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MISERICORDS
IN PARIS
AND THE OISE REGION

Misericordia International
MISERICORDS IN PARIS AND THE OISE REGION

A CATALOGUE-GUIDE

by

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1993
This booklet is a guide for participants at the first colloquium of Misericordia International on July 1-2, 1993. It describes and analyzes the iconography of each misericord we will visit in the six churches and one museum located in Paris and the Oise region. It also provides basic information on the churches in general and on artistic details worthy of note. This includes basic information on the choir stalls: date, number, position in the church and provenance.

The abbreviations N, E, W, S indicate the location of the choir wall; L and U the lower and upper row of stalls. Numbering is from west (the usual entrance to the choir) to east.

The carved medieval and Renaissance choirstalls on this route are:

Paris:  St-Gervais-St-Protais
        Cluny Museum

Oise:  Fontenay-en-Parisis: St-Aquelin
       St-Martin-aux-Bois: Parish church
       L'Isle-Adam: St-Martin
       Soisy-sous-Montmorency: St-Germain
       St-Denis: Basilica

Other Ile-de-France misericords can be found at: Presles, Mériel, Rémy, Montmorency, Gerberoy, Chaumont-en-Vexin, Milly-en-Forêt, Champeaux and St-Sulpice-de-Favière.
Our Thanks to the Following for their Support and Co-operation:

Les Frères de Jérusalem de St-Gervais de Paris

M. Pierre-Yves Pogan: Musée de Cluny

M. Bedos: Mayor of Fontenay-en-Parisis

P. Guyard: Mayor of St-Martin-aux-Bois

Le Révérent Père François Huppe: Curé, St-Martin-de-l'Isle-Adam

The parish of St-Germain-de-Soisy-sous-Montmorency

Le Révérent Père Jacques Midy: Curé de la Basilique de St-Denis

M. Serge Santos: Administrator of the Basilique de St-Denis

Brian J Levy: Department of French, The University of Hull

Colloquium Committee: Louise Guiney, Nora Laos, Catherine Sim, Laura Wiegert
and Lee Wood.
The two patron saints of this church were twin brothers martyred in Rome during Nero's reign. A church was first constructed in 1213 on the site of a small chapel. Only the first two storeys of the clock tower remain of this structure. The second church, which survives, was started in 1494 in the older Gothic style, visible on the exterior from the east and south facades. The church was not completed until the 17th century and the west facade is therefore Baroque rather than Gothic.

The misericords were definitely not intended for this church. Tradition attributes them to the chapel at Port-Royal. The patrons of these stalls may have been the French kings François Ier and his son Henri II, since their coats of arms, the crowned salamander and the three twined crescents, each appear on one of the misericords. Saints are carved on the end-panels.

The misericords at the west end of the upper choir rows were carved in the 17th century and alternate the elm tree, or tree of justice, which stood in the Place de Grève before the church, with a floral arrangement. They do not follow the medieval carving traditions. The medieval stalls show local occupations, calendar scenes and Flemish proverbs. There must have been additional carvings in the original set. Some of the misericords that survive are badly mutilated, probably deliberately. This vandalism was probably due to the "Victorian" attitude of some cleric who felt the scenes were inappropriate for his church.

**NL-01 17th-Century Carving.**

**NL-02 Man Crawling in Woods.** He may be drunk or searching for something. This carving and the next one have larger, coarser features and contrast with the finer carvings on the other stalls.

**NL-03 Vanitas.** A curly haired nude reclines on one elbow over a skull. This scene reminds us that death is always with us. Skulls appear on many choir stalls, either on a misericord or an arm-rest.

**NL-04 Man Blesses Woman.** She wears a hat with cloth panel hanging down her back, as does a dancing woman on the south stalls. This was a popular 15th-century hat style. The action in this carving seems hurried, since a man is rushing towards the woman, a bag in his hand. He may be trying to rescue the woman or to pay her for favors. Or the woman may have
escaped his advances while he still holds the money bag. This may be an illustration for a fabliau.

**NL-05 Couple in Bath.** A woman is in a large wooden bathtub and a nude man is about to join her. A tray between them on the tub clearly holds a supper for them to share. This is probably a scene, common in manuscripts, of a bathhouse where couples bathed, feasted and bedded. The carving has been badly mutilated, since it probably offended contemporary clerics.

**NL-06 Fool before a House.** This carving is an enigma. The man is dressed as a fool with ass ears and is apparently very happy as he relieves himself before a bourgeois' house. A woman looks out of the window, and there is a vestige of a little dog waiting for the fool. The scene may illustrate a Flemish proverb "All is beautiful in the eyes of a beloved". It may also be a satiric commentary on the sanitary conditions of the streets.

**NL-07 Apothecary and Patient.** This carving is so mutilated that it is difficult to identify the characters and action. Close inspection reveals the outline of a woman on a pillowed bed. A man kneels by the bed. He is an apothecary and is about to treat her with a "clyster", a painful remedy for the relief of intestinal ailments.

**NL-08 Angel.** This carving does not follow the medieval traditions and probably replaces an older "scandalous scene." The seat above the carving, as with three other angel-misericords, is thicker than the older ones.

**NL-09 Scholar at Lectern.** A man in long robe and cap sits on an elegant chair before a lectern. He reads a book while other books lie by the lectern.

**NL-10 Angel.** See NL-08.

East bay only of the upper stalls.

**NU-01 Triple Crescent.** Three crescents, Henri II's usual coat-of-arms, enclosing a man's profile. These faces may show different emotions, or the Ages of Man. The carving may indicate that Henri II was the patron for at least the north stalls.

**NU-02 Mason and Apprentice.** Older man well-dressed in plumed hat, sits in abstract background; apprentice approaches him with note or plan.
Vintner Opening Wine-Cask. Man kneels among six wine casks, opening one. This is one of the Occupations on the stalls.

Head with Garland. Head is angrily spewing a garland from mouth. The carving resembles pagan heads with vine leaves.

Angel. See NL-08.

17th-Century Carving.

Angel. See NL-08.

Couple Dancing. Woman wears a bonnet with cloth panel hanging down back. Man wears a comic costume with pointed hat. They hold each other by the arms, dancing energetically, possibly at a carnival.

Master Shoemaker. Elegantly dressed in plumed hat and jacket with puffed and cut sleeves. He sits at a bench and cuts leather for a pair of shoes. His work is neatly exhibited in a row behind him.

Two Turning a Spit. Two plainly-dressed men stand on either side of spit, turning a roast. A drip-pan rests on the fire below the roast. One of the cooks is badly mutilated, possibly because there was an anomaly with that person. Similar carving at Villefranche-de-Rouergue shows one of the turners with taloned feet. A Flemish proverb, "It is difficult for two to work together" may underlie this scene. See W-06, Salle XVIII at the Cluny Museum.

Angel. See NL-08.

Crowned Salamander. This carving is the coat-of-arms of François 1er, and may indicate that he was the patron of the south stalls.

Man Rowing Boat. He may be providing a transport service from one bank of the Seine to the other, but his elegant attire and plumed hat belie his task. As in Books of Hours, peasants and workmen wore their best clothing for portraits honoring their noble patrons.
**SL-09** Pig Eating from Bowl. According to calendar scenes in Books of Hours, the pig was fattened in November before being killed for winter food. Pigs therefore represent the month of November. Note one of the "November" pages in a Book of Hours in Salle XVIII of the Cluny Museum.

**SL-10** Lion Mask. This carving may be a copy of a mask used in religious processions or at Carnival time.

Upper stalls of east bay only.

**SU-01** Mermaid. She holds a mirror and flips her tail to one side. She represents lust.

**SU-02** Angel. See NL-08.

**SU-03** Cat Licking Rear End. This usually represents the vice of sloth.

**SU-04** Lion Mask. This mask is different from SL-10 but probably is also a copy of a procession mask.

**SU-05** Seated Woman. The woman sits legs parted. The figure is badly mutilated, probably because it was inappropriate for a church sculpture. It resembles a carving on the choir stalls of Auch, which shows a woman giving birth.

**Other attractions at St-Gervais:**

The church contains the oldest organ in Paris. It was made by and for the brothers Couperin, who lived in the building adjoining the church and played this organ. Some panes of medieval glass are in the Lady Chapel. Unfortunately, the early Netherlandish triptych, normally in the north transept, is being restored and will not be returned before the summer of 1993.

Office du milieu du jour starts at 12:30 in the Lady Chapel, and visitors are welcome.
Date: 1492-1500

Number: 65 choir stalls with misericords.

Provenance: St-Lucien-de-Beauvais and churches in Burgundy

Many misericords in the Cluny collection, including those in Salle XVIII, the detached misericords on the walls of Salle XXIII and most of the misericords in the museum's reserves were originally in the chapel of St-Lucien-de-Beauvais. In 1820, most of them were installed in the winter choir of the Basilica of St-Denis. They were removed from the Basilica in 1873 and given to the Cluny in 1889-1890. Additional stalls from St-Lucien were purchased by the museum in 1970 and others are on loan from St.Denis. The abbey of St-Lucien was destroyed during the Revolution. Several of the side-carvings and wooden panels from these choirstalls are in the National Museum of the Renaissance at Ecouen.

The end-panels of the choir stalls in Salle XVIII provide clues to their origin. On one panel Saints Lucien, Maxien and Julien are sent to evangelize the citizens of Beauvais. On the other end-panel, Antoine du Bois, head of the abbey at the close of the 15th century and the patron who commissioned the choirstalls kneels before his patron saint, St-Antoine.

A few stalls in Salles III & XIX and in the Cluny chapel come from Burgundy and are not otherwise identified.

Salle III: Two sets of choirstalls, three seats in each. Provenance: Burgundy, late 14th-century.

W-01  

a. Winged Lion of St. Mark. The evangelist symbol looks backward holding the scriptures in its paws.

b. Slaughtering Pig. Boy raises axe as the pig, head lowered, stands at his feet. Winter slaughter of the pig represents the month of December when pigs were killed for winter food, as in Salle XVIII.

c. Dancing Bears. One plays a flute as the others dance. This possibly represents a proverb, "To see the bears dance," meaning to be
hungry. Similar dancing bears appear on the choir stalls of St-Martin-aux-Bois and in Brueghel's proverb painting, now in Berlin.

**W-02**

*a.* **Beekeepers.** A man and woman hold two cornucopias between them. Iconography is the same as a capital at Vézelay which represents the winds of Paradise. The misericord-carvers may have copied the Vézelay model but misunderstood it.

*b.* **Vintage.** Two men carry a basket of grapes between them. There may be an argument since one appears to be pushing the other, and he also holds a knife. The basket is overturned to dump the grapes.

*c.* **Siren Couple.** They have human heads and feathered bird bodies. The man smiles and the woman points upwards. Such a couple may represent lust.

**Salle XIII:** Set of three choir stalls from St-Lucien-de-Beauvais.

**E-01**

*a.* **Tailor.** A man sits on a tasseled cushion, probably repairing a pair of trousers. This meaning is uncertain since the carving resembles one at Hoogstraten, Belgium, where a man is probably stealing a pair of trousers.

*b.* **Two Women Working.** One sits and one stands with hand raised about to slap some food on a platter, a gesture she would make if preparing dough. Both wear similar clothing. The middle of the carving is missing and may have held a table. A similar grouping of two women is at Fairford (England) and Hoogstraten (Belgium). These women may be working in a kitchen or arguing.

*c.* **Vanity.** A woman stands dressed in her finery, and looks at herself in the mirror. This usually represents the vice of pride.

**Salle XVIII:**

The 26 misericords, armrests and endpanels in this room are from St-Lucien-de-Beauvais and indicate the grandeur and variety of themes on these stalls.
Those on the west wall generally illustrate daily life inside the monastery. Monks and laymen work at ordinary tasks. Some satire is involved, since we see a fox preacher and a preaching friar.

The misericords on the north wall are more elaborate. They may illustrate stories as well as vices such as lust and drunkenness.

On the east wall we see a number of entertainers - acrobats, dancers, jesters - that may have entertained the townspeople at the door of the abbey.

Starting on the west wall by the window and continuing to the north and east walls:

**W-01 Bearded Guard.** He wears a short, flared, belted coat with scalloped collar, points a spear upwards, ready to aim.

**W-02 Barber.** He shaves a seated, tonsured friar who is protected with a cloth and holds a bowl under his chin.

**W-03 Tonsured Friar.** He preaches from a hexagonal pulpit, leaning his arms on the pulpit. This scene is derogatory since the abbey monks were of a meditative order.

**W-04 Fox Preacher.** He stands in a small hexagonal pulpit preaching to three chickens or geese, whose heads have not survived.

**W-05 Monk Churns Butter.** Monk in hood and long robe churns butter in a large wooden churn.

**W-06 Cook.** Seated man in long robe with collar and hat turning a spit (missing) over three logs and a dripping pan. A figure to the right is missing. This may be a proverb signifying that it is difficult to work with a partner. Note also the cooks at St-Gervais in Paris.

**W-07 Kitchen Work.** Monk in hood and long robe prepares meat on table.

**W-08 Cellerer.** Man in knee-breeches with several slits on the thighs and short jacket and hat kneels by a cask preparing to pierce it so as to fill the jug on the floor at his feet.
W-09 **Wine Merchant.** In short belted skirt, no hat, he wheels a large cask on a one-wheel barrow.

W-10 **Charity.** Monk in robe and cape kneels at the feet of a rich man who wears a robe, cape buttoned at the shoulder, and round hat. The monk is either begging or is being given alms, an act of charity.

W-11 **Miner.** Wearing a short belted skirt and tight hat, he shovels coal onto a contraption to hold or transport it.

N-01 **Drunken Husband.** Woman in hat, dress and long apron, wheels a drunken man in a barrow. He holds a jug in one hand and has a cup to his mouth, undoubtedly committing the deadly vice of gluttony.

N-02 **Lover in the Oven.** Husband pushes his wife's lover, hiding in the oven, so that he falls out the rear door. A small dog gnaws a bone below the oven, oblivious to the scene. While this represents lust, it may also illustrate a tale.

N-03 **Couple Meeting.** Woman in coif and long robe, possibly a nun, greets a man in short flared coat and hat with small brim. He carries a banner over his shoulder.

N-04 **Couple on Horseback.** Well-dressed couple with hats and scarves to protect them from winds ride a horse with an ornate bridle. A servant walks behind and is probably whipping the horse to speed its pace.

N-05 **Bridal Couple in Cart.** Bearded man, with cloth head-dress falling to his shoulders, pulls a young couple in a four-wheeled cart. He strains against a heavy rope over his shoulder. The groom sits behind the bride and has his arm around her waist. They are probably newlyweds being transported to their home.

N-06 **Life of St. Eustace.** The saint stands, hands raised. He is elaborately dressed with large purse at his belt. A lion on the left holds a child in its mouth and a wolf on the right also grasps a child. This is the episode in the life of St. Eustace in which the lion and bear steal his two children. The conversion of St. Eustace is on a misericord at St-Denis. Both these scenes appear in a window at Chartres Cathedral.
**N-07** Dancer. Man dances with one arm extended behind him and the other touching the toes of his raised foot.

**E-01** Acrobat. In tights and cap, he performs a back-bend on a knife.

**E-02** Control the World. A man in short belted coat with fur collar bends down and pushes the world before him.

**E-03** Bagpiper. Seated man plays bagpipes.

**E-04** Entertainer. Elderly man in pleated coat with wide sleeves dances with one arm extended, the other folded on chest.

**E-05** Slaughtering the Pig. Man in knee-length pleated coat with belt, flat hat and low shoes grasps the bristled back of a pig and aims a club at its head. Slaughter of the pig represents the month of December. There is a similar misericord in Salle III. Also, one November and one December page in the Books of Hours on a stand in the center of Salle XVIII also show the slaughter of the pig.

**E-06** Blow the Windmill. Man in hood and short smock blows at a small windmill which stands on a mound. Possibly this represents the topsy-turvy world or a proverb such as, "To make the mill turn."

**E-07** Pannoy or the Struggle for Power. Two men are seated, soles of their feet together, grasping the same stick. The winner is the one who remains seated while the other is forced to rise. Both men wear knee-length coats. One is old and bearded. The other, younger, wears a fur hat. It looks as if he is losing, since he is not sitting as low as his partner. For variations see: Bordeaux, St-Seurin; Negrepelisse; and Astorga; as well as a pair of monkeys playing pannoy in stone on the courtyard frieze of the Cluny museum.

**E-08** Handicapped Man. A beggar (part of one leg amputated) wears hat, coat, shawl with purse slung down back. Approaches tiny house and opens wooden door. Very few handicapped people appear on misericords: there is a handicapped beggar in Breda and one in Christchurch, England. They may hint at charity, and certainly portray street life.

**E-09** Dancing Jester. Dancer with fancy belted jacket and double sleeves.
E-10  **Jester with Marotte.** Jester in cap, buttoned jacket and wide sleeves with bells at the tips, gazes at his bauble which he holds with both hands.

**Cluny Chapel:**

6 misericords, late 14th-century
Provenance: Burgundy

*S-01* (Set of three stalls)

a. **Pig Organist.** Hooded pig sits on a bench before an organ, while a second pig sits behind it, pumps bellows and nurses her young at the same time. Musical pigs are common on misericords in England and in Spain, although there they play pipes or harps. They show the topsy-turvy world in which animals play the roles of humans.

b. **Pig Organist.** Hooded pig sits on the floor before an organ, playing it. Bellows behind are visible and are not being pumped. Therefore there can be no sound from this pig's playing. This is an added joke in the topsy-turvy world.

c. **Foliage.**

*W-01* (Set of three stalls)

a. **Man Jumping.** His hands are around his legs.

b. **Cat.** Raises one rear leg straight up and licks the other. Cat lies on bellows which suggests a farting noise. This scene often represents the vice of Sloth.

c. **Grimacing Mask.** Masklike human head with ass's ear has arms extending from ears to mouth. The hands are stretching the mouth open to imply the vice of Gluttony, or the game of grimacing (or "gurning"). The latter, popular on English misericords, is a parlor game in which one person tries to make the others laugh by making funny faces. The first to laugh becomes the next grimacer.
Salle XXIII:

Detached misericords on the walls.
Provenance: St-Lucien-de-Beauvais

*S-01* Carpenter. He planes at his bench.

*S-02* Tanner. He stretches leather at his bench.

*S-03* Woodworker. He carves a bowl.

*E-01* Sculptor. He stands at a table carving the crucified Christ.

*E-02* Shoemaker. Sits at bench, one shoe at each side. His simple dress shows he is a lowly workman, rather than a master craftsman like the St-Gervais shoemaker.

*E-03* Hunter. He prepares his crossbow for its arrow.

*E-04* Blacksmith. He wears an apron, and bends over a forge. The same figure, probably a copy, is on the episcopal seat at the Basilica of St-Denis.

*E-07* Minter. Dressed in fine coat and fur hat, he straddles his bench as he makes his coins. A bowl of coins is at the edge of his bench. Minting was a new urban profession at this time.

Cluny Misericords in the Reserves:

*R-01* Man with Sword on Horseback. Man wears a hat with upturned brim, a belted knee-length coat with lapels, and highboots. He has a long sword hanging from his waist. One hand is on his hip and the other holds the reins of the prancing horse. The horse has an ornate bridle.

*R-02* Sheep or Ram. It looks as if the rear half has been shorn. It leans its head back to lick its furry neck. As in calendars for Books of Hours, the shorn lamb may represent the month of July.

*R-03* Shepherd and Soldier at Castle. The soldier, dressed in helmet and armored skirt, walks ahead, holding broken sword. Shepherd, in simple
dress, hat and cape, sleeps in a cave-like structure, leaning on his knees, holding his staff. Three sheep are grazing nearby and a walled city with a church is on a hill behind.

**R-04 Donkey with Sack on its Back.** It has a bridle and raises one front paw. It may represent Sloth or St. Anthony's donkey at Padua that recognized the sacrament.

**R-05 The Lai of Aristotle.** A woman in long gown with laced top sits astride an object, badly mutilated, that is probably the philosopher Aristotle. This is the story of Phyllis and Aristotle. Phyllis, known originally as Campaspe, was the mistress of Alexander the Great. When Alexander's tutor, Aristotle, broke up their romance, Phyllis exacted her revenge by seducing the great philosopher. She mounted him and forced him to crawl on all fours past the young king's window. The story of this legendary humiliation is known as *The Lai of Aristotle*, and symbolizes Lust. If a woman can so humiliate a great philosopher, think of what she can do to an ordinary man. The theme was popular, and appears on misericords at L'Isle-Adam, Rouen, Dordrecht, Toledo and Zamora.

**R-06 Drunken Noah.** Noah reclines and his partly open robe reveals his genitals. One son hides his eyes while he tugs his father's coat down. The two other sons watch in amusement. A reclining nude figure with Jew's hat at Hereford, England, may be a similar Noah. A capital on the facade of the Hôtel de Ville at Louvain also shows the drunken Noah.

**R-07 Benediction of Isaac.** A bearded man dressed in hat with flap and fur-collared coat sits on a straight chair with a high back. He holds the hand of a young man attired in a belted robe, who holds a large bow. The old man appears to be blind. The scene is probably Isaac blessing Esau instead of Jacob.

**R-08 Chimera.** The monster turns its head backwards on a long neck. Its mouth is filled with teeth and it has claws on hind paws only.

**R-09 Boy Riding Cock.** Boy wears a short belted coat with lapels and holds the cock's reins. Large double-tailed cock has bit in mouth. The scene looks like a precursor of Mother Goose. A misericord at Belmonte (Spain) and a capital at Autun (France) have similar carvings.
R-10 **Beheading a Woman.** Bearded man in hat and fur-trimmed coat raises a sword to strike largely mutilated kneeling figure. The gown worn by the figure being executed shows it to be a woman. This may be St. Barbara who was executed by her father.

R-11 **Children Jousting.** Two nude children, one smiling and one scowling, sit on hobby-horses made of sticks with horseheads, and attack each other with a newly-fashionable pinwheel-type toy.

R-12 **Two Monsters.** One furry and the other with a bumpy spine have intertwined necks. Monsters generally represent evil.

R-13 **Monk on Crutches.** Monk in cap with ear-flaps and in loose coat, walks with the aid of two crutches, one broken.

R-14 **Fool Dances.**

R-15 **Man with Sack.** Bearded man is bent under the weight of a large sack he carries on his back.

**Other attractions at the Cluny Museum:**

The Lady and Unicorn tapestries (Cards with analysis of these tapestries are available in Salle XIII.)

Chapel with pendant ceiling.

Treasury with gold jewelry and church objects.

Panels of stained glass, mainly from the Sainte-Chapelle.

Heads of kings of Judah from the west facade of Notre-Dame. These statues, knocked down during the Revolution, were found about 10 years ago, immured in wall behind a bank.

"Mille fleurs" set of courtly tapestries.

...And many other medieval gems.
The town is just north of Paris in the department of Val d'Oise. St-Aquilin stands in a square before the town hall in the center of this suburban hill village. Construction of the church began in the second half of the 12th century. The vaults and tower were completed in the 13th century and the baptismal chapel in the 15th century. The church was restored in 1905 by Gabriel Ruprich-Robert.

The 15 misericords were carved about 1530 by the woodcarver Geoffrey de Clou for the Abbey of Saint-Victor-de-Paris. They were acquired by St-Aquilin in 1779 when the monks of Saint-Victor tired of their stalls. They show scenes of Joseph, Susannah and the Elders, Tobias, and other Old Testament stories. Since St-Victor was totally destroyed during the Revolution, it is pure luck that at least some of the stalls survive. Approximately 50 seats from what once was a very large set of stalls are divided today among Fontenay, Soignolles (Seine-et-Marne), the Evreux Municipal Museum (Eure), Les Bottereaux (Eure) and possibly Villabe (Yvelines).

Date: 16th century

Number: 15 stalls with misericords

Provenance: Abbey of Saint-Victor-de-Paris

Restoration: In the 19th century the misericords were badly restored. The sculptor, unaware of the themes of each seat, added anachronisms, changed the age and sex of people and even made one man into an angel. So many pieces of the puzzle are missing that some scenes are impossible to identify.

**N-01 Turreted Gate and Figures.** One has an axe at his belt, one bends under a tent and holds something flat in his hands. He also holds a recognizable banner, and may be hitting the first man. Only the outline of a third figure survives. This may be a scene in Holophernes' camp, connected to the story of Judith on N-03 and at Evreux.
**N-02 Gate with Towers.** The towers are crenelated and the gate is gabled. Of two figures, probably male, only the feet remain. There may have been a third person before the gate.

**N-03 Judith with Head of Holophernes.** A headless nude figure lies under his bed-covers in a tent, a sword-bearing woman at his side. As in the biblical story, Judith hands the head to a servant, here almost totally mutilated, who puts it in a bag. A second circular tent in the background shows the Assyrian army camp. The regicide is probably of Holofernes. The Municipal Museum at Evreux has other misericords with the story of Judith.

**N-04 Sleeping King.** The nude crowned king lies under a blanket, his head resting on a pillow in the canopied curtained bed. There is a long curtain behind the bed and a chamber pot under it. The Egyptian Pharaoh dreams of the seven fat and seven lean cows that Joseph will later interpret. One of the cows from the dream stands under arch at the left. Joseph was considered a precursor of Christ.

**N-05 Joseph in the Well.** A clothed figure prays inside a circular well. Joseph is a young man with short curly hair. Around him stand several figures, rocks and trees. The brothers have just cast him into a well in a rocky countryside.

**N-06 Jacob and the Angel.** Man and angel fight with sword and shield. Helmeted man wears more elaborate clothing. Landscape is rocky and sparsely dotted with trees.

**N-07 Judgement Scene.** Bearded man, face missing, sits in a highbacked chair. A woman sits nearby, and a third figure is apparently ready to cast a stone. This may be a scene of judgment. The long-robed bearded man gestures as if speaking. This is possibly Jezebel condemning a man.

**N-08 David Guarding His Flock.** He wears a wide-brimmed hat with scarf under his chin, and short cape with wide collar. Sheep, hills and trees are in the background. Possibly David as shepherd, although his attribute, the harp, is nowhere to be seen. A series of misericords on the story of David are at the church at Soignolles.
**N-09 Susannah in Her Bath.** The bath, actually a two-layered fountain, is in the middle. Susannah, nude, stands in the lower basin. She leans to one side to avoid the hands of one of the elders. The second elder, bearded, smiling and lusty, walks towards Susannah. He wears a hat with turned-up brim and a wide-sleeved robe. His head, that of Susannah and the upper basin are all modern.

**N-10 Susannah in Her Garden.** Three women are walking, probably to the bath; two men peer through the trees over a fence. As in the Bible, Susannah walks with two servants, one carrying a vial of perfume. The garden is enclosed by a fence and the entrance is covered by a wood roof. Both elders (one bearded, one shaven) wear hats and can be glimpsed among the trees. The women's clothing was fashionable toward the middle of the reign of François 1er.

**S-01 Job and his Friends.** Job sits nude under a tree. One figure stands behind him as he talks to two others approaching. One wears a calf-length coat, the other a longer robe. The restorer has mistakenly turned one man into a woman.

**S-02 Elijah and the Angel.** A man sleeps while an angel hovers above him. The bread and pitcher of water announced by the angel are under the tree.

**S-03 The Sacrifice of Elijah.** A man who has recognized Elijah bows to him. At left an altar with sacrifice burning on it. The prophet is shaven, wears a wide-brimmed hat and belted robe. Young man is shaven and bare-headed. The restorer, mistaking him for an angel, has attached wings to his back. (Cf. Kings III, XVIII, 7-38.)

**S-04 Elijah Sleeping.** He lies before a wall holding a cylindrical object. There are trees in the background, and the bird overhead is the crow that feeds him.

**S-05 Tobias Shrouds a Corpse.** A woman kneels and helps. The background of forest, houses with columns and tile-roofs, and horse are all modern.
ST-MARTIN-AUX-BOIS (OISE)

The parish church of St-Martin-aux-Bois is in the department of the Oise, about 40 miles north of Paris on the way to Roy. It looks like a small model of the nearby Cathedral of Beauvais. The monastic buildings surrounding it were destroyed during the Hundred Years' War, and it now stands alone behind a farm and can be seen from a distance, rising from the wheatfields. One of the farm buildings was the chapter house and has recently been restored. The town itself consists of a single street with private homes and one small cafe. The mayor has six such villages under his jurisdiction.

Date: Late 15th century. The abbey church of St-Martin-de-Ruricourt became a parish church when the monastery was destroyed.

Number: 28 choir stalls with 25 misericords on north, south and west sides of choir. Several illustrate proverbs and negative attitudes toward women. There is no record of the themes of the missing misericords.

Arms: Carved with monsters and animals such as pig and frog.

Other carvings: Ends; Canopies on N and S.

N-01 Devil Sculpting Woman. A man and a devil stand by a seated woman. The man hammers a chisel into the woman's head while the devil holds a mallet. It illustrates a proverb, "Man cannot sculpt a woman without the aid of the devil".

N-02 Badly Defaced. Outlines visible of a man holding a whip, and two other figures. Described before mutilation as two men whipping a third, it might relate to S-04 which shows a condemned man. According to Witkowski, these men are Sodomites.

N-03 Woman Linked to Devil. Woman in simple gown and coif, possibly nun, stands by female-devil with prominent breasts. The woman holds the end of a sharp-toothed saw (the teeth are visible when you look behind the saw). She is sawing the devil in half. The scene probably refers to one of the proverbs such as "Woman is in league with the devil", and is certainly intended to show woman's link with, or equivalence to, the devil.
Oak Leaves and Acorns.

Bless the Land. Mitred abbot blesses an orchard.

Leaves and Grapes.

Coat-of-Arms. Two seated bears hold a shield between them.

Coat-of-Arms. Rat and horse hold a shield between them.

See the Bears Dance. Two bears dance while a third plays a flute. An almost identical misericord at the Cluny museum in Paris. The reference may be to a proverb illustrated in Bruegel's Proverbs painting: "To see the bears dance", which means to be hungry.

Man and Rabbit. A man is ready to whip a large rabbit, possibly illustrating the vice of Cowardice.

(The next 4 stalls are stripped of their misericords.)

The Meddler. A man kneels by a frame holding a goose ready to have a shoe nailed to its claw. The proverb: "To shoe the goose" means you are in the wrong profession and lack the skills for the job. Three other misericords bear this proverb: Walcourt (Belgium), Beverley Minster and Whalley (England).

Knight and Castle. Man is about to enter his castle as his saddled and caparisoned horse prances before him.

Missing. Stolen early in the century, with no record of its theme.

Hunting Scene. Dog with collar waits to attack rabbit emerging from its burrow.

The Miser. Two men carry chest filled with money or stolen goods. Possibly illustrates fabliau or vice of Avarice.

Two Musicians. Drum and flute players may be entertaining diners on next seat.
**S-03**  **Banquet.** Two people eat at board-and-trestle table covered by cloth. Servant brings food and a dog lies under table.

**S-04**  **Condemned Man.** Standing male figure, hands tied behind back, has noose over his head. A guard runs toward him with whip.

**S-05**  **Dining at an Inn.** Men carry food, a basket of bread and a jug of wine, possibly to the diners on S-03. The wine-bearer also holds the keys to the cellar. The dinner scene may illustrate a fabliau or signify Gluttony.

**S-06**  **Clean Sweep.** Two rats stand upright, each holding pole. One rat has human face. They may be sweeping or playing a game, or illustrating a proverb, seen at L'Isle-Adam, "You cannot pick up all you spill".

**S-07**  **Monkey Husband.** A seated woman in gown and coif holds aloft her distaff. On the floor before her sits a monkey, possibly representing her husband and illustrating her domination over him. There is a quatrain on the theme of the wife-dominated hearth.

**S-08**  **Man Versus Pig.** Man with whip faces pig, back toward him, holding flail.

**S-09**  **Coat-of-Arms.** Horse guards a shield suspended from a tree.

**S-10**  **Coat-of-Arms.** Lion sits between two shields.

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**Other Attractions:**

Carvings on doorway, and on choir-stall arms, ends and canopies.

Long elegant windows, an example of early Gothic architecture.

Chapter house recently restored.
The church of St-Martin stands near the center of this popular resort on the banks of the Oise river. The carving of a skeleton on the west portal is supposedly the statue of the patron fifty years after his death. There is also an intriguing group of statues on the vaults of this portal in what may be a sexual scene.

Beside the altar inside the church is a photograph of a Flemish altarpiece that has been stolen. A plaque by the choirstalls explains, with varying accuracy, the subjects of the misericords.

Date: 15th century.

Number: 10 stalls. Flemish carvers probably worked on these stalls since they bear several proverbs and some occupations similar to those at Rouen Cathedral.

Arms: Carved with figures; Backs (bottom section): some carvings.

Provenance: St-Seurin-de-Bordeaux which retains the rest of the stalls.

**N-01 Phyllis and Aristotle.** Woman mounted on harnessed man rides toward a small figure, possibly Alexander the Great. The same scene appears on a misericord in the reserves of the Cluny Museum.

**N-02 Centaur and Wildman.** A centaur sits on a wildman while a horse waits on one the side. Wildmen are common on English misericords but appear rarely in France. The wildman was presumably a real creature who lived in the woods and exhibited the basic instincts of man.

**N-03 Pilgrim and Evil.** A man in pilgrim hat with shell on it, possibly St. James or a pilgrim, runs forward. He holds a knife in one hand; the other rests on a dragon, possibly dead, lying by his side. The scene probably represents the struggle between good and evil.

**N-04 Samson Killing Lion.** Wearing tunic and turban, Samson sits astride a lion and rends its jaws. This is one of four events in the biblical story of Samson (the others are Samson and Delilah, Samson with the Gates of Gaza.
and Samson tearing down the temple of the Philistines) which appear on misericords. Samson with the lion may also be seen at Dordrecht (Netherlands), Zamora (Spain) and Lincoln (England). Samson was considered a prefiguration of Christ. Samson and the Lion is paired with the Harrowing of Hell in the *Biblia Pauperum*.

**N-05 Woman Tying Devil to Cushion.** The woman leans over a monster-devil, tying it to a tasseled cushion with a ribbon. The proverb shows woman's link to the devil. The same proverb appears at Dordrecht (Netherlands) and Barcelona (Spain).

**S-01 Man Yawning by Oven.** The man is well-dressed and wears a fancy hat. He stands with one foot raised and hands on a belt at his waist, his mouth agape. The proverb: "To outgape the oven", meaning to attempt an impossible task, appears on many misericords in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Breda), Belgium (Hoogstraten, Walcourt), France (Rouen), Germany (Kempen) and Spain (Toledo, Zamora) and in Brueghel's Proverbs painting.

**S-02 Crying Over Spilt Milk.** Two men clad in plain short tunics, with smooth or masked faces, each holds a pole. A large overturned three-legged pot lies on the floor between them. The scene illustrates the proverb: "You cannot pick up all you spill", or its modern equivalent, "Do not cry over spilt milk". This proverb appears on the stalls at Hoogstraten.

**S-03 Coat-of-Arms.** Two stags hold crowned coat-of-arms (three fleur-de-llys). Trees at side possibly represent a forest.

**S-04 Barber Shaves Man.** The barber stands behind his seated client. Two containers hang on wall behind him. Occupations are depicted on a number of French choirstalls, especially those at Rouen. The distinctive features on the faces indicate this may be a double portrait.

**S-05 Carpenters or Masons.** They work at a bench with their tools, hammer and ruler. Other carpenters appear on misericords at Rouen (Seine-Maritime), Paris St-Gervais, Soisy and Les Andelys (Eure).

**Other Attractions:**

Carvings on west portal. Photograph of Flemish altarpiece.
This new church houses a group of recently-restored medieval misericords, one of which was stolen during the restoration. The finish on the wood is pleasantly light and one can easily see the details of the carvings. The elaborate clothing places the carvings about the time of François Ier.

Date: 16th century.

Number: 12 choir stalls with 11 misericords. Stalls are by N and S walls at rear (West end) of church. They were restored and returned to the church in 1989.

N-01 Angel. It smiles, and wings frame its face. Angels were usually carved at a later date and replaced carvings deemed inappropriate to churches.

N-02 Acrobat. An elderly bearded man performs a backbend. He wears a smock, trimmed breeches ending below the knee and square shoes. Arms are missing. Acrobats may represent the vice of Sloth. Many appear on misericords such as those at Hoogstraten (Belgium).

N-03 Charity of Christ. A pelican stands on wattled nest, pecks her breast as she suckles three young. The Bestiary tells of the pelican killing her young and reviving them three days later by pecking her breast and feeding her blood to them. The red spot on the top of the pelican's beak may have given rise to this tale, subsequently used to symbolize the Charity of Christ. The pelican is the most popular animal on misericords.

N-04 Animal-Trainer. A man sits on a low chair, legs extended. He wears a simple hat and a flared short coat over breeches. He holds two sticks. A cask, probably with wine, rests between his feet. He stares intently at an elongated canine standing on its hind legs. The man is perhaps training the animal to perform.

N-05 Missing (subject unknown). The misericord was stolen recently during the restoration of the choir stalls.
N-06 Wine Merchant. A man pushes a one-wheeled cart ingeniously designed to hold two large barrels and one small. He wears a hat with upturned brim, short coat and cape over knee-breeches. While this shows an urban occupation it may also allude to the vices of gluttony and drunkenness.

S-01 Angry Angel. The angel's face has furrowed brows and is framed by wings. It probably replaces an older carving.

S-02 Cheese or Apothecary Shop. Two men, well-dressed in jackets and breeches, shirt with slit sleeves, and plumed hats, work in a shop. One puts a round object, possibly a cake or a cheese, on a counter. The other works with a churn, making butter or cheese; or perhaps the container is a mortar for mixing medicines.

S-03 Topsy-turvy World. A well-dressed man, with flared coat and a plumed hat, stands before an ass seated in a chair, feeding leaf-like food to it. The world upside down.

S-04 Carpenter. Wears an elaborate jacket, breeches and plumed hat as he planes wood on a bench before him. One leg is missing.

S-05 Woman at Well. Barefoot woman in long simple dress with apron, and scarf knotted on her head, pulls chain at well to get water. The woman looks like a crone.

S-06 Lion. It struts with tail curled over its back and long mane covering its chest. The lion can symbolize a number of contradictory vices and virtues. The long mane is a symbol of courage.
The choir stalls at the Basilica of St-Denis are probably the third set to be installed. There are no records of an original set. The second set, now in the Cluny Museum, was from the Abbey of St-Lucien-de-Beauvais and was placed in the choir by Viollet-le-Duc when he restored the Basilica in the 19th century. The episcopal chair, supposedly from St-Vincent-de-Beauvais, looks suspiciously like a copy of the original in the Cluny Museum. The current set of choir stalls comes from the Château de Gaillon near Les Andelys in Normandy. The Château is being restored, and the chapel may be visited with permission and on "La Journée de Patrimoine" at the end of September.

Date: Early 16th century

Number: 12 choir stalls and one episcopal chair

Provenance: 12 from Chateau de Gaillon (Eure)  
1 from St. Lucien de Beauvais (Oise)

Renaissance style. Italian artisans worked with the French at the Château de Gaillon.

Arms: Workers attired in contemporary dress work with their tools.

Backs: Marquetry with scenes of sibyls and virtues. Above is a set of panels with the life of John the Baptist and Stephen.

Ends: Carved with scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary.

Panels: The sides of each seat are covered with marquetry, an Italian specialty. There are scenes of devils and vices.

Misericords: The scenes are elaborately carved, often with groups of figures. Many of them are set in garden or woods which may imply that they represent the concerts, plays or illusions that entertained guests at the Château de Gaillon. They may be inspired by early 16th-century Italian engravings. They are intricately carved, typical of 16th-century Renaissance style.
**N-01 Conversion of St. Eustace.** The saint kneels, holding the bridle of his horse with one hand and a cask with the other, as he sees a vision of a cross between the antlers of a deer. The saint wears a jacket with elaborate sleeves and a flared skirt. A sword hangs from his belt. A dog runs by his feet and another barks at the stag. Overhead an angel, hand now missing, points at the stag. Another incident in the life of St. Eustace is on a misericord in the Cluny Museum.

**N-02 Woman and Knight.** A woman, faithful dog at her feet, holds a shield and stands, dressed in a long gown, in a forest. A knight on horseback approaches. At the left, behind a large oak tree, a man swings an axe to kill the pig at his feet, signifying the month of December. The knight, head missing, rides a galloping horse. Behind him is a castle. This is probably a romance illustration, perhaps of the *Châtelaine de Vergi*.

**N-03 Acrobats.** Cherubs clad in short costumes, do handstands and balancing-acts. An elderly man stands at the side.

**N-04 Puttis Dance a Roundel.** Nude winged puttis hold hands in a circle, move their feet and hold garlands.

**N-05 Concert.** Six musicians sing, play flute, lute and organ in a garden setting. Woman singer in hat and long gown holds music before her. Tiny figure (now headless) of organist sits on stool before instrument. Several figures are mutilated.

**N-06 Angels Dance.** The figures, possibly winged women, are dressed in long gowns and overskirts, and hold hands in circle.

**S-01 Two Women-Snakes.** This image may represent the saying: "Woman is half-angel half-beast". See Diest, Rouen etc.

**S-02 Hybrids in Forest.** Two knights dressed in jackets with puffed sleeves and in flared skirts, a man in a plain gown and a man in a short skirt are in the forest with several hybrids who are human from the waist up and have hairy animal hindquarters. A faun at one side plays his pipes and a man at the right plays a viol. A castle is in the background. Most of the figures are mutilated. The scene may illustrate a tale or fabliau, or advertise a theatrical performance at the château.
Ordeal by Fire. A man whose head has not survived, with one taloned and one human foot, dressed in classic robe, sits on an elaborate chair. Before him stands a man by a fire burning in a pot. The latter has one hand in the fire and is pointing with the other. A scroll above probably indicates the reason that the man is being judged. If he is innocent, the fire will not burn his hand. Figures stand at each side, and a castle and walled town are in the background.

Women Work. A woman in long square-necked gown with underblouse, sits at table working with small tools. She may be making tart or doing some fine sewing. Another woman sits at her feet, reading a book on lap. The scene is in a house with large brick arch. A small figure appears to be standing in the arch. To side are three men, one well-dressed (so mutilated that it is difficult to decipher actions). The scene may illustrate a fabliau.

Mermaid Battles Merman. The two Bestiary figures with long fish-tails face each other holding small shields. They aim spears, now broken, at each other. The scene is unusual since the mermaid is usually depicted combing her hair while her merman mate may be battling. This scene follows the iconography of the battling couple.

Pig-Shepherd. Pig in shepherd's hood, holds staff and watches over flock of sheep. At one side is a man crawling as if he has joined the flock of sheep. A castle is in the background. This is an example of the topsy-turvy world where animals replace humans, in this case, in an occupation. A similar shepherd-pig, in simpler style, appears on a misericord at Champeaux (Seine-et-Marne).

Blacksmith. This is separate from the rest in an episcopal stall. Man in hat and long apron bends over forge with tools. This is the only misericord from St-Lucien-de-Beauvais and is much simpler in style than those from the Château de Gaillon. Viollet-le-Duc had arranged all the choir stalls from St-Lucien in the choir of St-Denis. This set is now at Cluny.

Other Attractions: St-Denis is rich in history and monuments: it is the royal necropolis of France, and many of the tombs are works of art. An ancient crypt has been excavated (visible from the new crypt). The choir windows are ancient, but many panes have been replaced. Look for the patron, the Abbot Suger, at the foot of the Madonna in one choir window.
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