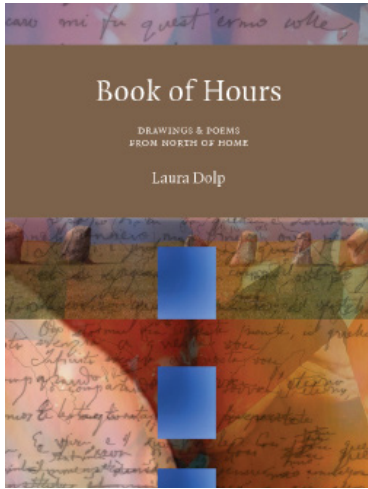


BOOK OF HOURS



Breathing new life into the form of the devotional text, *Book of Hours* is a powerful meditation on the conditions of place, gaze, and being.

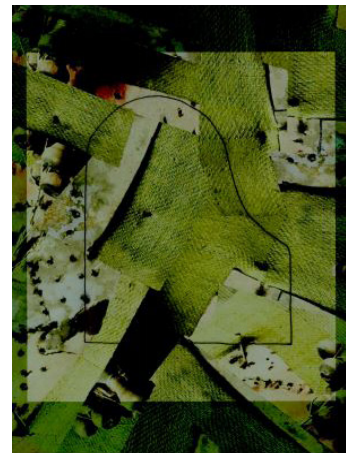
This pocket-sized collection of original drawings and poems in English animates visual and textual poetics around the mythology of place. Recalling the richly illustrated devotional texts of early modern Europe, *Book of Hours* draws widely on sources from Swedish, Italian, German, and Arabic literature as well as music, photographs, architectural blueprints, and geological maps from Europe, Australia, and the Americas.

With the startling clarity of a mathematical theorem and the lyrical familiarity of a dream, Dolp's poetry provides metaphorical instructions for the delicate work of tracing and orientation. The collection's visual miniatures are also invested in the project of seeing: objects of meditation are collaged on and against each other, urging the reader to reconsider what is and what is yet to be.

Colored by grief, nostalgia and ecstasy, *Book of Hours* honors the circumambulatory paths of our lives, asking: *How did we get here? Where are the borders of day and night, gravity and weightlessness, inside and outside? What have we gained and what are we in danger of losing?*



Study In Brown 9,
from "Hours of the Buddha"



Study in Green 8,
from "Psalms"

AVAILABLE OCTOBER 1, 2021

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3.5 x 5 inches, 80 pages

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Laura Dolp is a practitioner, creative writer, and researcher about music as a site of human transformation. Her work often includes themes of music and spirituality, the interrelation of music and social spaces, mapping and musical practices, and the poetics of the natural world. Current projects include illustrations and poems for a dream-atlas entitled *Sophia* and an essay collection, *Maps and Music: Stories of the Cartographic Score*, that explores the historical relationship between cartography and the music score. She is also the editor of *Arvo Pärt's White Light: Media, Culture, Politics*

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Sample Interview Questions

1. What is a book of hours, and how has it been reimagined in this collection?

The original book of hours was a devotional codex widely popular among the Christian laity in late medieval Europe. The books were often designed for individual patrons and illuminated with miniature paintings depicting the life of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and individual saints. Dolp's *Book of Hours*, which integrates contemporary poetic language and highly detailed visual composites, roughly mirrors the form of these medieval texts; four of the five chapters—Calendar, Hours, Psalms, and Office of the Dead—parallel the structure and function of these early books.

While its structure evokes a specific older form, Dolp's book reaches well beyond the borders of Western Europe and the limits of a pre-industrial, Christian liturgy. The book's second chapter, "Hours of the Buddha," embraces a more expansive cartography. Her miniatures also combine musical scores, photographs, literature, architectural blueprints, and geological maps from the Arab World, the Americas,

and Australia. In an individual notes section published [online](#), readers can trace the book's rich network of references, from ninth-century Syria to seventeenth-century France to twentieth-century United States. Through this diverse set of materials, images, and references, *Book of Hours* positions itself as a contemporary and more global instrument of ritual than the model that inspired it.

2. In what ways does the visual aspect of *Book of Hours* explore the im(materiality) of language?

The book's miniatures are multi-layered collages that combine written and other symbolic languages (like musical notation) as well as purely visual imagery. Dolp explores the (im)materiality of language by intentionally distorting, reshaping, and splicing language past the point of legibility. In this way, *Book of Hours* probes how a loss of cognitive meaning can give shape to new, visual understanding. During the development of Dolp's composite process, she studied the strategies of British artist Idris Khan. While their work differs significantly in its level of formality, sourcing of materials, and modalities, they share a curiosity about the ways linguistic deconstruction and layering imbues a kind of visual (re)meaning.

This dance between figuration and abstraction first came into play for Dolp while she was learning Arabic. She remarks how the process of learning a new alphabet and script opened a productive intellectual and emotional space that was more expansive than other languages that she had learned with Latin bases. While rehearsing the new signs and their forceful remapping of the page, she relied heavily on their sounds. It was only through daily re-making and re-associating that the gestures gained any conceptual meaning. Dolp emphasizes how much she relished the process of objectively drawing their shapes before the process of internalizing them took place. She is deeply compelled by the elegance of Arabic script (she has also explored Thuluth calligraphy), the way it morphs according to where the letters are located in the word, and its realities of absence (how its short vowel sounds are not marked in most contexts). The drawings in *Book of Hours* were shaped by these initial encounters with Arabic, lessons marked by playfulness, mystery, and personal discovery.

Also important to note is the incorporation of hand-written musical notation in her visual miniatures. The scores used in *Book of Hours* are a kind of personal anthology of musical influence for the author. Her training as a historian has influenced her perception of these scores as material and cultural products that represent the geographies and values of a particular canon. For Dolp, to repurpose score symbols as purely visual material changes not only their potential for sound but also their cultural meanings. In this context, *Book of Hours* also becomes a self-reflexive exercise in memory. Its drawings recall all of a score's performances, inevitably collapsing time and distance.

3. Are there any historical forms of notation from which *Book of Hours* drew inspiration?

Book of Hours explores historical forms of notation through its evocation of ancient picture writing, pre-print forms, and older practices surrounding early book forms. Dolp draws on these older forms and practices as

additional experimental tools.

For example, the recurring binding of visual imagery to various writing systems recalls the original impulse of hieroglyphic language. Through these fabricated visual codes, *Book of Hours* equates the pictorial with the linguistic to confer esoteric, or perhaps extralinguistic, meaning.

The book's emphasis on pre-technological materials appears also in its selections of literary manuscripts, which are part authentic, part invented images. In cases when real autograph manuscripts have not survived, Dolp taught herself the hand-writing of a particular author and created her own imagined version of the lost autograph. This combination of fidelity to the visual expression of language and the words on the page, while creating a fully fictionalized material object, was a productive way to re-examine the meanings of a canon.

Finally, the transparent layers in *Book of Hours* recalls the habitual practices of eleventh- and twelfth-century Christian commentators when faced with a shortage of books--namely, the practice of making palimpsests, where scribes would meticulously erase the pages of older codices and then reinscribed them with the texts of more contemporary authors. While making the drawings for *Book of Hours*, Dolp covered her studio with images from palimpsestic texts as visual guides for her process. These texts included the Archimedes Palimpsest, which features a 1204 Christian prayer book masking the only surviving copy of Archimedes' work "On Floating Bodies"; the Novgorod Palimpsest, the oldest book of the Rus' people from around the year 1000; and the Vatican Palimpsests, a vast collection of over 550 multi-layered manuscripts in 13 languages. Dolp's fascination with the ghosting in these manuscripts is evident throughout *Book of Hours*. She capitalizes on its mystery as a formal device to rob viewers of normal avenues of comprehension, directing them into the liminal, and therefore creative, space between clear cognitive associations and exquisite visual beauty.

4. How does the thematic and stylistic elements of Dolp's poetry speak with the broader themes in *Book of Hours*?

While the poetry in *Book of Hours* eschews categorization, there exists both recurring stylistic choices and motifs. Dolp's poetry explores the process of orientation and tracing, in all its symbolic, mathematical, emotional, and spiritual resonances. Just as mapping itself focuses on bringing multiple locations into relation with each other, the poetry of *Book of Hours* is similarly multivalent. Scale gets both stretched and shrunk, hung through verse in delicate suspension; for example in "Sagres," an ocean swells, the stars rise in the morning sky—all while one person lies still, mouth pressed in sleep. The poems often center around the lives of objects and people trying to stay in balance: of the mooring and unmooring of a hillwalker, of a tilted earth under a fixed North Star.

Subtle fractures in form serve as emotional arcs of her poetic texts. Dolp's musical background is reflected in her attention to the sonic components of the poems: gentle consonances and alliterative, lyrical verses

guide us through *Book of Hours*. Yet carefully placed punctuation and short, staccato lines facilitate, at times, moments of shattering: a page torn in “Swedish Summer,” a night exploded by sharp edges in “Portal,” a white light of loss in “Asp.” Her poetry is native to her drawings. It is made and understood in composite, acquiring meaning based on many (sometimes contradictory) parts. It slowly unfurls itself, challenging readers to embrace openness, flexibility, mystery, and personal discovery.

Just as time and distance are collapsed in her visual composites, Dolp achieves a similar effect in her poetic texts. In the final poem of the collection, “Untitled,” she measures the distance between a church and a river not only in space, but also in time (“seven light years”) and material (“the last drop of water, “a half-finished poem”), prompting the reader to consider symbolic, intangible, and perhaps unmeasurable spaces. Dolp reaches a conceptual collapse in *Book of Hours* through her manipulation of written language, whether physically in her visuals or symbolically in her poetry. Using both mediums, Dolp gives shape to experiences that are expansive and visceral.

Other aspects of her poetry approach the question of language from a more granular perspective. Even as narratives seem to coalesce (about love, loss, survival), Dolp’s poetry is just as interested in a linguistic unwinding. The short poem “The Utility of Grammar” is, in sum, an exposition on the syntax of the poem’s final line: “You have made me.” The poem forces us to question the fundamental premises of language: what is our position as an object? What is the shape of space between meaning and description? Can language actually encompass a “you” and a “me”? Her reflection about deconstruction, (re)meaning, and the necessity of language, underpin the project of *Book of Hours*.

5. How was the process of making the book personally transformative for the author?

According to Dolp, the making of *Book of Hours* upended her previous academic training. It was a deliberate act of artistic subversion that released her from the industry of academic discourse and what she had felt was often its superficial division into intellectual factions. Setting aside the learned artifice of academic language for something more direct, metabolized, and personal took several years. The material of her work as a music historian continues to deeply interest her, but *Book of Hours* allowed her reconfigure her relationship with her questions, as well to engage with the expanse of meanings that lie beyond written language. The process has publically transformed Dolp into a more intuitive thinker and artist, who takes more risks and is more willing to question old patterns of discernment. In her words, through poetic understanding, she is better prepared to decipher the world.