



Alexander Fights in the Town of the Sudracaë, Attributed to the Master of the Jardin de vertueuse consolation

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Flemish, about 1470–75

Tempera colors, gold leaf, gold paint, and ink on parchment

17 x 13 in.

Ms. Ludwig XV 8, fol. 204

Questions for Teaching

Take time to look closely at the work of art. What do you notice first? What do you notice next?

What do you notice about the setting?

Describe the **foreground**, **middle ground**, and **background**.

Which soldier is Alexander? What do you see that makes you say that? (*Alexander is clad head to toe in gold armor. He is depicted within the town's walls. His army is outside, attempting to scale a wall to come to his rescue.*)

Describe what is happening in the image. What do you think will happen next?

What do you notice about colors in the work?

How would you describe the mood?

Is this a realistic depiction of war? Why or why not?

How does this battle scene compare with those we see today in the movies or on the news? (*This battle scene depicts hand-to-hand combat whereas most wars today are fought with artillery and heavy machinery, if not high-tech equipment. In some movies, explosions are seen from a distance, which can sometimes distance viewers from the atrocities of the battles. In other movies and in some newspapers, the violence of war is depicted in its gruesome reality.*)



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Background Information

In a suit of golden armor, **Alexander the Great** battles valiantly in the town of the Sudracae [soo-DRAH-kay] in India. Having foolishly jumped over the ramparts into the enemy city without reinforcements, he must defend himself in prolonged hand-to-hand combat. The **illuminator** used the device of a cutaway view of the city wall in order to show both Alexander within the town and his army outside, attempting to scale the wall to come to his rescue.

The entire scene is presented in fifteenth-century guise, with the town of the Sudracae resembling a northern European walled city more than anything Indian. Both the Macedonian and the Indian soldiers are outfitted in the battle gear of the illuminator's time, with little attention paid to distinguishing between the two armies, either in weaponry or in ethnicity. This would have given the scene particular immediacy for a fifteenth-century European reader, especially one who himself might be called upon to serve his leader in battle.

About the Artist

Attributed to the Master of the Jardin de vertueuse consolation (Flemish, active 1450–75)

The illumination of the Getty Museum's *Livres des fais d'Alexandre le grant* (Book of the deeds of Alexander the Great) is attributed to an anonymous artist who also decorated a manuscript of Pierre d'Ailly's *Jardin de vertueuse consolation* (Garden of virtuous consolation), from which he received his name. Among the works attributed to him, the Getty Museum's Alexander is considered one of his finest.

Little is known about the illuminator's life; what is hypothesized is based on analysis of his artistic style and output. He was probably a follower of the popular illuminator Lieven van Lathem, and he may have lived in Bruges or Antwerp, both major artistic centers where Van Lathem was active. Working during the mid-1400s, the Master enjoyed the patronage of such prominent Burgundian court figures as the Bruges book collector Louis de Gruuthuse. Unlike the many artists at this time who specialized in books of hours (books containing texts designed to aid private prayer), he illuminated a variety of texts, including secular, theological, and hagiographic books (books containing biographies of saints or other venerated persons).