

















The Female Body Politic: Enacting the Architecture of *The Book of the City of Ladies*

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*The female sex has been left for a long time now, like an orchard without a wall, and bereft of a champion to take up arms in order to protect it.
... For this reason, we three ladies whom you see before you have been moved by pity to tell you that you are to construct a building in the shape of a walled city, sturdy and impregnable.
... You alone of all women have been granted the honour of building the City of Ladies. In order to lay the foundations, you shall draw fresh water from us three as from a clear spring. We will bring you building materials which will be stronger and more durable, than solid, uncemented marble. Your city will be unparalleled in splendor and will last for all eternity.¹*

With these words the allegorical female figure, Reason compels Italian/French medieval author Christine de Pizan to construct a walled city in order to protect the female sex from misogyny. De Pizan describes this fictional encounter between herself, 'Christine', Reason and another two allegorical figures, the virtues of Rectitude and Justice, in her celebrated text *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 1404–05.²

Correlating the act of writing a book to defend women, with the construction of an imaginary defensive city, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, has been seen as a proto-feminist manifesto.³ Although widely studied in terms of its literary significance, I am interested in the under-researched architectural and urban allegory depicted in the text and the accompanying illuminations (miniature illustrations), which imagine a Utopia inhabited solely by women and constructed for them by a woman (Christine herself).⁴

My recent practice/drawing-led research focuses on this text, but here, I will present this in conjunction to my study of a second book, de Pizan's *The Book of the Body Politic*, 1404–07, where she attempts to describe what society looked, or should look like: the underlying structure of medieval collective life.⁵ I will start with an introduction of de Pizan, followed by a brief description of *The Book of the Body Politic* before getting into more detail about *The Book of the City of Ladies* and finally presenting my design-led research entitled "City of Ladies".⁷ I refer to 'de Pizan', the author, and to, 'Christine', to her depiction of herself in her text.⁸

Christine de Pizan

Christine de Pizan was born in Venice in 1364 and she moved to Paris as a young child when her father was invited to join the court of King Charles V as a royal astrologer, physician and secretary. She was married at the age 14, happily, to a notary and royal secretary, and had three children, before disaster struck. Her father's death in 1387 was swiftly followed by the death of her husband in 1389 from the plague, changing dramatically her fortune and leading a widowed de Pizan to take up writing professionally in order to support her family at the age of 25.⁹ Her talents had been devoted predominantly to the composition of

conventional courtly lyric poetry for the enjoyment of her royal and noble patrons, when she instigated the very public literary controversy 'Quarrel of the Romance of the Rose' between 1401–04.¹⁰ In a series of letters, de Pizan protested against Jean de Meun's 'Romance of the Rose', a popular French poem describing the art of romantic love, and insisted that it was misogynistic, vulgar, and conveying immoral views, which were slanderous to women.¹¹ Her growing notoriety, as a result of this public debate, led to commissioned work and she produced a wide range of books on a surprising wide range of subjects: from ballads and biography, to autobiographical allegory and political theory in the form of 'mirrors for princes'.¹²

De Pizan has been described as a visual thinker, which is evident in the two books I study here: one comparing the book to a body and the other comparing the book to a city.¹³ Today we use the term 'body politic' to signify the people of a nation, state, or society considered collectively as an organized group of citizens, but in Medieval thinking it was a direct organic metaphor comparing the ideal political state to the human body.

The Book of the Body Politic

Feudal medieval society was unquestionably hierarchical, but with the relatively novel social reconfiguration posed by the growth of cities, the relationships between different groups was complex. Writers such as John of Salisbury and Nicole Oresme, used the corporal metaphor, originating in one of Aesop's fables entitled 'The Belly and the Members', to help define these complex class relations.¹⁴

Inspired by these writers, de Pizan's *The Book of the Body Politic*, is a 'mirror for princes' written during the troubled times of the Hundred Years' War.¹⁵ It is structured in three chapters, each one analogous to different parts of the body. Part I, starting with the head, offers principles and guidance for the education of the king, or prince, and advice on how to govern, referring to Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*, as well as his *Rhetoric* and *Metaphysics*.¹⁶ She advocates unconditional submission to the ruler, but her emphasis on the importance of learning and eloquence reveals her humanist values. In Part II, relating to the arms and hands, she discusses the knights and nobles: strong arms that defend the law and hands that push harmful things aside. Finally, in Part III the shortest part of the book, equivalent to the torso/belly the feet and legs, she discusses the common people who she calls 'universal': merchants, students, artisans and peasants.¹⁷

De Pizan's political thought paradoxically couples a progressive defence of women with what appears as a regressive view of social class.¹⁸ Her social theory is very conservative from a contemporary point of view, emphasising hierarchy within the community as a precondition of social and political order. However, in the 'Living Body Politic', political scientist Cary J. Nederman suggests that if seen in the context of her time, her use of the corporal metaphor reveals a 'capacious' image that aims to express 'equilibrium and equity'.¹⁹ She emphasizes a circulatory and anatomical image 'stressing the need for the limbs and organs to cooperate in their active coordination and intercommunication of functions' and looks to homeostasis to co-ordinate the whole.²⁰

Although there is no mention of gender, de Pizan clearly denotes a male body, similarly to all her predecessors and successors, such as Thomas Hobbes, who later challenged the

trope itself, but not its gender, in his *Leviathan*, 1651.²¹ The head signifies a male king or prince, and all the body parts refer to groups of traditionally male professions, the army, the clergy, merchants and labourers: the male body politic.

The Book of the City of Ladies

According to Nadia Margolis 'The Quarrel of the Romance of the Rose' was the trigger for de Pizan's decision to embark on an authored text with the main purpose to portray women more positively.²² *The Book of the City of Ladies* is perhaps de Pizan's most well-known piece of writing. Created around the same time as the *Book of the Body Politic*, it was a popular text during her time and several copies, some in her own hand, survive today.²³

In the book she describes in first person, sitting in her study, despairing about why so many male writers have presented women negatively. Distraught and feeling dejected, she questions her own sex and concludes that being female must be a terrible thing. She falls in a trance and is suddenly awakened by the startling arrival of three virtues – Reason, Rectitude and Justice. They tell her that she has been chosen to set the record straight about women and to build city, which will protect them against misogyny.²⁴ The three virtues can be seen as de Pizan's trinity alter ego, with which she engages in an inner dialogue. Through this allegorical trope, she is able to articulate the complex interplay between self-doubt and her decisive, often polemical, defence of women. The three virtues are supportive, encouraging and caring, often using the term 'daughter' to refer to Christine, thus taking on the role of a triad of exemplary 'mother' figures.

In a similar tripartite book structure to *The Book of the Body Politic*, each virtue takes turns in each one of three chapters to educate Christine about the achievements of famous queens, artists, scholars, warriors, saints and other great women throughout history, while at the same time directing and assisting her, in her gradual construction of the city.²⁵ Throughout the text, De Pizan conflates the act of writing the book and collecting the stories of women with the act of building the allegorical city. She refers to the stories that the three virtues narrate, as the building blocks, and to the women that the stories portray, as the buildings populating the city. The book itself, therefore, becomes the fabled city, creating an imaginary place that all women can inhabit to protect themselves from slander.

There is no direct attempt to relate specific body parts to the different kinds of women presented in the three chapters of *The Book of the City of Ladies*, but there are analogies to the structure of the city as a body, albeit in reverse. The first chapter portrays pagan women, which she equates to setting the city's foundations, equivalent to the lower part, the feet and legs of a body. The second chapter describes Hebrew and Christian ladies who were renowned for their prophetic gifts, which she equates to the design and construction of main buildings, the upper body of the city. And the third discusses the lives of saints as equivalent to the decoration and construction of towers and turrets and embellishing the city with gold, the head and crown of the city.

The production of illuminated manuscripts in Paris during the late fourteenth century was greatly expanded and supported by King Charles V, who commissioned translations of many Greek and Latin texts in French including Aristotle's *Politics*, *Ethics* and *Economics* for the first time. With Paris becoming an important university city, he chose to promote himself as

a learned king, which rightly earned him the epithet 'The Wise'. Apart from seeing the political benefit of supporting the creation of books, Charles was also a builder king. Between 1358 and 1371, he expanded the city wall, mostly on the right bank, to protect the fast-growing city from the dangers of the Hundred Years War. He also moved the palace from *The Palais de la Cité*, to the old fortress of the Louvre, repurposing the tower of its Falconry into the First Royal Library, or '*librairie*', to house his growing collection of manuscripts and made sure that all his counsellors had access to them.²⁶ A splendid miniature portraying the new palace adorns the page for the month of October in the Book of Hours, *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, drawn by the Limbourg brothers between 1412 and 1416.²⁷ The similarity between the depiction of the Louvre in this illumination and the form of the growing city in de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* suggests that the inspiration for the design might be closer to home, at her adoptive city, Paris: the city-like palace, within which her father was employed and which she describes in detail in one of her books.²⁸

However, for Judith L. Kellogg the city in *The Book of the City of Ladies* departs from the constraints of being bound to a real place. She asks: 'Where, in fact, is this marvellous city? Where are the defensive walls? Where is the space in which that gendered body politic can be maintained?' Its role is to reconfigure knowledge and as a result reimagine gendered space; for Kellogg it is clear that de Pizan aims for the city to be built 'within the consciousness of each individual woman.'²⁹ Moreover, Margarete Zimmermann poignantly labels de Pizan as 'memory's architect' and suggests that by giving spatial shape to a gender-specific cultural memory, her aim is to create 'an archive of cultural history, a utopia grounded in history'; female collective memory takes the form of exclusive female collective life in an imaginary city, a sanctuary, or safe haven.³⁰ The renowned historical women, whose deeds and talents fill the pages of the book, are not only the buildings; they are also invited to notionally inhabit the imaginary city, which, therefore, embodies a virtual female body politic.³¹

City of Ladies

My practice-led research, entitled "City of Ladies", in collaboration with research assistant John Cruwys, was presented at Domobaal gallery in London in January 2020.³² (Figure 1) The specific version of the text that this project interprets is part of Harley 4431, a compilation that Pizan assembled for Queen Isabeau of Bavaria between 1410–1414 and one of the most important manuscripts held at the British Library, since its foundation as part of the British Museum in 1753.³³ The illumination embellishing the frontispiece of the compilation shows de Pizan offering the book to the queen, placing the image of the volume in *mise en abyme*.

My research focuses on the under-explored description of the making of the allegorical city in the text, but perhaps most importantly on its depiction in the accompanying illuminations. 'Illumination' refers to a miniature illustration and derives from the Latin *illuminare* (to light up) referring to the glow created by the use of silver, gold and bright mineral colours. Illuminations took the form of decorated letters and embellished borders, but also framed figurative scenes illustrating the content of the text.

According to art historian and curator Christine Sciacca in *Building the Medieval World*, the creative ways in which architecture is represented in illuminated manuscripts “offers a unique insight into what these buildings meant for men and women of the medieval era. Buildings were not simply structures to inhabit – they symbolised grandeur, power, even heaven on earth”.³⁴ Illuminations often contain historically significant details of construction methods and drawing instruments and intricate architectural elements were used as decorative motifs framing important texts and charts.³⁵

In *The Book of the City of Ladies*, the illuminations appear on the first page of each chapter show the city in three stages of construction: the first one takes over two columns of the text, but the second and third crown just the left-hand side column of text. The exhibition “City of Ladies” comprises an installation and a digital film that spatially and materially reconstruct these three pages of the manuscript and feature a blossoming of the pictorial city from two dimensions into three. The work attempts to claim de Pizan’s message for architecture and is in search of a way of projecting it into the far future.

Manuscripts were hand written and illuminated on sheets of vellum, an extremely durable writing and drawing surface made out of animal skin, which was also used for architectural drawing.³⁶ In my work, I represent each of the chapter front pages with a whole skin of vellum, supported and framed by a specially designed table.³⁷ Each table is also named after each of the three virtues, Reason, Rectitude, and Justice, who recount the women’s stories and guide Christine’s city building in each chapter. The three tables are arranged radially forming circular pattern, supported by slender wooden legs. (Figure 2) The vellum skins lay on the tables like tablecloths, but are also drawing surfaces that carry ideas, diagrams of the process of design and markings for the positioning of other elements. Their pure white surface is decorated in gilding, using silver, gold and white gold leaf, a technique that I started developing in an earlier piece entitled, “Between the Retina and the Dome”, 2018, which studies the underlying structure of our perceptual system and how this casts, and is cast on, architecture.³⁸

At closer inspection the first illumination, double in width, presents not one but two consecutive scenes. On the left we see Christine inside her study writing in an open book, at the moment when the three virtues appear at an impossibly narrow space behind her desk. (Figure 3) This scene, strongly resembles depictions of the Annunciation in Books of Hours. Similarly to Christine, the Virgin Mary is often depicted within a study/room reading from an open book, when she is startled by the angel, who delivers news of the immaculate conception and birth of a son. Here the three virtues announce to Christine her immaculate conception and foundation of an edifice: the birth of a city.³⁹ The action continues to the right of the study in a green space, which she calls the ‘Field of Letters’, which had to be first cleared from debris, the slandering of women found in famous men’s books. The two figures from the previous adjacent scene appear again in the same space but at a future time: Reason carries a block of stone, a tray of mortar rests on the half-built wall, while Christine is holding a trowel caught in the act of laying the nascent foundation wall.

To enter the figurative space of the city we decoded the illusory depth depicted in the illuminations and fleshed it out into three dimensions, following a design process in reverse.⁴⁰ The pre-linear-perspective illusory pictorial representation was as accurately as

possible translated into digital models that were 3D printed at the same scale. (Figure 4) The miniature models propped up in rough blocks of wood representing the columns of text that the illuminations crown, become nuclei of the promise of a city that has not been built yet.

The decision to omit the figures of the women from the models brings to the foreground the evolution of the city and its tectonic qualities. Furthermore, the absence of the female bodies accentuates de Pizan's insistence that the stones and the buildings of the city are the renowned women themselves. The new models are of female bodies transformed into female buildings.

My study of de Pizan's text, which was written more than 600 years ago, provokes a stark realisation: that, even today, her desire for a city conceived and built by and for women remains unfulfilled. Our cities have been almost entirely conceived and constructed by men, primarily, for men. The physical fabric that hosts, represents and shapes the body politic is still largely devoid of the trace of female imagination and female touch. What will our cities look like in 600 years from now, and how much will women be involved in shaping them both physically and allegorically? In search of guidelines and principles on how such a city might be conceived I found more clues in de Pizan's text.

When they first appear to her, the three virtues bring her three gifts: a mirror, a ruler and a vessel.⁴¹ In the text, de Pizan's describes these as measuring devices that the three virtues urge Christine to directly employ in the construction of the city. Though a process of poetic interpretative design and making, I engaged in a remaking, a translation of these objects into symbolic guiding principles for the design of a new city, while also foregrounding the overlapping metaphors of the body, the city and the book.⁴²

The Mirror of Reason

Reason brings a mirror as a device for measuring self-knowledge and self-worth, which she suggests Christine will need to plan the city. My translation of this metaphorical artefact is a new mirror. It portrays binocular vision as an alternative visual matrix imbedded in the body, a female vision against the male sharpness of linear perspective; an instrument to help plan the city. The proposed mirror made out of polished metal, as most mirrors were in medieval times, represents the horopter – a geometrical surface indicating a binocular picture plane – and is held in place by two large ball bearings, the eyeballs, carrying slender steel visual rays. It rests on a wooden base made out of machined walnut that also references the visual perceptual system, more specifically the optical chiasma. Self-knowledge and recognition of the value of the female point of view literally and metaphorically becomes the basis of the conception of a new female city. Relating it to body parts, the mirror is equivalent to the face, or the head, and Reason's table becomes a 'dressing table'. (Figure 5a)

The Ruler of Rectitude

Rectitude holds a ruler, a yardstick of truth what separates right from wrong, which she insists Christine should use to design the interior of the city, to build its high temples, palaces and houses, its roads, squares and marketplaces. In the history of measurement, many distance units are based on human body parts such as the cubit, the fathom and the foot with variations in length by era and location. However, one aspect has been constant:

the measurements always refer to the male body and even the term defining the instrument, refers to the body measurements of a male 'ruler', the king. My interpretation of the ruler is a direct imprint of female hands, particularly my hands: the ruler fits like a glove. It derived from a complex process of: physically casting my hands in ink-tinted plaster; creating a digital model of the casts through photogrammetry; arranging alternating units of fingers to the length of a French ell (*aune*) which was used to measure cloth. The resulting model of concave imprints was machined into a piece of pear wood. The ruler points to a city that is made not only for male but also for female human bodies and their needs. The ruler obviously relates to the hands of a body and Rectitude's table becomes a 'drawing table'. (Figure 5b)

The Vessel of Justice

Finally, Justice offers Christine a vessel of gold, a container measuring weight or volume, able to calculate and distribute portions of fortune for each individual. She suggests that Christine will use it to embellish the high turrets and roofs of the completed buildings and to adorn the city with gold. I see the vessel as a gauge of female values. My interpretation is a complex glass-blown form comprising two interlocking chambers resembling splitting cells.⁴³ A hybrid between an hourglass and a double pitcher, the vessel decants white marble sand and is able to measure time through mass, promoting long-term thinking a value usually absent from design. Sitting on a base machined into lime wood, the vessel is the abdomen ingesting and gestating and its presence on Justice's table makes this a 'dining table'. (Figure 5c)

De Pizan's work is characterised by recurrent triadic configurations: three chapters, three body parts, three societal groups, three virtues, three groups of notable women, three stages of the construction of a city and three gifts to be used as measuring devices. Yet, all of these tripartite structures are symbolic subdivisions of a strong single entity: one book, one society, one city, one body and one female author collecting stories of women throughout history. The structure of the "City of Ladies" installation is a direct reflection of this pattern in matter, taking the form of three tables gathering centrally as one, while retaining their defining traits of body, city and book though the symbolism and artefacts that they carry.⁴⁴ (Figure 6)

In direct dialogue with the installation, which performs a historical reading of the medieval artefact of the book, the sister digital film, created in collaboration with architectural/digital animation designer John Cruwys and sound artist Kevin Pollard, attempts to project de Pizan's ideas of into the far future, by catching a glimpse of the allegorical genesis of the three artefacts, the mirror, the ruler and the vessel, which lead to the conception and gestation of the city.⁴⁵ A central part of the digital animation, enlivens a gilded drawing on Reason's vellum, which attempts to capture the magical transformation from de Pizan's/Christine's study and the process of researching and writing a book into the conception of an allegorical city as defender of the female sex. A room of one's own, framing the intellectual pursuit of a female mind, transforms into a womb-like foundation wall that will nurture the growing foetus of a new city for women. (Figure 7) Using visual and sonic tropes from science fiction films, the film creates an ambiguous spatial voyage moving from the interior of the body to outer space and back to the present moment in the gallery space.

Moving between the physical and the digital, the work exists in time and in matter. So far it has been a solitary endeavour, a space to think through de Pizan's work through drawing, design and production of the three artefacts, which also become props of a performance. (Figure 8) I saw the process as an enactment that allows an exploration of history through drawing and making, but also as a methodology that allows me to notionally embody Christine de Pizan, the author, and her splitting into fictional personas: the commissioning and guiding virtues of Reason, Rectitude and Justice, carrying measuring device gifts, and Christine, the architect.⁴⁶ However, following the essence of the book as a collection of stories, and de Pizan as a compiler, my aim is to open up this as a collective work. Using the installation as a first reading, or a seed, I would like to prepare, not a manifesto, but an invitation to a collective rethinking, a call for the design of female buildings for a future city that will take the form of an exhibition and an edited book: a new communal architectural take on *The Book of the City of Ladies*.

And I would like to end with a provocation. At a time when 'humanity' is facing survival challenges, perhaps as a direct result of the unfettered growth of our man-made cities, could de Pizan's book conceal a prescient allusion? That the solution might lie in the imagination of the other half of humanity, the half that has not yet been in a position to conceive and construct its own version of the city, and to propose better, more sustainable and visionary urban futures that cater for the needs and desires of both sexes.

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¹ Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Rosalind Brown-Grant (London: Penguin, 1999).

² Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards, (New York: Persea, 1998).

³ For other feminist analyses of Christine de Pizan's *The Book of The City of Ladies*, see: Jody Enders, "The Feminist Mnemonics of Christine de Pizan," *MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (1994): 231–249; Judith L. Kellogg, "Le Livre de la cité des dames: Reconfiguring Knowledge and Reimagining Gendered Space," in *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altman and Deborah L. McGrady (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003); Maureen Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan's Cité de dames* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁴ For a discussion of the illuminations in this version of the book see: Sandra L. Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar: Christine De Pizan's 'Cité des Dames'", *Feminist Studies*, 10, no. 3 (1984): 457–483. For a broader discussion of the role of illumination in de Pizan's work, see: Charlotte Cooper, "A Re-Assessment of Text-Image Relationships in Christine de Pizan's Didactic Works" (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 2017).

⁵ I have previously used a design-led approach to art-historical research in my monograph: Penelope Haralambidou, *Marcel Duchamp and the Architecture of Desire* (London: Routledge 2013).

⁶ Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, ed. and trans. Kate Langdon Forhan, series: Cambridge texts in the history of political thought (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁷ The research was kindly funded the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, Architecture Research Fund, and culminated with an exhibition, "City of Ladies" hosted by Domobaal Gallery in January–February 2020.

⁸ In an email exchange (26 January 2020), professor Earl Jeffery Richards very rightly observed that: "scholars in French and Italian prefer to refer to 'Christine' rather than 'de Pizan' - this is because Christine in her works speaks of herself as 'Je, Christine,' interpreted as a solemn affirmation of her identity". Furthermore, he suggested that "'de Pizan' is not a family name as such, but an indication that she, Christine, is noble". However, in this essay I chose to keep this use of two names so as to stress the distinction between the author and her auto-characterisation.

⁹ Nadia Margolis, *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012).

¹⁰ Christine McWebb, ed., *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

¹¹ Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. and ed. Frances Horgan and Based on the French edition by Félix Lecoy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹² Mirrors for princes was a literary genre of political writing during the Middle Ages, which took the form of a textbook aimed to instruct a young king or prince on certain aspects of rule and behaviour by creating images of kings for imitation or avoidance. A few of Christine de Pizan's most famous texts are mirrors for princes: *The Epistle of Othea to Hector: Or the Book of Knighthood* (c. 1400), *Book of the Body Politic* (1404–1407), *The Book of Peace* (between 1412 and 1414).

¹³ See Kate Langdon Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 45.

¹⁴ Tsae Lan Lee Dow, "Christine de Pizan and the Body Politic" in *Healing the Body Politic: The Political thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Karen Green and Constant J. Mews (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 229.

¹⁵ The Hundred Years' War, 1337–1453 was a series of conflicts in Europe between the House of Plantagenet, rulers of England, and the French House of Valois, over the right to rule the Kingdom of France. Significantly the official pretext to the start of the conflict was an interruption of the direct male line of the Capetian dynasty, which led to an ambiguity about succession and the reinstatement of the Salic law, forbidding not only inheritance by a woman, but also inheritance through a female line.

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¹⁷ Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, ed. and trans. Kate Langdon Forhan, series: Cambridge texts in the history of political thought (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), xxii.

¹⁸ Langdon Forhan, *Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, 45.

¹⁹ Cary J. Nederman, "Living Body Politic: The Diversification of Organic Metaphors in Nicole Oresme and Christine de Pizan" in *Healing the Body Politic: The Political thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Karen Green and Constant J. Mews (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 33.

²⁰ Nederman, "Living Body Politic," 33.

²¹ See, Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651. The iconic frontispiece by Abraham Bosse, with creative input from Hobbes, features a composite image including a representation of the Sovereign King figuratively constituted by the individual bodies of the citizenry.

²² Nadia Margolis, *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 61.

²³ Two versions are kept at the Bibliothèque National de France, Paris BnF 1179, 1405, and Paris BnF 1178, 1413.

²⁴ de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies*, 11.

²⁵ For a detailed list of the women portrayed in the book, see:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Book_of_the_City_of_Ladies

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- ²⁶ Mark Cruse, “The Louvre of Charles V: Legitimacy, Renewal, and Royal Presence in Fourteenth-Century Paris”, *L'Esprit Créateur*, 54, no. 2, (2014): 19–32.
- ²⁷ Books of Hours were prayer books for lay people, containing cycles of prayers to be read at set hours throughout the day. They were often beautifully illustrated to complement the texts and focus devotion and became very popular in the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Les_Tr%C3%AAs_Riches_Heures_du_duc_de_Berry_octobre.jpg
- ²⁸ See, Christine de Pizan, *Book of the Deeds and Good Practices of the Wise King Charles V*, 1404. <https://blogs.bl.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2016/06/from-the-louvre-to-treasures-gallery.html>
- ²⁹ Judith L. Kellog, “Le Livre de la cité des dames: Reconfiguring Knowledge and Reimagining Gendered Space,” in *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altman and Deborah L. McGrady (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), 140.
- ³⁰ Margarete Zimmermann, “Christine de Pizan: Memory’s Architect”, in Barbara K. Altman and Deborah L. McGrady, eds., *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003).
- ³¹ For a full list of all the women mentioned in the book, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Book_of_the_City_of_Ladies
- ³² Penelope Haralambidou, City of Ladies, Domo Baal gallery, January–February 2020. <https://www.domobaal.com/exhibitions/112-20-penelope-haralambidou-01.html>
- ³³ Link to the digitised version of the manuscript at the British Library: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Harley_MS_4431
- ³⁴ Christine Sciacca, *Building the Medieval World* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum and London: British Library, 2010).
- ³⁵ For more on the use of architectural motifs in illuminated manuscripts see: Penelope Haralambidou, “Withdrawing Room on Vellum: The Persistent Vanishing of the Architectural Drawing Surface” in *Drawing Futures: Speculations for Contemporary Art and Architecture*, eds., Laura Allen and Luke Pearson (London: UCL Press, 2016), 82-89.
- ³⁶ For more on vellum and its use as an architectural drawing surface, see: Penelope Haralambidou, “Withdrawing Room on Vellum: The Persistent Vanishing of the Architectural Drawing Surface” in *Drawing Futures: Speculations for Contemporary Art and Architecture*, eds., Laura Allen and Luke Pearson (London: UCL Press, 2016).
- ³⁷ I obtained the three pieces of whole skin vellum from the last remaining producer in the UK, William Cowley, <http://www.williamcowley.co.uk/>
- ³⁸ The piece was exhibited as part of Works & Words 2019, 2nd Biennale for Artistic Research in Architecture, KADK <https://kadk.dk/en/calendar/works-words-2019>, see exhibition catalogue: https://kadk.dk/sites/default/files/downloads/event/workswords_2019_-_final_28.11.19_0.pdf
- ³⁹ Margolis, *Introduction to Christine de Pizan*, 71.
- ⁴⁰ The work was developed in close collaboration with research assistant John Cruwys.
- ⁴¹ This a further allusion to another example of Christian iconography: The Adoration of the Magi.
- ⁴² For an exploration of the significance of the different parts of the body in the Middle Ages, see: Jack Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies: Life, Death and Art in the Middle Ages* (London: Wellcome Collection, 2019).
- ⁴³ The design of the vessel was expertly realised by glassblower Graham Reed at Jaytec Glass.
- ⁴⁴ Although consisting of three parts, the arrangement of this paper is not equivalent to these tripartite structures: it is an analysis of two texts by de Pizan, described in the first two sections of the paper that inform and come together in my design-led work, which is the main driver of the research and presented in the third part, followed by a portfolio of images. The research work is not, therefore, primarily textual, but ‘figural’, see Penelope Haralambidou, “Allegory, Architecture and ‘Figural Theory’” in *Intellectual Birdhouse: Artistic Practice as Research*, eds., Florian Dombois, Claudia Mareis, Michael Schwab, Ute Meta Bauer (Cologne: Walther Koenig, 2011).
- ⁴⁵ <https://vimeo.com/444331957>
- ⁴⁶ As one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper has very poignantly commented, this ‘re-enactment’ of the relationship between Christine and the virtues might inform a different type of practice: “one in which the dynamic between collaborators is of a different (non-hierarchical) order. The author’s invitation to collaborate (in the manner of the virtues) is therefore a potential contestation of the traditional (gendered) role of the architect as master-builder. This, it seems to me, is where the question of a new collective might be addressed: in a mode of practice that both echoes the ‘equity’ the author describes as key to de Pizan’s philosophical position, and that contests models set out by Hobbes (and others) in which a sovereign (a head) determines collective action.”