

THE Mourners

Tomb Sculptures from the COURT OF BURGUNDY

The elaborate tombs of the first Valois dukes of Burgundy, Philip the Bold and his son, John the Fearless, are among the masterpieces of late medieval sculpture in Europe. These monuments feature the sculpted figures of the deceased rulers lying in state atop the tombs, while below a procession of mourning figures appears to slip in and out of the arcades of a cloister. The mourners are intended to evoke the funeral processions of the dukes, events that brought together various elements of Burgundian society: nobility, clergy, and laypersons. They convey powerful emotion, some lost in thought or giving vent to their grief, and others consoling their neighbors. Mourning, they remind us, is a collective experience, common to all people and all moments in history.



The tombs were originally installed in a monastery outside Dijon, but since the early 19th century they have been on display in the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Dijon. Renovations of the museum's medieval galleries have created the occasion for American audiences to discover for themselves these celebrated sculptures. *The Mourners: Tomb Sculptures from the Court of Burgundy* features the thirty-eight mourners from the tomb of John the Fearless, second duke of Burgundy, here displayed independently of the tomb's architectural framework, and offering a unique opportunity to appreciate these sculptures for their precise naturalism, variety, and profoundly moving character.

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Left: *Tomb of John the Fearless and Margaret of Bavaria* (detail of the arcades)

Right: Jean de La Huerta, active 1431-1462, Antoine le Moiturier, born c. 1425, died 1494, and their studio, *Tomb of John the Fearless and Margaret of Bavaria*, 1443-70, polychromed and gilded alabaster, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon