

Les tombeaux des ducs de Bourgogne

Tombs of the Dukes of Burgundy

The ducal Tombs were conceived for the Charterhouse of Champmol*, founded in 1384 by Philippe le Hardi (the Bold) as a burial place for the new dynasty of the Valois dukes. The tombs were originally placed in the choir of the church and remained there until the Revolution (*fig. 1*). Because the Charterhouse kept its own books, the archives have allowed us to determine precisely the chronology of the tombs and their authors.

THE TOMB OF PHILIPPE LE HARDI (*fig. 2*)
A work long in the making. In 1381 Jean de Marville, sculptor of the ducal workshop, was commissioned



JEAN DE MARVILLE, CLAUD SLUTER, CLAUD DE WERVE
AND THEIR WORKSHOP,
Tomb of Philippe le Hardi, 1381-1410
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to build the tomb of Philippe le Hardi. The architectural framework, which came first, was begun in 1384. In 1389 the direction of the work was given over to Claus Sluter. In 1400 a huge slab of black marble was delivered but Sluter was so

absorbed in other projects that the work progressed slowly.

In 1404, at the Duke's death, only the architectural framework and two mourners had been finished. Jean sans Peur (the Fearless) ordered Claus Sluter to finish the tomb in four years, but in 1406 the sculptor died. Claus de Werve, his nephew and aide, finished the mourners and sculpted the recumbent statue, the lion and the two angels. The tomb was installed in 1410 after



JEAN-PHILIPPE GILQUIN,
drawing of the Tomb of Philippe le Hardi, 1736
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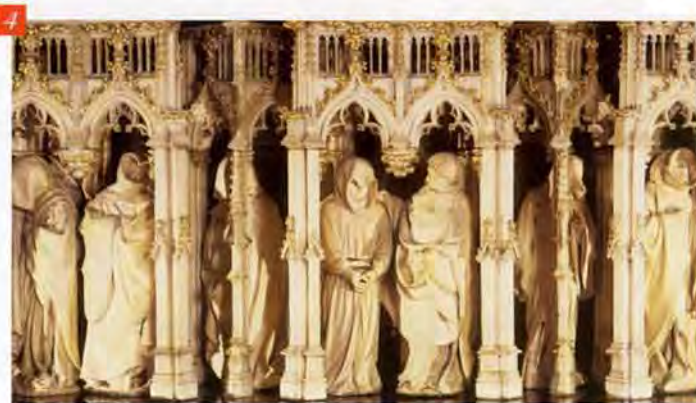
polychroming and gilding by the painter Jean Malouel.



NÉE AFTER LALLEMAND,
The Interior of the church of Champmol before the Revolution, engraving
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Innovative work. The Duke is represented recumbent on the marble slab, eyes open, hands joined, wearing his coronet, dressed in the cape which originally covered his armour. The recumbent figure, destroyed during the Revolution, with the exception of the hands and the face which are original, is known from an eighteenth century drawing (*fig. 3*). His helmet is borne by two angels and his feet rest on a lion. The whole is painted in natural tones, which increase the realism.

Double bays alternating with triangular niches make up the arcades. The white marble, originally gilded in part, contrasts with the black marble, from Dinant, of the base and the bottom slab (*fig. 4*).



TOMB OF PHILIPPE LE HARDI,
detail of the arcades
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Among these arcades pass the alabaster mourners, called "pleurants". They follow one another in procession, asperging the body with holy-water: two choirboys, the acolyte carrying the cross, a



Tomb of Philippe le Hardi, the bishop
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deacon, the bishop (fig. 5), three singers, officers and domestics of his house, all wearing the mourning robes customary at that period for funerals. The faces have character but are not portraits.



JEAN DE LA HUERTA, ANTOINE LE MOITURIER AND THEIR WORKSHOP,
Tomb of Jean sans Peur and of Marguerite de Bavière, 1443-1470
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The iconography of the procession and recumbent figure is not new ; it takes up a tradition, in use since the middle of the thirteenth century, of which the abbey of Saint Denis, burial place of the kings of France, gives us numerous examples. What is new is the monumentality of the tomb, which practically lifts the prince's effigy out of the viewer's sight ; and even more, the space given over on the base of the monument to the mourners, who are no longer isolated in low relief in their niches, but seem to slip through the arcades of a cloister. They express their suffering by their expressions, a gesture to a neighbour or by the eloquence of their flowing garments.

It is not easy to decide who, between Marville or Sluter, is responsible for which part in the conception of this extraordinary tomb. The account books designate Marville as author but since his other works have disappeared, we cannot define his artistic personality. On the other hand, the Portal at Champmol and the Moses Well identify Sluter as one of the most innovative and gifted artists of his time, always seeking effects of volume and expression. For that reason, he has often been cited as the author of the procession of mourners through the arcades. The supple and elegant style of Claus de Werve is clearly stamped on the angels, but we should not overlook the role of the workshop in making the tomb. Many gifted sculptors collaborated, amongst others Philippe van Eram, Hennequin de Prindale, Pierre Beauneveu.

THE TOMB OF JEAN SANS PEUR AND MARGUERITE DE BAVIÈRE (fig. 6)

A complicated project. No sooner was the tomb installed in the Church of Champmol, than Jean sans Peur decided that he too would like to have built for himself "a burial place similar to that of his departed father". But nothing was begun, even after his death in 1419.

In 1435, Philippe le Bon (the Good) renewed the order and added a project for his own tomb. But Claus de Werve died in 1439 without having found the right alabaster. Finally, on March 23, 1443, Philippe le Bon signed an order with Jean de la Huerta for the tomb of his father



Tomb of Jean sans Peur, les anges et les géants
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requiring that it be "as good or better", and of the same dimensions, as that of Philippe le Hardi. A "portrait" of the recumbent figures was transmitted to La Huerta. The project of a tomb for Philippe le Bon, however, was no longer mentioned.

Jean de la Huerta left Dijon in 1456 having had some trouble fashioning the recumbent figures. The completed parts of the tomb were brought to Champmol in 1457. This well-recorded event tells us which elements were finished by that date: the architectural arcade, the mourners, the angels (*fig. 7*), the great slab of marble and the helmet.

In 1461, Agnes, the sister of Philippe Le Bon, counselled her brother to transfer the project to Antoine Le Moiturier, the nephew of Jacques Morel who had made a monumental tomb at Souvigny (Allier) between 1446 and 1452, for Charles de Bourbon and Agnes de Bourgogne. Antoine Le Moiturier then, carved the recumbent figures from 1466 to 1469 (*fig. 7*), and during those years completed the mourners and the arcade. In 1470, the tomb was installed in the choir in front of that of Philippe le Hardi.

The first tomb repeated. Jean and after him Philippe le Bon had expressed their wish to see this second tomb follow faithfully that of their ancestor Philippe le Hardi. But the décor of the arches is in fact more complex, more “flamboyant” (*fig. 8*). On the upper part is a border on which are sculpted the emblems of the Duke, a plane and a hops leaf.

Jean de la Huerta and Antoine Le Moiturier, by their contract required to follow closely their model, hardly have the occasion to create original work here: several of the mourners in fact are literal copies of their model. Thus it would be risky to make attributions to one or the other sculptor for the mourners, especially as the workshop always contributed. If certain of the mourners, by the freer movement of their draperies, can be situated within the Sluterian influence, others seem of a more simple conception.

THE DUKES' SEVERAL BURIAL PLACES

The Champmol Tombs: tombs or cenotaphs? We must keep in mind that though traditionally called “tombs”, these funeral monuments are really cenotaphs, the coffins of the dukes having been buried in vaults under the choir of the church.

Such monuments honoured only the first two dukes. The explanation is in the history of their long, costly and difficult construction. Philippe le Bon, who died in 1467, did not even see his father's tomb finished. If he desired to have one built for himself, nothing was ever done. In 1474 his

remains and those of Isabel of Portugal were placed in a third vault with a simple epitaph.

Family members buried away from Champmol.

When we admire Marguerite de Bavière lying in state next to her spouse Jean sans Peur we are perhaps surprised not to see Marguerite de Flandres next to her spouse Philippe le Hardi. Marguerite, first Duchess of Burgundy, countess of Flanders and Artois, remained faithful to her ancestors and chose burial near her father Louis de Mâle, and mother Marguerite de Brabant, at Lille in the church of Saint Pierre. In 1453 Philippe le Bon had built a monument on the tomb of his ancestors there. The mourners, in bronze not alabaster, represented the lineal connection of Flanders and Burgundy. Though he himself was the only one of his dynasty not to have a funeral monument, he was nonetheless sensitive to the dynastic value of these tombs. In 1434, he had a tomb built for his first wife Michelle de France (died 1422) at Ghent in the abbey of Saint-Bavon and, in about 1436, one for his sister Anne, Duchess of Bedford (died 1432) in the Church of the Celestins in Paris.



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Tomb of Jean sans Peur, detail of the architectural framework
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Charles le Téméraire (the Bold) concerned himself neither for his father's tomb nor for his own. His daughter Marie built a monument for his wife (her mother) Isabelle de Bourbon (died 1468) in Antwerp: the recumbent figure and the bronze mourners still exist. Charles, who died in Nancy in 1477, was given burial in 1506 by René II of Lorraine. In 1550, the Emperor Charles V ordered his body transferred to the Church of Notre Dame in Bruges near that of Marie de Bourgogne his ancestor. The tomb was completed in 1558 with an heraldic décor in gilded copper.

THE TOMBS OF PHILIPPE LE HARDI
AND JEAN SANS PEUR FROM
THE REVOLUTION TO THE PRESENT DAY

Transfer to Saint Benigne. In 1792, when the Charterhouse was sold in June of that year, the tombs were retained for the Nation on account of their historical importance. Under the supervision of the sculptor Attiret, they were taken down and reassembled at the new cathedral of Saint Benigne.

Vandalism and break-up. On August 9, 1793 the first steps were taken to eliminate all signs of feudalism in Dijon. The recumbent figures were destroyed. The cathedral was transformed into a Temple of Reason and the tombs were dismantled. The hands and faces of the mutilated figures were carefully saved and stored with the arcades, the angels and the lions. Certain of the mourners and odd pieces of the architectural framework disappeared or were picked up by antique dealers. Only 70 of the original 80 mourners found their way to the museum in 1794.

Nineteenth century restoration. In 1819, Claude Saint-Père, architect, undertook to restore the tombs. He drew together the pieces preserved in the storerooms, sought out the fragments which had fallen into private hands. The missing parts were remade by the sculptors Joseph Moreau and Marion de Semur: nearly a third of the arcades, the recumbent figures, onto which were attached the original faces and hands and ten mourners to replace those missing. Four of them depict the authors of this huge project of restoration (*fig. 9*). The two tombs were reassembled in the Guard Room of the Ducal Palace, which was turned into a museum. The new presentation was inaugurated in 1827.

Twentieth century improvements. Between 1900 and 1930, it became clear that the new order given the mourners was inaccurate; this was remedied through comparison with eighteenth century drawings. At the time, the missing mourners now in the hands of collectors began to come to light. Pierre Quarré, curator of the Museum in 1945, was able to arrange for the return of mourners which belonged to the Louvre, the Musée de



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Original sculptured canopy from the tomb of Philippe le Hardi
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Cluny, and to an English art collector, Percy Moore. Seven mourners still have not found their original niches: four left France at the end of the 1930's and were acquired by the Cleveland Museum, one is in a private collection and two seem to have disappeared. Research at present underway has turned up, on the market and in various museums, fragments of the architectural framework which escaped the first restorers. The Museum was able to buy an original sculptured canopy from the Tomb of Philippe le Hardi (1991) (*fig. 10*), pendentives of canopies of the tombs of Philippe and Jean (2001), and to receive on permanent loan from the Musée des Arts Décoratifs a small column from the Tomb of Philippe le Hardi and an incomplete canopy from the tomb of Jean sans Peur (2001).

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JOSEPH MOREAU,
Neogothic Mourners, portraits of Claude Saint-Père, Fèvres de Saint-Mémin, Joseph Moreau and Marion de Semur
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* See the sheet which treats this theme.