

Sirarpie Der Nersessian. *Armenian Manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 1973.*

This catalogue presents the most distinguished collection of Armenian illuminated manuscripts in the United States, described in full by Professor Sirarpie Der Nersessian, the internationally recognized authority on Armenian art.

Miss Der Nersessian, who has known the manuscripts in the Walters collection since 1931, has compiled a comprehensive catalogue in which she discusses in detail the Gallery's nine Gospels and two Hymnals: their provenance, binding, script and miniatures. Every illumination in each manuscript is reproduced actual size, and eight color plates attest to the artists' expressive use of color to convey the emotion of the narrative. The colophons have been transcribed and appear in Armenian in the Appendix.

Acquired in the second and third decades of this century by Henry Walters, the founder of the Gallery, these eleven codices range in date from the tenth to the seventeenth century. The earliest of the group, the "Gospels of the Translators", Miss Der Nersessian describes as "one of the key monuments of Armenian illumination". This manuscript, dated A. D. 966, is the oldest Armenian codex in an American collection and the fourth earliest illustrated Gospels thus far known. The most brilliant period of Armenian painting is represented by a Gospels signed by the famous Cilician painter, Toros Roslin, and dated 1262. Only seven works signed by Toros Roslin are known today, the Walters Gospels being the most lavishly illustrated.

The Gallery is fortunate in owning the masterpiece of the Khizan school of illuminators, a Gospels signed by Khatchatur and dated 1455 which is characterized by exuberant colors and inventive compositions. Five manuscripts in the collection offer an opportunity to study the various trends in miniature painting in the seventeenth century, among them a fine Gospels probably illuminated at Constantinople.

The author compares the style and iconography of the illuminations in each manuscript with comparable codices in other libraries, and has compiled a list of all known works by the scribes and painters listed in the colophons. Miss Der Nersessian is well prepared for this undertaking for she has studied all the great collections in Armenia, as well as in Russia, Jerusalem, Egypt, Turkey and Western Europe. Previously she has written the catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts in the A. Chester Beatty Collection, Dublin, and the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. Miss Der Nersessian is also the author of a monograph on the church of Aght'amar and many additional articles.