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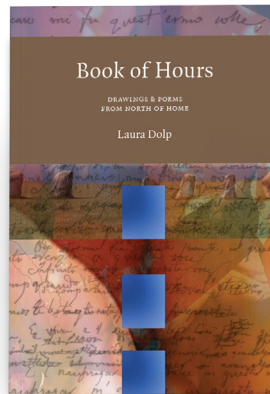
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Book of Hours

DRAWINGS & POEMS FROM NORTH OF HOME



Publication date: December 9, 2021
ISBN: 978-1-7359523-1-4
Price: Softcover: \$24.95
Dimensions: 3.5" w x 5" h x 0.3" d
Pages: 75 pages
Category: poetry and the arts
Language details: poems in English
Publisher: Stenen Press
Distributor: Asterism Books

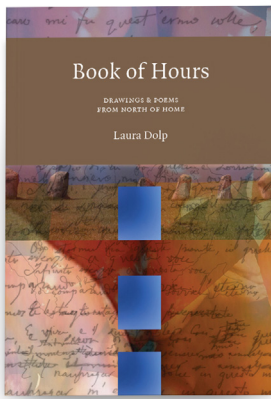
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Book of Hours

DRAWINGS & POEMS FROM NORTH OF HOME

“*Book of Hours* is a total delight: spare, elegant and deeply moving. A pocket astrarium, a piece to keep with you through all times. A paper planetarium for a difficult age.”

—Cherry Denman, illustrator of *A Modern 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?*

CONTRIBUTOR



Laura Dolp
author, artist

In addition to being the Founder and Director of Stenen Press, Laura Dolp is known for her vibrant, multi-disciplinary artistic practice. Her visual work takes a research-driven approach that combines printmaking, collage and literary texts. She has also written extensively on the historical agency of music as a site of human transformation. These include several reception studies of the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, and an epistolary account of American experience in Nasser’s Egypt in *Letters from Cairo* (2021).

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Laura Dolp

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She has also written extensively on the historical agency of music as a site of human transformation. These include several reception studies of the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, and an epistolary account of American experience in Nasser's Egypt in *Letters from Cairo* (2021).

Dolp is a working member of the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop in New York City and KKV Grafik, Konstnärernas Kollektiva Grafikverkstad in Malmö, Sweden.

After over two decades of teaching, Dolp left her academic post in 2024 to devote herself full time to her artistic practice and Stenen Press. She holds a Ph.D. in Historical Musicology from Columbia University.

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Reviews

“Every generation needs to breathe new life into the old stories and to refresh the old ways of telling those stories, of conveying those truths. For centuries, Books of Hours were considered to be “pocket cathedrals,” handfults of beauty and wisdom, stories to boost the spirit and deepen the soul. In that tradition comes Laura Dolp’s lovely collection... Highly recommended.”

—Phil Cousineau, editor of *The Soul of the World* and author of *The Art of Pilgrimage*

“*Book of Hours* is a total delight: spare, elegant and deeply moving. A pocket astrarium, a piece to keep with you through all times. A paper planetarium for a difficult age.”

—Cherry Denman, illustrator of *A Modern Book of Hours*

“Laura Dolp’s *Book of Hours* interrogates the spaces in between. ...Aligned with the music of poetry, her images move with sound, with structure and logic akin to lines and stanzas. Her poems are deceptively simple, rich with history and experience in the places before, and in moments of desire.”

—EJ Colen, author of *The Green Condition*

Videos



About *Book of Hours*: A Discussion with the Author

Laura Dolp, author and artist of *Book of Hours*, discusses the ancient form of a Book of Hours, and the meaning and method behind this modern version.

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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 were devotional books widely popular among the laity in late medieval Europe. The works were often designed for individual patrons and illuminated with miniature paintings depicting the life of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and individual Saints. The form of Books of Hours, made up of written language and complementary visual miniatures, mirrors the form of this originating text. Four of the five chapters of Books of Hours—Calendar, Psalms, Office of the Dead, and Praise—were elements also found in these medieval devotional books.

Dolp's *Book of Hours*, however, takes inspiration from beyond the borders of Western Europe and outside the time period of the medieval ages. The book's fifth chapter, entitled Hours of the Buddha, hints at a more expansive cartography. The images in *Book of Hours* are drawn from music, photographs, literature, architectural blueprints, and geological maps not only from Europe, but also from the Middle East, the Americas, and Australia. As made clear in the notes section of the book, its network of references are widespread, spanning from 9th century Syria to 17th century France to 20th century United States. Through this diverse set of materials, images, and references, *Book of Hours* figures itself as a contemporary and more global instrument of ritual than the book from which it was inspired.

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

The book's visual miniatures takes the form of collage, incorporating written and symbolic language (e.g. musical notation) as well as purely visual imagery. Dolp explores the im(materiality) of language by intentionally distorting, reshaping, and cutting up 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. The visual manipulation of both text and score is in part drawn from the work of British artist Idris Khan, whose work relies on a linguistic deconstruction/destruction in order to imbue 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 in the process of learning the language, one must cross a series of thresholds in order to learn new signs. Sonic association precedes meaning in the early period of learning; it is only through daily re-learning and re-associating that the Arabic signs gain any conceptual meaning. Before writing Arabic script, Dolp relished in the process of drawing it—enjoying the shapes, the elegance, the way it morphs according to where the letters are located in the word. The drawings in *Book of Hours* come out of these initial encounters with Arabic, ones marked by playfulness, mystery, and personal discovery.

Also important to note is the role of musical notation in these visual miniatures. The scores used in *Book of Hours* are a personal library of intellectual and emotional influence for the author. Her background as a professional historian underscores the reality that these scores are inherently material, for they exist as a cultural product that represent place and the values of a particular canon. For Dolp, to repurpose score symbols as purely visual material is also to change its very sound, transforming it into a visual cacophony. It also becomes a self-reflexive exercise in memory; the process of transformation recalls 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?

The interest in language (im)materiality in *Book of Hours* is not an entirely new project; rather, this practice draws on visual/artistic traditions from the past:

Hieroglyphic languages: Across the drawings in *Book of Hours* appears recurring imagery in the presence of written languages. Through these common visual "codes," akin to those in hieroglyphs, *Book of Hours* relies on visual meaning to confer esoteric, or perhaps extralinguistic, meaning.

Palimpsest: The layering of both texts and musical scores in *Book of Hours* recalls the practice of making palimpsests, particularly in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, where Christian scribes copied and wrote over older texts. While making the drawings for *Book of Hours*, Dolp covered her studio in images from palimpsestic texts, using them as visual inspiration. Some such texts include the Archimedes Palimpsest, copied over in 1204 with a Christian prayer book and contains Archimedes' work "On Floating Bodies"; the Novgorod Palimpsest, the oldest book of the Rus' people from around the year 1000, with psalms 75 and 76 as well as dozens if not hundred of textual layers; and the Vatican Palimpsests, a collection of over 550 manuscripts in 13 languages.

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

During the making of *Book of Hours*, Dolp was challenged to question her previous academic training. In other words, making *Book of Hours* was an act of subversion: it released her from the expectation of having to explain unexplainable concepts in written language. The process let Dolp work intuitively, take risks, rewire her process of discernment, and rethink her relationship with material and cultural products.