posthumously, extended her personal and dynastic claims to power and significance far beyond the beautiful, but constrained and temporary envelope of her own flesh. This is an important contribution to our understanding of how medieval things and medieval people were entangled—to borrow the phrase of archaeologist Ian Hodder. A beautifully produced and well-written book such as this is a

treasure in its own right, and in this case one that does justice to the treasure—and the amasser of that treasure—it describes.

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