



# Renaissance to Modern TAPESTRIES

in The Metropolitan Museum of Art

EDITH APPLETON STANDEN

COVER: Detail, fig. 13

INSIDE FRONT COVER: Detail, fig. 2

BACK COVER: Detail, fig. 1

INSIDE BACK COVER: Detail, fig. 10

FURTHER INFORMATION can be found in Edith Appleton Standen, European Post-Medieval Tapestries and Related Hangings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1985; references are given as "cat. no." for each tapestry reproduced here.

### THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART BULLETIN

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ISITORS TO the Metropolitan Museum are familiar with the splendid *Hunt of the Unicorn* medieval tapestries on exhibit at The Cloisters. Few may realize, however, that our collection of later hangings, dating from the early sixteenth century to the present day, rivals those of major European museums—in diversity and quality, if not in quantity. The Metropolitan's holdings are remarkable for their wideranging provenance, representing not only Flanders and France—the chief manufacturing centers—but also England, Italy, Germany, Poland, Russia, Ireland, Denmark, and other countries. Perhaps the most imposing are the large, typically Northern European hangings, which were made in sets and designed to completely cover the walls and often even the doors of grand rooms. The variety of subject matter in the tapestries is also extraordinary; included are scenes and images from the Old and New Testaments, history and mythology, allegory, romance, and poetry.

The range and the artistry of this medium are well represented by the thirty-four examples chosen for this issue of the *Bulletin*. This selection constitutes only a small part of the Metropolitan's rich collection of more than three hundred post-medieval tapestries and hangings. Begun in 1888 with the acquisition of three pieces, the collection grew appreciably in the 1930s, when the owners of many great American houses moved to more modern residences with lower ceilings that could not accommodate such large hangings. We are fortunate to own several complete tapestry sets, among them the spectacular wall hangings and upholstery designed for the Croome Court Room, which is part of the Museum's permanent galleries.

Many of the works illustrated on these pages are usually in storage and are seen only in temporary exhibitions or reproduced in publications such as this one. More will be displayed once the new European Sculpture and Decorative Arts wing opens in a few years, but the exhibition of these tapestries will always be limited because of their fragility and sensitivity to light and because of the great amount of space needed for their display. This *Bulletin* therefore offers a rare glimpse of the collection.

The text accompanying the illustrations is informed by the vast knowledge of the author, Edith Appleton Standen, associate curator in charge of the Textile Study Room from 1949 until her retirement in 1970 and now consultant to the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts. Readers who wish to learn more about the collection may consult Miss Standen's two-volume catalogue, European Post-Medieval Tapestries and Related Hangings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, published by the Museum in 1985.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO Director

A P E S T R I E S are made on looms. Their distinctive weave is basically simple; the colored weft threads interface regularly with the monochrome warps, as in darning or plain cloth, but as they do so, they form a design by reversing their direction when a change of color is needed. The wefts are beaten down to cover the warps completely. The result is a design or picture that is the fabric itself, not one laid upon a ground like an embroidery, a print, or brocading. The back and front of a tapestry show the same design. The weaver always follows a preexisting model, generally a drawing or painting, known as the cartoon, which in most cases he reproduces as exactly as he can. Long training is needed to become a professional tapestry weaver. It can take as much as a year to produce a yard of very finely woven tapestry.

Tapestry-woven fabrics have been made from China to Peru and from very early times to the present day, but large wall hangings in this technique, mainly of wool, are typically Northern European. Few examples predating the late fourteenth century have survived, but from about 1400 tapestries were an essential part of aristocratic life. The prince or great nobleman sent his plate and his tapestries ahead of him to furnish his castles before his arrival as he traveled through his domains; both had the same function, to display his wealth and social position. It has frequently been suggested that tapestries helped to heat stone-walled rooms, but this is a modern idea; comfort was of minor importance in the Middle Ages. Tapestries were portable grandeur, instant splendor, taking the place, north of the Alps, of painted frescoes further south. They were hung without gaps between them, covering entire walls and often doors as well. Only very occasionally were they made as individual works of art such as altar frontals. They were usually commissioned or bought as sets, or "chambers," and constituted the most important furnishings of any grand room, except for the display of plate, throughout the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century. Later, woven silks, ornamental wood carving, stucco decoration, and painted leather gradually replaced tapestry as expensive wall coverings, until at last wallpaper was introduced in the late eighteenth century and eventually swept away almost everything else.

Small tapestries can be made anywhere and even by amateurs, but sets of hangings—perhaps consisting of eight or ten pieces, each as much as fifteen feet high and thirty feet wide—require huge looms, many workers, and substantial capital investment; manufactories accordingly arose in prosperous localities, usually weaving centers, where they were at first under strict guild regulations. By 1500 Flanders, especially Brussels, had become the chief place of production, so it was to the head of a workshop there that Pope Leo X sent cartoons by Raphael of *The Acts of the Apostles* to be copied in tapestry for the Sistine Chapel in about 1515–19.

The Raphael cartoons had great influence on Flemish artists, who had only recently begun to put Italian Renaissance details timidly into their paintings. Now stupendous works of one of the greatest masters of the High Renaissance were spread before them; tapestry designers were especially impressed. Brussels tapestries with compositions that were strongly influenced by Raphael and other Italian masters, though usually designed by Flemings, were commissioned by rich patrons throughout Europe, and thanks to increasing wealth and prosperity, they began to be permanent fixtures in the many residences of a king or other great person. Some powerful rulers set up tapestry manufactories in their own countries, often with Flemish weavers to run them. These enterprises, in Italy, France, Germany, England, and elsewhere, sometimes produced series as fine as those made in Brussels, but they were seldom commercially viable and often rose or fell with the interest shown in them by their noble patrons.

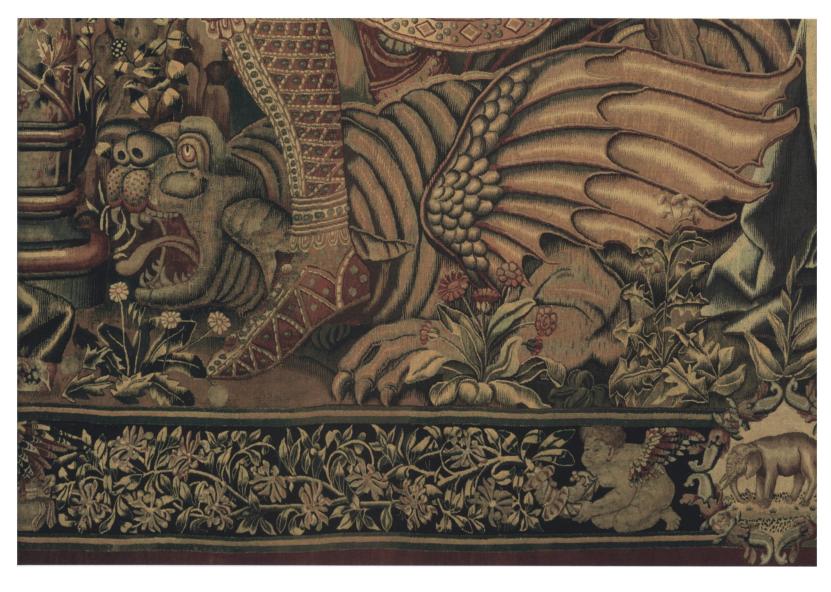
As great a change as that effected by Raphael's designs in Brussels in the early sixteenth century was brought about in Flanders by the cartoons made by Rubens a hundred years later. The tumultuous Baroque style, also used by other contemporary designers, gave rise to tapestries of unsurpassed grandeur, although it did not lend itself to the production of the picturesque details that constitute so much of the charm of earlier hangings. In the 1660s, however, the leading role in the creation of tapestries passed to France, where Louis XIV's great minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert set up three centers: the Gobelins in Paris, to supply furnishings for the king's palaces; Beauvais, to sell to wealthy customers; and Aubusson, to accommodate the moderately well-to-do. All produced tapestries in great quantity throughout the eighteenth century.

Gobelins tapestries in the seventeenth century, and very frequently in the eighteenth, were nobly solemn, suitable for royal palaces. Beauvais, on the other hand, had to please less awesome customers, and even before the death of Louis XIV in 1715 it was reproducing lighter, airier, more frivolous designs that already showed the style that would be called Régence after the king's successor. As furniture began to be upholstered in the second half of the seventeenth century, Beauvais initiated what would be one of its most successful undertakings, wall hangings with furniture covers designed to go with them. From Inverary Castle in Scotland to palaces in Peking and Turin, tapestry sets proclaimed the mastery of the designers and weavers of Beauvais. The many small workshops of Aubusson had no first-rate designers, but the weavers there followed the fashion and made cruder versions of similar designs for both wall hangings and upholstery, mostly for a local market and more cheaply.

Excellent designers are, in fact, as necessary as skilled weavers in the making of truly fine tapestries. It was thus fortunate that in 1736 the director of the manufactory at Beauvais picked François Boucher to supply his cartoons. He could not have made a better choice. The artist designed six tapestry series, each of between four and nine compositions, during the next thirty years; at least four hundred tapestries had been woven after these cartoons by the end of the 1770s, and all of them are masterpieces. They are among the greatest achievements of the Rococo and also demonstrate that Boucher, often considered primarily a creator of charming little pictures, was eminently capable of designing on a grand scale.

Boucher accepted a position at the Gobelins when he abandoned Beauvais, but he was then too busy and too famous to do much work for the weavers there. He did, however, give them paintings to become the centers of wall panels, with wide backgrounds, usually crimson, that imitate damask. Boucher's compositions appear as pictures in simulated frames hanging against the damask background; the surrounding areas and the borders have great swirling curves and an abundance of flowers, birds, and symbols of love and country life. By the 1760s, when the weaving of the first of these sets (now in the Metropolitan Museum; see fig. 28) was begun, the king of France could no longer support his manufactory adequately, so most of the tapestries of this type were sold to rich Englishmen; they were made up as "tapestry rooms," with every available wall surface covered. Flower-strewn furniture upholstery went with the hangings. A room so decorated provides a place where tapestries can be viewed today as all tapestries were once intended to be seen; the viewer is surrounded on all sides by splendor that can almost overwhelm him when he first steps into the room, yet on close inspection, he will find a wealth of delightful detail to surprise and absorb him.

By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the "tapestry room" was no longer fashionable; paper had replaced wall coverings of wool and silk. Tapestries, of course, were still made, but in the nineteenth century they often seem to have been produced mainly as individual works of art that astonish by their resemblance to oil paintings, tours de force woven with a remarkably large number of wefts per inch. In England during the second half of the century, William Morris attempted to reverse this trend and to bring tapestry weaving back to its true principles, those he considered to have governed it in the Middle Ages. He imitated medieval tapestries in both style and technique, using few warps to the inch, but he did not make sets; the original function for which tapestry is so admirably suited—completely covering the walls of a room and providing sumptuous surroundings for a life of pomp and splendor-could not be revived. Morris's example has been followed, though with less imitation of medieval style, by many weavers of the present century, whose coarsely woven cloths hang like single pictures and can be admired as examples of contemporary art.



Detail, fig. 1 (overleaf)

#### 1. Autumn

Flemish (Brussels), ca. 1525–28. Wool and silk. 14 ft. 7 in. × 24 ft. Cat. no. 2c. Gift of The Hearst Foundation, in memory of William Randolph Hearst, 1953 (53.221.3)

The complete set of four pieces called The Twelve Ages of Man in the Metropolitan Museum represents the ages of man considered as the equivalent of the four seasons and the twelve months of the year. In the third piece, Bacchus presides over July, August, and September and the autumn of life, the years from thirty-six to fifty-four. At the top of the tapestry are seasonal winds with fans or bellows; between them, in medallions surrounded by hourglasses, single figures are engaged in labors of the three monthsmaking hay, harvesting, and pressing grapes. The larger scenes below them show similar activities, though the harvest in the center is actually that supervised by Joseph in Egypt, as related in Genesis 41:48-49.

The mythological scenes depicted in the foreground on either side of the seated Bacchus refer to a man's concerns at the autumnal stage of his life. On the left, Aesculapius, a son of Apollo, is instructed in medicine by the centaur Chiron, so that he can become the greatest of all physicians; this scene is a reminder of the illnesses that come with middle age. On the right, Hercules accomplishes the last of his great deeds, plucking the golden apples of the Hesperides, shown as four beautiful maidens, and bestriding the conquered dragon; this tells us that after fifty-four a man's remarkable achievements are over. All this dense, complicated matter is explained in suitably abstruse Latin hexameters.

The design of the tapestry is still basically medieval, with closely packed figures and crowded compositions, but Renaissance details, such as the ornamentation of the columns on either side of Bacchus and the nude, winged children in the borders, have crept in.







# 2. The Last Supper

Flemish (Brussels), ca. 1520–30. Wool, silk, and silver-gilt thread. 11 ft. 11 in. × 11 ft. 6 in. Cat. no. 6. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.1915)

Four pieces are known of the *Passion* set to which this tapestry belongs, two of them in the National Gallery, Washington, D.C., and one in the Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris. They were certainly designed by Bernaert van Orley and were probably woven in the workshop of Pieter de Pannemaker. Van Orley was the leading tapestry designer of the first half of the sixteenth century in Brussels. The influence of the Raphael cartoons is unmistakable in all his work; the figures move easily in space and there are extensive distances behind them. All the architecture and ornamentation in *The Last Supper* is classical, except for the fabric stretched behind the table; this is in the style of a fifteenth-century Italian brocaded silk.

Christ holds out one hand to Judas, who is identified by the money bag tucked under his belt. Christ and the apostles have transparent gold halos. They wear simple robes and are barefoot; the fantastically dressed man pouring wine (inside front cover) is the innkeeper or a servant. In the upper right is a distant view of Christ washing the disciples' feet. The borders have intricate scrolls of lilies, honeysuckle,

fringed poppies, pomegranates, hazelnuts, and pea pods, with swirls of classical foliage, in red and gold.

The general scheme of the composition goes back to Dieric Bouts's altarpiece of 1464–68 in Saint Peter's, Louvain, though the influence of Leonardo is apparent in the windows at the rear and the perturbed gestures of the apostles. The most immediate source, however, was Albrecht Dürer's woodcut of 1510, reflected in the attitudes of the apostles and of the man pouring wine.

# 3. Grotesques

Flemish (Brussels), ca. 1550–60. Wool, silk, silver-gilt and silver thread. 5 ft. 5½ in. × 7 ft. Cat. no. 12a. Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.100.384)

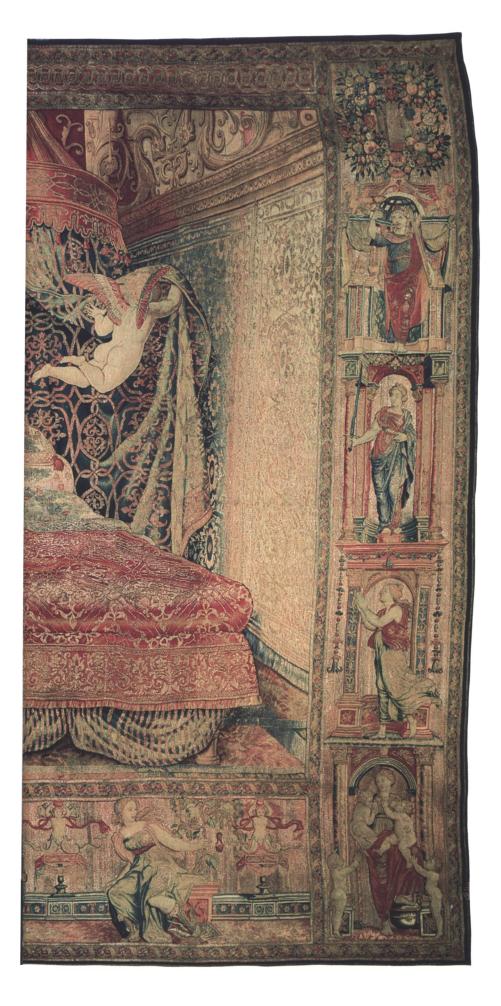
The panel is from a set of bed hangings of which another piece is in the Metropolitan Museum and four smaller ones are in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.

The designs of all these pieces are grotesques, so called because the classical prototypes of the style were found painted on the walls and ceilings of buried rooms in the House of Nero and other ancient buildings in Rome; as the rooms had to be excavated, they were called *grotte*, or caverns. When first uncovered, about 1480, the fantastic, extravagant patterns were eagerly seized on by painters and engravers. The designs provided authentic ancient Roman models that were an alternative, equally antique and thus correct, to the realistic, often austere, classical sculpture that represented ideal beauty in the Renaissance. Raphael and his workshop used variations of them when decorating the Logge in the Vatican, and artists all over western Europe produced their own versions. A lively fancy was all that was necessary; nothing need make sense.

The type of grotesque used in this tapestry is that invented by the Flemish artist Cornelis Floris. The design comprises what appears to be a metal framework—rigidly symmetrical, covering the whole field, and with a profusion of flowers, fruit, and ribbons twining in and out of the interstices and filling every possible space. Amid this luxuriance, a man and a woman sit placidly on what might be thought of as iron thrones, but which more closely resemble cages. Below, a sheep and a goat rest contentedly in their iron rings. In 1552, Floris published a set of prints called *Fantastic Chariots*, which are closely related to these bed hangings.







# 4. The Bridal Chamber of Herse

Flemish (Brussels), ca. 1550. Wool, silk, and silver-gilt thread. 14 ft. 5 in. × 17 ft. 8 in. Cat. no. 10a. Bequest of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.190.135)

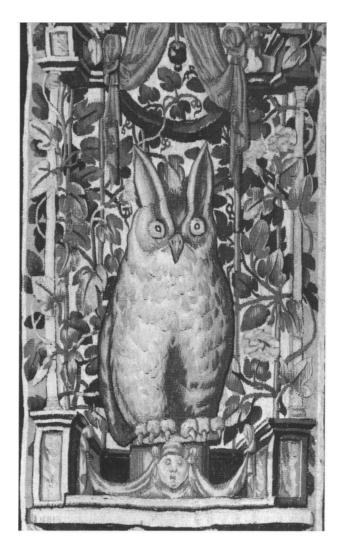
The tapestry series showing the story of Mercury's love affair with Herse consists of eight scenes, from the god's first sight of the beautiful daughter of Cecrops, king of Athens, to his final departure from the city. The set, woven in the workshop of Willem de Pannemaker, belonged to the dukes of Medinaceli in Spain. Two pieces are now in the Metropolitan Museum, two others are in the Prado, Madrid, and the rest are in private collections in Spain.

In *The Bridal Chamber of Herse*, the god has placed on a table his caduceus, or serpent- entwined staff, and rushes toward the modest Herse with such impetuosity that his winged sandals are slipping from his feet. Herse's flower-strewn bed is so covered with rich fabrics that only two small parts of the legs are visible; near one of them, a chamber pot is almost concealed by drapery. The walls of the room are hung with elaborately patterned silks.

The vertical borders contain figures of the Theological Virtues (Faith, Hope, and Charity) and one of the Cardinal Virtues (Justice). These are taken from the designs made in Raphael's workshop for the borders of one of The Acts of the Apostles tapestries and have their usual attributes: a cross for Faith, a prayerful attitude for Hope, children for Charity, and a sword or pair of scales for Justice. The lower border has less easily identified personifications, which include Temperance with a clock and Fortitude with a man's head on the point of a sword and a crutch under her feet, to show she has no need of it. None of the border figures has the slightest connection with the story of Mercury and Herse; this discrepancy between borders and central scenes is not uncommon in Renaissance Flemish tapestries. The weaver's mark is in gold in the lower right corner.

The designs of all the tapestries of the series are so Italianate that it is possible they were made by a follower of Raphael, though the figures of the lower border are probably Flemish.





Detail of border, Rachel and Bilhah with Dan, another tapestry from The Story of Jacob (1983.73.3)

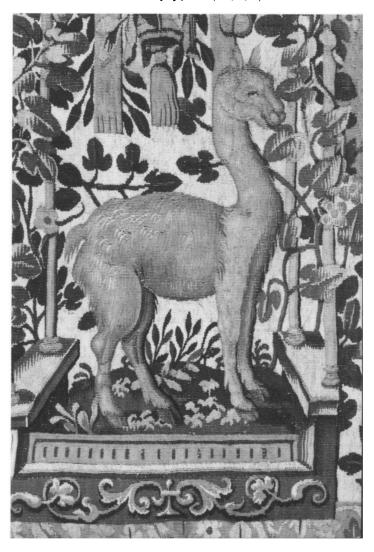
# 5. Esau Selling His Birthright to Jacob

Flemish (Brussels), ca. 1550–75. Wool and silk. 12 ft.  $8\frac{1}{2}$  in.  $\times$  8 ft.  $7\frac{1}{4}$  in. Cat. no. 17a. Bequest of Amy Warren Paterson, 1981 (1983.73.1).

Esau and Jacob were Isaac's twin sons by Rebekah; Esau was born first, so he had the birthright of an elder son. A "cunning hunter," he came home one day exhausted from the chase and sold his birthright to his younger brother in return for "bread and pottage of lentils." In the tapestry he points to heaven to witness his oath and clasps Jacob's hand as he prepares to receive the bowl of pottage. He is seen hunting in the distance, while by a tent on the right, Rebekah carries a pot to the fire; she is about to cook the "savory meat" with which Jacob will deceive his dying father, persuading him that it is the venison shot by Esau. He thus obtained the blessing of an elder son (Genesis 25:25–34;27:1–29).

Six pieces of *The Story of Jacob* are in the Metropolitan Museum; this is probably not a complete set, as some of the best-known events of Jacob's life, such as his vision of a ladder reaching to heaven, are not included. All the pieces except one have in their borders the double *B* that stands for Brabant-Brussels, and several have an unidentified maker's mark. The borders are basically similar but show a number of different animals among the foliage and strapwork.

Detail of border, Jacob Burying Idols under an Oak, also from The Story of Jacob (1983.73.6)





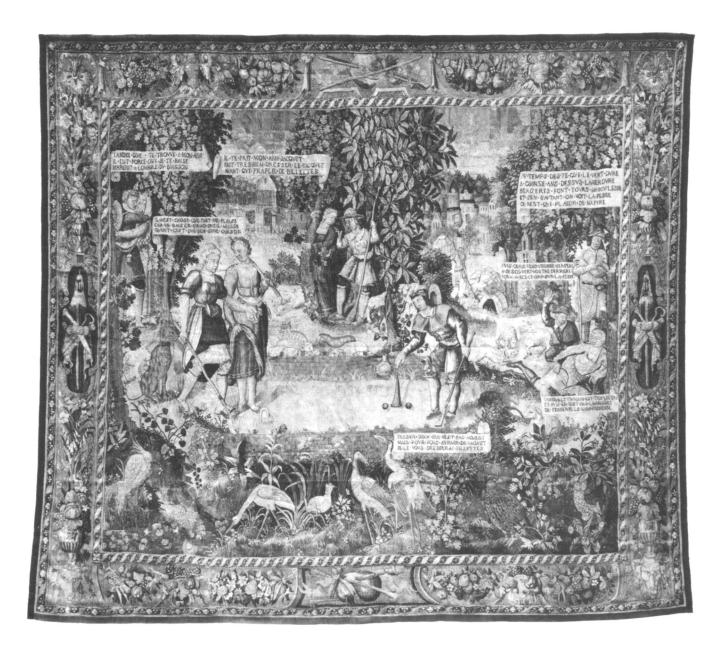
# 6. The Lewknor Armorial Table Carpet

Flemish (perhaps Enghien), dated 1564. Wool and silk. 7 ft. 6 in. × 16 ft. 4 in. Cat. no. 25. Fletcher Fund, 1959 (59.33)

The Lewknors were an ancient English family. In the center of the tapestry-woven carpet are the arms of Sir Roger Lewknor (1465–1543), who owned Bodiam Castle in Sussex, and his two wives; in the borders, all arranged to be right-way up when the carpet is placed on a table, are those of families related to the Lewknors. The date 1564 on the tablet in the lower right corner shows that the piece was commissioned by Sir Roger's widow or one of his children, probably from a Flemish weaver, though it has often been thought to have been made in England. The border, however, can be compared with those on tapestries known to be from Enghien.



The complete history of the carpet is on record. It was bequeathed to a cousin by Sir Roger's youngest daughter in 1634 and is mentioned in an inventory of Richard Lewknor the following year. A Sir John Lewknor described it in a memorandum of 1662, which was preserved with the carpet until recently, as "Ye Carpet of Arms now aged about 100 yeares." It belonged to a Lewknor until 1706 and then was passed on by inheritance, eventually to the Knight family, connections of Jane Austen, until it was sold in 1958.



#### 7. The Ball Game

Flemish (Bruges), ca. 1590–1600. Wool and silk. II ft. 5 in.  $\times$  12 ft. II in. Cat. no. 23. Gift of Charles Zadok, 1958 (58.62)

A frequently woven tapestry series tells the simple story of Gombaut and Macée, shepherd and shepherdess. The first four pieces show the occupations of young shepherds and shepherdesses at the ages of ten, fifteen, twenty, and twenty-five. The next three are concerned specifically with Gombaut and Macée, without mentioning their ages; the two are betrothed and married, and their flocks are attacked by a wolf. In the last tapestry of the series, Death pursues the whole group.

In *The Ball Game*, the second of the scenes, the most conspicuous activity is a kind of croquet, but the inscriptions and some of the goings-on indicate that the teenagers' main interest is in the opposite sex; like the balloons in a comic strip, the scrolls contain the words the characters say to each other in French verse, chiefly about kisses and other amatory gestures. Thus the boy who raises his hand above a girl on the right says (in a suitably free translation) something like: "Shepherdess, so fat and rosy, As bottoms up I hold you cosy, Smack your behind I am enraged to." She replies: "Gombaut, your hand is much too free! And then it is not courtesy, To smack a girl you're not engaged to."

The story is a pastoral, meant to fill the onlooker, who would belong to a very different social class, with a sentimental, somewhat wistful, admiration for a more natural, perhaps happier, way of life.

The borders show country objects, including bagpipes and shepherds' implements; in some tapestries of the series, they have the Bruges city mark, a weaver's shuttle.

# 8. Chasuble with the Gathering of the Manna

Netherlandish (probably Gouda), 1570. Wool and silk. 3 ft. 8 in.  $\times$  2 ft.  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in. Cat. no. 29b. Rogers Fund, 1954 (54.176.2)

Tapestry-woven ecclesiastical vestments such as this chasuble are very rare. A matching dalmatic, also in the Metropolitan, and a second dalmatic in the Los Angeles County Museum come from the same set. They must have been made for a member of the family whose arms appear on them, probably a van der Geer of Utrecht. The Latin inscription on the scroll, which can be translated as "We are bent, not broken, by the waves," refers to the bulrushes below. These plants are a symbol of the meekness of Christ, but the sentiment is also appropriate for a Roman Catholic priest in the troubled Netherlands of 1570.

Between the coats of arms is a scene of the Children of Israel gathering and eating the manna that fell from heaven to feed them when they were starving in the wilderness (Exodus 16: I-2I). This food foreshadows the Host of the Eucharist; the white circles at the top of the chasuble could represent either substance. The ground of the chasuble imitates an Italian brocaded velvet, an expensive fabric but a much more usual material for vestments than tapestry-woven wool. Some details are embroidered in silk.

# 9. Portrait of Augustus I of Saxony

German (Leipzig), 1550. Wool, silk, and silver-gilt thread. 8 ft. 10½ in. × 6 ft. 1 in. Cat. no. 137. Bequest of Susan Dwight Bliss, 1966 (67.55.97)





Augustus I is shown before he succeeded his older brother in 1553 as elector of Saxony. An inscription at the upper right gives his title (Duke of Saxony) in Latin, his birth date (August 1, 1525), and his age (twenty-four); since he was actually born in 1526, the tapestry was presumably woven in 1550. His complicated coat of arms is seen at the upper left; the central shield, striped black and gold, represents the duchy of Saxony.

The initials S.B. in the lower right corner are those of Seger Bombeck, a Flemish weaver, who emigrated to Saxony, probably because he was a Protestant, about 1543. He wove a number of portraits of German rulers and worked in Leipzig between 1545 and 1552.

A painting by Hans Krell, formerly in the Dresden Picture Gallery but destroyed in World War II, showed the duke in the same pose but against a plain background. Bombeck added the columns and the patterned background, a close copy of an Italian damask. The border of the tapestry is typically Flemish.



# 10. Table carpet with unicorns

Dutch, mid-17th century. Wool and silk. 5 ft.  $\times$  7 ft. 8 in. Cat. no. 39. Gift of P. A. B. Widener, 1970 (1970.250)

Because oriental rugs were very valuable imports to Europe in the seventeenth century, they are far more often seen on tables than on floors in paintings of the period. It is not surprising that tapestry weavers undertook to make substitutes in European styles. Dutch paintings often show a distinctive type of table carpet with a central medallion, surrounded by thickly packed flowers, fruit, and vegetables; similar tapestries are therefore believed to have been made in Holland. Like the Lewknor table carpet (fig. 6), this tapestry has a central panel, designed to lie on a table, and a border that falls over the sides. The large unicorn of the central medallion and the little ones of the borders suggest that the carpet was intended for an unmarried girl, as the animal is a symbol of virginity.





# 11. Scenes from the New Testament

Cushion cover. English (Barcheston), early 17th century. Wool, silk, and silver-gilt thread. I ft. 8 in.  $\times$  3 ft. 75% in. Cat. no. 119. Bequest of Mary Stillman Harkness, 1950 (50.145.56)

The Annunciation, Adoration of the Shepherds, and Adoration of the Kings are shown as three scenes under arches. The letters T.E.I. (*I* for *J*) in gold thread on the keystone of the central arch suggest that the cushion was made for a member of a Jones family known to have owned tapestries of the type called Barcheston or Sheldon. This manufacture, or cottage industry, was set up by a gentleman, William Sheldon, in Barcheston and other villages in western England about 1561. Many cushions were made, square ones for chairs and long ones for benches, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The religious subjects in the Metropolitan Museum tapestry are surrounded by a border with incongruous hunting scenes above and below; these are frequently found on Sheldon cushions. At the top, a rabbit and a boar are chased by men and dogs; below, a hunted fox has a stolen goose slung over its back and a stag escapes from hounds.



#### 12. The Annunciation

Cushion cover. Danish, late 17th or early 18th century. Wool and silk. 1 ft. 8½ in. square. Cat. no. 140. Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.100.59)

Peasant art is difficult to date. The primitive appearance of this cushion cover does not indicate an early period, but rather can be attributed to the repetition by an unprofessional weaver of a design handed down through many generations. The Dove of the Annunciation rests precariously in a tree between Gabriel and the Virgin. Through the copying of the design over time, the flowers, originally probably realistic, have become so simplified and distorted that they are not all recognizable, but they include what were most likely iris, foxglove, sunflower, carnation, fritillary, columbine, and tulip. Several similar cushion covers are known to have been made in Schleswig-Holstein or Denmark. All have the naïve charm of peasant art uninfluenced by the centers of tapestry manufacture.





# 13. The Drowning of Britomartis

French (probably Paris), ca. 1547–59. Wool and silk. 15 ft. 3 in. × 9 ft. 7 in. Cat. no. 40a. Gift of the children of Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, 1942 (42.57.1)

Eight pieces are known of the set to which this tapestry belongs, all showing scenes from the story of the goddess Diana. One other is in the Metropolitan Museum, one (a fragment) is in a private collection, one is in the Musée Départemental des Antiquités de la Seine-Maritime, Rouen, and the rest are owned by the French government.

The myth illustrated in The Drowning of Britomartis is an obscure one. Britomartis was a nymph of Diana who was pursued by King Minos of Crete and threw herself over a cliff into the sea to escape him. Diana thereupon invented the fishnet and gave one to some fishermen who hauled out the dead body. The goddess built a temple to contain it and to honor her follower. She is seen, a crescent on her forehead, in the center of the tapestry; Britomartis raises an arm in the water below. Minos, accompanied by Cupid, stands horror-stricken on a cliff in the middle distance as the body is taken into a boat. Further off, above, Diana gives the net to the fishermen and, on the left, Minos chases the nymph. Immediately under the panel that tells the story (in French verse) is the temple, with nets hung between the columns. The small scenes with Latin inscriptions in the upper and lower borders concern other episodes in the stories of Diana and Britomartis.

The set was certainly made for Diane de Poitiers, mistress of Henry II. In the upper corners, her arms have been replaced by those of a later owner. The *G*'s in the side borders stand for his name, Grillo, but the Greek deltas, the arrows, and the motto, which can be translated as "It attains whatever it seeks" (or perhaps "She gets what she wants"), are Diane's.

# 14. The Meeting of Antony and Cleopatra

Flemish (Brussels), ca. 1650–77. Wool, silk, silver, and silver-gilt thread. 13 ft. 7 in. × 17 ft. Cat. no. 32b. Bequest of Elizabeth U. Coles, in memory of her son, William F. Coles, 1891 (92.1.9)

The Metropolitan Museum has five pieces of a set showing scenes from the story of Antony and Cleopatra. They were designed by Justus van Egmont, a follower of Rubens, and woven in the workshops of Jan van Leefdael and Geraert van der Strecken; the name of the latter appears in the lower border of *The Meeting*.

The scene follows the description by Plutarch that had been turned into poetry half a century earlier by Shakespeare: "She sailed up the Cydnus [a river near Tarsus] in a vessel with a gilded stern, with purple sails spread, and the rowers working with silver oars to the sound of the flute in harmony with pipes and lutes. Cleopatra reclined under an awning spangled with gold, dressed as Venus is painted, and youths representing the Cupids in pictures stood on each side fanning her. In like manner the handsomest of her female slaves in the dress of Nereids and Graces were stationed, some at the rudders and others at the ropes" (*Life of Antony*, chap. 25). The Latin inscription says that Antony, sent to constrain her, is captured by love of her.

Both the central scene and the borders, where winged boys hurl themselves down into bowls of fruit or reach up to pluck pieces from the swags above them, display the violent movements, the tumultuous exuberance, and the grandeur of Baroque design.





# 15. Moses Striking the Rock

Italian (Florence), 1651–57. Wool and silk. 16 ft. × 17 ft. Cat. no. 142. Gift of the family of Frederick W. Rhinelander, 1920 (20.63)

The children of Israel, at one point in their sojourn in the wilderness, had no water to drink and complained bitterly. At God's command, Moses struck a rock and water rushed out (Exodus 17:1–7). The Latin inscription in the upper border of this tapestry can be translated: "The rock is obedient to Moses' blows; let the heart of man, irresponsive to God's gift, blush with shame."

The name of the weaver, Bernardino van Asselt, is written in the lower border. He worked in the mid-seventeenth century at the manufactory set up by the Medici grand dukes in Florence. Several sets of a *Life of Moses* were woven, panels of which are in Rome, Florence, Parma, Pistoia, and Jerusalem. The designer was Agostino Melissi.

The Florentine tapestry manufactory, which was founded in 1546 by Cosimo I, was among the most successful of the enterprises undertaken by rulers to rival the productions of Brussels. The heavy architectural border of the *Moses* set is typical of seventeenth-century Florentine tapestries.

# 16. Cupid and Psyche Bathing

French (Paris, Gobelins), 1692–1700. Wool, silk, and silver-gilt thread. 12 ft. × 14 ft. 3 in. Cat. no. 46c. Gift of Julia A. Berwind, 1953 (53.225.10)

A series of eight tapestries after drawings attributed to Giulio Romano in the French royal collection was designed for the Gobelins manufactory about 1684. The drawing that was the source for *Cupid and Psyche Bathing* has not been identified, but it must have been related to a similar fresco by Giulio Romano in the Sala di Psiche of the Palazzo del Te, Mantua. The tapestries were made for Louis XIV. Madame de Maintenon, the secret wife of his old age, objected to the nudity of the figures and had draperies added; one of them covers part of Cupid's body.

The Metropolitan Museum owns four pieces of the Mythological Subjects after Giulio Romano, all related to the frescoes in Mantua, and two of the parallel series, the Mythological Subjects after Raphael; there are also some fragments of the elaborate borders that were used on tapestries of these designs. The Giulio Romano pieces are from the second weaving, made in the workshop of Jean Jans the Younger; another piece of the set is in the Belgian Royal Collection in Laeken.

Although the sixteenth-century frescoes in Mantua and the late seventeenth-century tapestries are related, there is a striking difference between them. The former are serious, meaningful, sensuous, and powerful; the latter are dignified, but languid and elegant, with no function but decoration. The subject of *Cupid and Psyche Bathing* has no meaning, since such a scene does not occur in their story; the comparable fresco shows Mars bathing with Venus. This, like the other scenes in the Sala di Psiche, has been interpreted as bearing a precise, though abstruse, symbolic significance that is entirely lacking in the tapestry.





# 17. Upholstery for a chair

French (Beauvais), 1696. Wool and silk. Cat. no. 65. Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913 (14.40.781)

The Metropolitan Museum has three chairs upholstered in tapestry with grotesques on a yellow ground; pieces of similar upholstery are in museums and private collections in Sweden. All have monograms of C's and P's, which stand for Count Carl Piper, a prominent Swedish statesman of the late seventeenth century. The correspondence of the architect Nicodemus Tessin in Stockholm and Baron Daniel Cronström in Paris contains an account of Piper's tapestry purchases in the 1690s. He commissioned wall hangings of the Berain Grotesques (see fig. 18), which have disappeared, and, to go with them, a set of furniture covers for six armchairs and six side chairs; the frames and covers were made and shipped in 1696. The tall backs are typical for chairs of the period.

There is no indication in the Tessin-Cronström correspondence that tapestry upholstery made *en suite* with wall panels was a new idea at Beauvais, but no earlier documented examples have been published. The idea was an extremely successful one, and it was eventually copied even at the Gobelins.

#### 18. The Camel

French (Beauvais), late 17th or early 18th century. Wool and silk. 9 ft. 2 in. × 17 ft. 4 in. Cat. no. 64a. Gift of John M. Schiff, 1977 (1977.437.1)

One of the series most frequently woven at the Beauvais manufactory is known as the Berain Grotesques because the compositions are in the style of Jean Berain. It was designed by Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer, known chiefly as a flower painter, though he was here certainly influenced by Berain. Berain's grotesques have more solidity than those of fig. 3, made a hundred years earlier, but they are still playfully illogical and very light and airy compared to the calm dignity of Gobelins productions such as Cupid and Psyche Bathing (fig. 16).

A great advantage of this series for Beauvais was that the designs could be adapted easily to fit larger or smaller walls. Taller versions have a flight of steps leading to a formal garden at the base of the tapestries; shorter ones end immediately above the entablature of the spindly columns. Each group of figures could also be made as a separate, narrow hanging.

The Metropolitan Museum has five pieces of this set of the *Berain Grotesques* and one with another border. The borders of the set of five contain grotesques that are closer to the Roman originals than are those of the central panel. They also include little Chinese figures, examples of the chinoiseries so popular at the time; the reclining man (detail, below) is accompanied by porcelains of the type then being imported into France in substantial quantities.

Detail of border, fig. 18











# 19. The Concert

English (London), ca. 1690–1715. Wool and silk. 10 ft.  $\times$  15 ft. Cat. no. 127a. Gift of Mrs. George F. Baker, 1953 (53.165.1)

Except for the finest productions of the royal manufactory at Mortlake, English seventeenth-century tapestries can quite fairly be called provincial. Provincial works of art are usually simplified imitations of more sophisticated designs from centers of activity, but very occasionally they can become, though still marked by naïveté, wildly original. Such is the character of several sets of tapestries known as the Indo-Chinese Scenes, made in London in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The weaver is known, a man from the Netherlands called John Vanderbank, but the designer has not been convincingly identified; Vanderbank described the set of nine pieces he made for Kensington Palace as "designed after the Indian manner."

The Metropolitan Museum has two pieces of the Indo-Chinese Scenes; two others with the same compositions are part of a set of four at Yale University that belonged to Elihu Yale. The black grounds, never found on other tapestries, were presumably copied from those of oriental lacquered screens; many of these were imported into England in the seventeenth century and were sometimes used to cover walls. The floating islands with strange growths and groups of little figures were also suggested by the screens but are more incoherent and arbitrary than the original designs. Of the figures in *The Concert*, the rajah with his ladies on a rug and the two girls playing musical instruments at the lower right are from Indian miniatures, but the horsemen in a group at the left have Turkish headgear and beat Turkish drums. The smaller figures throughout are Chinese.





#### 20. Arabesques

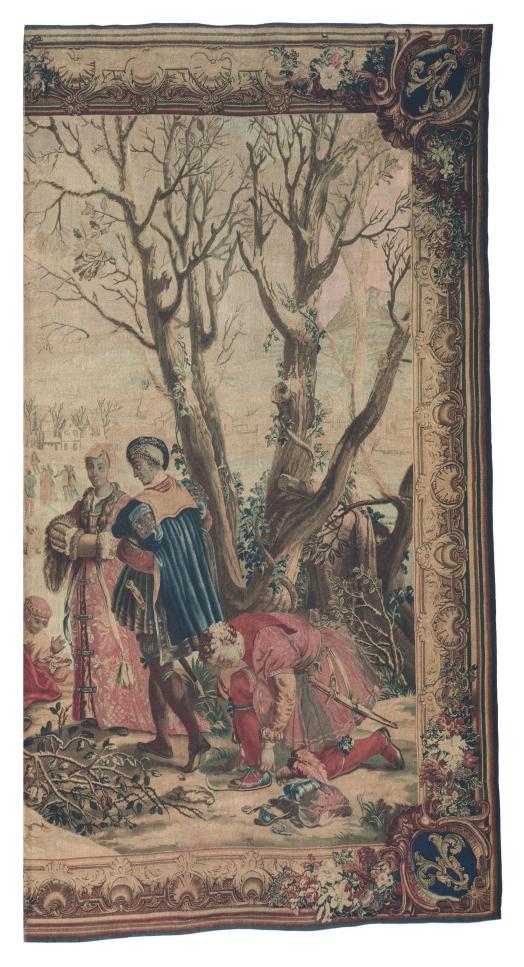
English (London), ca. 1720-30. Wool and silk. 8 ft. 10 in.  $\times$  9 ft. 7 in. Cat. no. 128. Gift of Mrs. Screven Lorillard, 1952 (52.195.22)

Some of a number of brilliantly colored tapestries with birds and flowers in a setting of bold arabesques and strapwork are signed "I. Morris," who has been identified with a London weaver, active in the 1720s, named Joshua Morris. The piece in this style at the Metropolitan Museum is from a set of at least three tapestries; one of the others is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Morris, who had workshops in Soho and Pall Mall, is best known for the lawsuit that was brought against him by Hogarth in 1728. The weaver commissioned some tapestry cartoons from Hogarth, but when they were delivered, he claimed they were impossible to work from and refused to pay. Hogarth sued him and won his case. The designer of *Arabesques* is not recorded, but he has been very plausibly identified as Andien de Clermont, a French artist who worked in England; similar birds, vases, and scrolls are found on ceilings he painted in several English houses. The style of the tapestries, anticipating the Rococo in its playful mixture of delicate scrolls and naturalistic flowers, is very French, marked by a feeling of lightness, precision, and gaiety.

Detail, fig. 19





#### 21. December

French (Paris, Gobelins), 1732–37. Wool and silk. 11 ft. 10 in. × 15 ft. 9 in. Cat. no. 50j. Gift of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1944 (44.60.10)

Louis XIV owned a set of much-admired sixteenth-century Brussels tapestries known as *The Months of Lucas*. The set was so called because it was thought, erroneously, to have been designed by the Flemish artist Lucas van Leyden. It was burned at the time of the French Revolution to recover the gold used in its weaving, but the Gobelins manufactory copied it several times between 1680 and 1770.

Most of these sets were made for the king, but there were also private commissions, such as a set that was woven in the workshop of Michel Audran for the Comte de Toulouse, a legitimized son of Louis XIV; ten pieces of it belong to the Metropolitan Museum, and the other two are owned by the Mobilier National, Paris. They have the count's arms in the upper borders: the Bourbon fleurs-de-lis with the smallest possible red mark of bastardy (barre de gules) between the lilies. Below are the chains of his three knightly orders—the Holy Ghost, Saint Michael, and the Golden Fleece-with an anchor for his function as admiral of France, head of the royal navy.

The skating scene in the center of December is copied fairly exactly from the original tapestry and shows people in sixteenthcentury costume. The older version was square, however, and the count needed a wide piece. Extra figures were therefore added on both sides by a designer who did his best to make them look like the others. He was not familiar with sixteenth-century clothes, however, so that the man on the far left seen from the back and the man on the right who kneels to fasten his skate (detail, p.38) wear fancy-dress, eighteenth-century imitations of the earlier costumes. The tapestry borders are completely in eighteenthcentury style.



Bourbon fleurs -de-lis, detail of border, fig. 21



Man fastening skates, detail, fig. 21



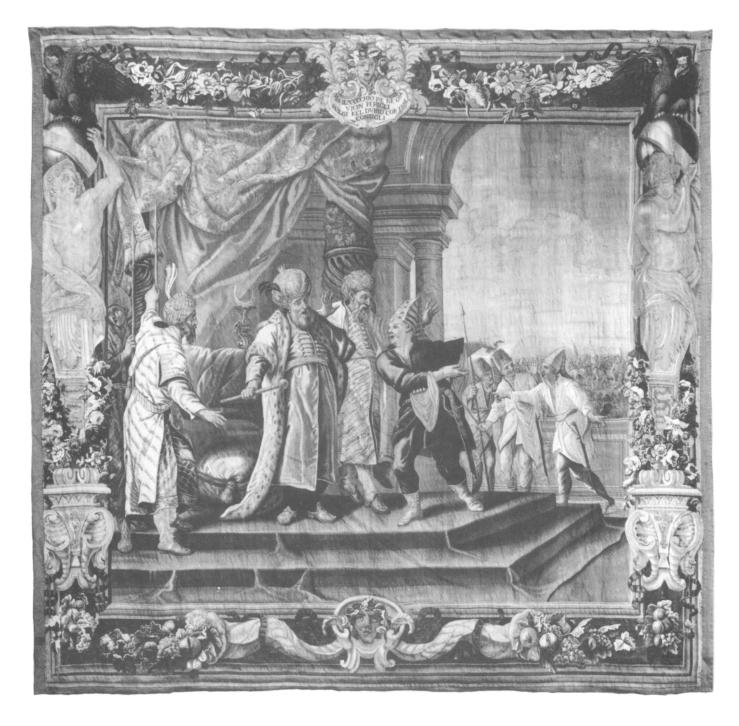
#### 22. Portrait of George II

Irish (Dublin), ca. 1732–38. Wool and silk. 2 ft.  $5\frac{3}{4}$  in.  $\times$  1 ft.  $11\frac{3}{4}$  in. Cat. no. 129. Gift of Irwin Untermyer, 1964 (64.101.1331)

The tapestry is in its original frame, which has inscriptions: one reading *The Worke-manship of John Vanbeaver Ye Famous Tapistry Weaver* and, below, a list of names of "Wardens" with the date 1738. The wardens were the officers of the Weavers' Guild of Dublin, to whom Van Beaver presented this portrait of the king of England and Ireland; it hung in their hall until the guild was abolished in 1840.

The gauntlets and plumed helmets of the frame are appropriate for the last English ruler to take part in a battle. The portrait is copied from a mezzotint of 1717 by John Smith after Godfrey Kneller, which shows George II as prince of Wales; the long wig would have been worn at the earlier date, but not in the 1730s. The same print was used as a model for the head of William III in the upper border of *The Battle of the Boyne*, a tapestry made for the Irish House of Lords (now the Bank of Ireland) by Van Beaver in 1728–32.

Tapestry weaving was introduced into Ireland by Robert Baillie, a Dublin upholsterer, who said in petitions of 1727 and 1732 to the House of Lords that he had brought in tapestry weavers from Britain, France, and Flanders; to judge from his name, Van Beaver was one of these Flemish weavers, perhaps the "famous face-maker" mentioned in the 1732 petition.



# 23. Aladin Hears of the Crusaders' Approach

Italian (Rome, San Michele), ca. 1739. Wool and silk. 12 ft. 2 in. × 11 ft. 6 in. Cat. no. 143a. Bequest of Elizabeth U. Coles, in memory of her son, William F. Coles, 1891 (92.1.14)

Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, a flamboyant papal nephew and a great patron of the arts, had the walls of an apartment in his Roman palace painted with scenes from Torquato Tasso's poem *Gerusalemme Liberata* (*Jerusalem Delivered*) between 1689 and 1693. In 1739 he decided to have these paintings reproduced in tapestry at the manufactory of San Michele, then under the direction of Pietro Ferloni. At the time of the cardinal's death in 1740, twelve pieces had been delivered and two more were still at the manufactory. Four are now in the Metropolitan Museum; others are in the San Francisco Opera House, the West German embassy in Vatican City, and the Edward James Foundation, West Dean College, in England.

The cardinal's arms of a crowned double-headed eagle, a privilege granted by the Holy Roman Emperor to the Ottoboni family, appear in the upper corners of the tapestries. In the center of the upper border of each piece is a quotation from Tasso's epic with a reference to the canto and line. Aladin is the name Tasso gives to the "king of Jerusalem"; in the tapestry at the Museum, a messenger arrives to give him the bad news that the Crusaders are at hand. The quotation is from the second canto. The king and the other Saracens wear oriental, somewhat Turkish, costumes.

#### 24. Bacchus and Ariadne

French (Beauvais), 1754–56. Wool and silk. 12 ft. × 17 ft. 6 in. Cat. no. 79b. From the Collection of James Stillman, Gift of Dr. Ernest G. Stillman, 1922 (22.16.2)

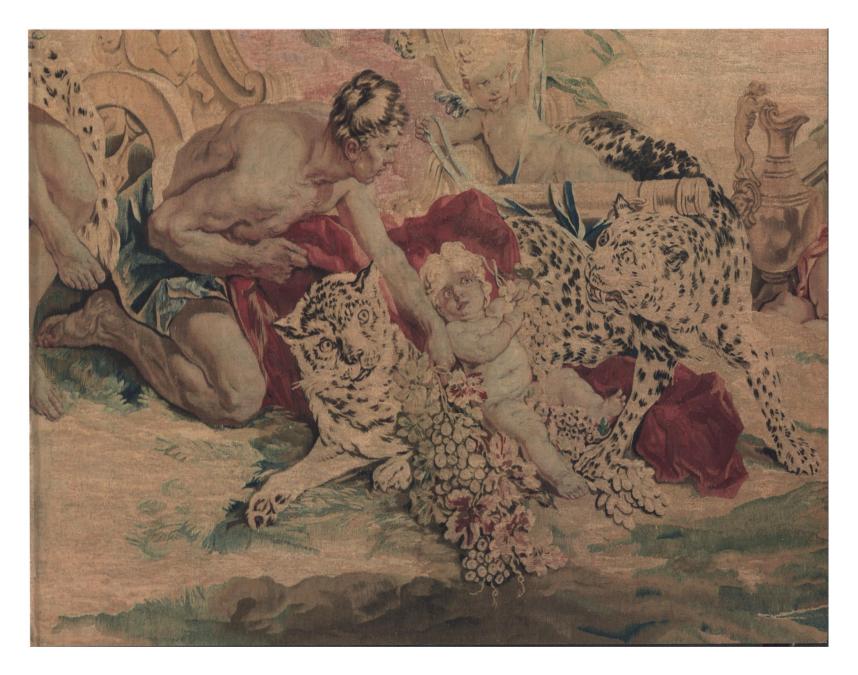
François Boucher provided nine cartoons for a Beauvais tapestry series called *The Loves of the Gods* about 1750. They were never all woven as a single set and must have been kept as a stock from which customers could choose as many subjects as they needed. One such customer was Baron Johann Hartvig Ernst Bernstorff of Copenhagen, the Danish ambassador at Versailles from 1744 to 1751 and then foreign minister at home. He started building his town house in 1752; one of his French friends, Louis-Antoine Crozat, baron de Thiers, acted as his representative in Paris, ordering wall coverings and upholstery from the Beauvais manufactory for a tapestry room, which was finished in 1757.

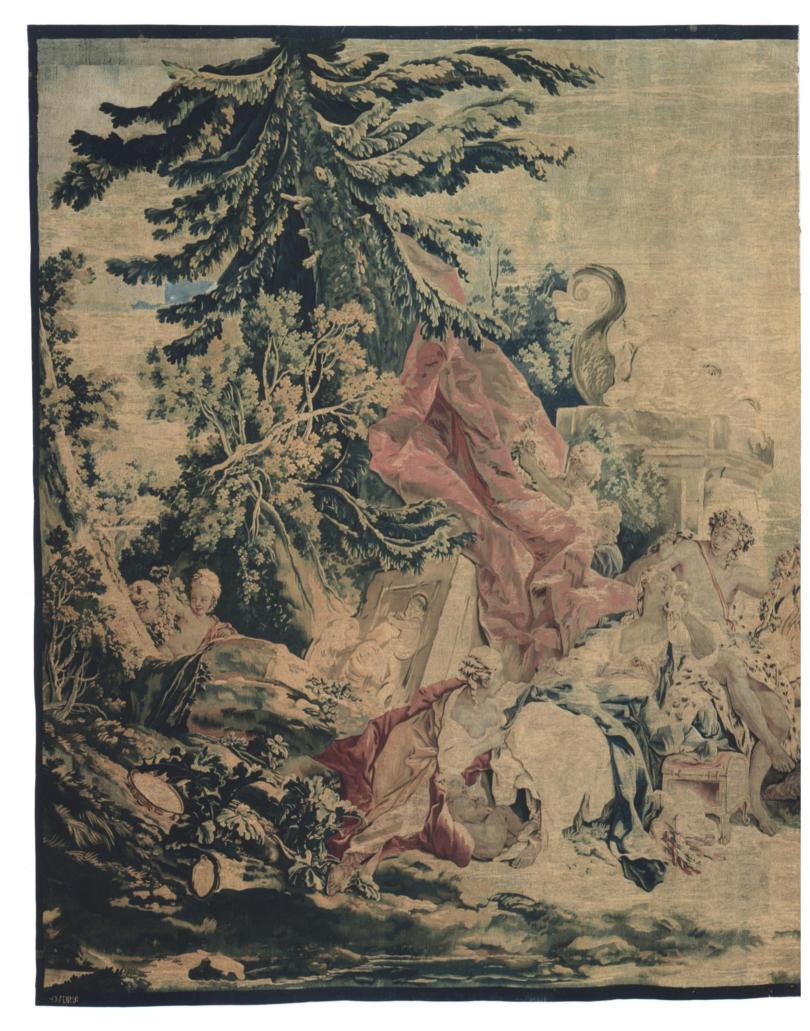
The room remained intact until early in the twentieth century; two of its four large tapestries were given to the Metropolitan Museum in 1922, but the others have not reappeared. The furniture (see fig. 25) has also been given to the Museum, though by another donor and not until 1935.

In *Bacchus and Ariadne*, the god has alighted from his chariot to console Ariadne, abandoned by her lover Theseus on the island of Naxos. The leopards of his chariot were designed by Jean-Baptiste Oudry, an animal painter as well as codirector of the Beauvais manufactory; one of them is based on a quick sketch that the artist must have made from life in the royal menagerie at Versailles. Oudry's name appears in the lower left corner of the tapestry; the A.C.C. in the lower right stands for André-Charlemagne Charron, the other codirector.

Boucher has here returned to the Italianate landscape with classical ruins and sculpture that he used in his first designs for Beauvais.

Detail, fig. 24







24. Bacchus and Ariadne

## 25. Upholstery for a chair

French (Beauvais), 1754–56. Wool and silk. Cat. no. 74. Gift of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1935 (35.145.11)

Jean-Baptiste Oudry supplied cartoons for large tapestries at Beauvais between 1726 and 1736, but even more important for the manufactory were his drawings of birds and animals. These were used to make upholstery designs for many years; sometimes the creatures illustrated the *Fables* of La Fontaine, but more often they were shown engaged in their natural activities. A book of these drawings is in the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass.; some of them are related to the central figures on the backs and seats of two sofas and twelve chairs in the Metropolitan Museum. This furniture was commissioned by Baron Bernstorff (see no. 24); his secretary wrote in an extant document that the covers were after Oudry's own designs. The baron's representative in Paris, the baron de Thiers, showed the set of hangings and furniture to friends in his house in the Place Vendôme in 1756.

The gilded frames have the mark of Nicolas Quinibert Foliot, whose workshop supplied much furniture to royal palaces between 1749 and 1776. They have been described as exemplifying "rococo invention at its most brilliant and varied" (James Parker, *Burlington Magazine* 115 [June 1973]: 371). Their emphatic curves, flower sprays, and shell forms are echoed in the bold scrolls and brightly colored naturalistic flowers and foliage that surround Oudry's animals; the designs are full of life and movement though never jerky or restless.



#### 26. The Collation

French (Beauvais), 1762. Wool and silk. 10 ft. 10 in. × 8 ft. 6 in. Cat. no. 78c. Gift of Mary Ann Robertson, 1964 (64.145.3)

Boucher's first cartoons for Beauvais were eight pieces of the series that was known as the Fêtes italiennes, or Italian Village Scenes. Of these, four were completed by 1736 but four were possibly not finished before 1742. The Collation, which belongs to the second group, shows young aristocrats having a picnic. The men are informally dressed; their short-sleeved jackets and floppy bows at the throat are suitable only for country wear and one even has a straw hat on the ground behind him. The servant with a napkin over his shoulder, who bends over them as he proffers a tray of refreshments, is much more formally attired. The rings in the chain held by the man on the left are *gimblettes*, pretzellike biscuits.

In 1736, Boucher had recently returned from Italy, and the first tapestries of the *Italian Village Scenes* are full of classical ruins, umbrella pines, statues, and urns. These Italianate features are much less common in the later cartoons and do not appear at all in *The Collation*, which has a purely French country setting.

The Metropolitan Museum owns a complete set of eight pieces of the *Italian Village Scenes*. This, the last set to be woven, was made for the Boulard de Gatellier family in 1762 and hung in their château near the Loire until 1898. Photographs taken of the interior of the château show that the tapestries were set into wood panels and had no borders. The furniture with Beauvais tapestry upholstery made to go with the hangings is now in the Louvre; the coverings have figures from Boucher's later series *The Noble Pastorale*.





#### 27. Mantle

Polish (Cracow), ca. 1755. Silk and silver-gilt thread. 4 ft. 9 in.  $\times$  7 ft. 11 in. Cat. no. 147. Rogers Fund, 1957 (57.94)

Although it is like a cope, this tapestry-woven silk mantle cannot be one, as it has no hood or orphreys and no indication of a fastening at the neck. It is clearly not a secular garment, however, and must have been made for a statue of the Virgin. The medallions contain her symbols, such as a city gate (the Gate of Heaven), a tower (the Tower of David), a mirror (the Mirror without Spot), the sun, the moon, a rose, the morning star, a lily, a cedar, and a fountain, all frequently used to suggest her qualities.

The attribution of the mantle to a Polish manufactory is based on its resemblance to a tapestry-woven chasuble in the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco that has inscriptions indicating it was made in Cracow for Andreas Stanislaus Zaluski, bishop of Cracow. Other tapestries made for the bishop are altar frontals in the Czartoryski Collection, National Museum, Cracow, which are signed by Franciszek Glaize; he had a workshop in Cracow from about 1747 to 1758.

The design of the mantle shows an attempt to use Rococo forms, but its rigid symmetry suggests a provincial manufacture and a date in the middle of the eighteenth century.

#### 28. The Croome Court Tapestries

French (Paris, Gobelins), 1764–71. Wool and silk. Wall panels: 10 ft. × 27 ft. 3 in.; 10 ft. × 17 ft. Cat. no. 57. Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1958 (\$8.75.2–12)

The most spectacular post-medieval tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum are the coverings for the walls and furniture of the Croome Court Room. These were commissioned by the sixth earl of Coventry from the Gobelins manufactory for his country house, Croome Court in Worcestershire, immediately after the end of the Seven Years War (the French and Indian War) in 1763. The general idea for the main panels was that of Jean-Germain Soufflot, the architect, then in charge of the royal manufactories; the central medallions are after paintings by François Boucher, so that the series is called the *Tentures de Boucher*; the wide decorative surrounds and some of the furniture covers are after Maurice Jacques, while others are after Louis Tessier; and all the tapestry was woven in the workshop headed by a man of

Scottish descent, Jacques Neilson. The plaster ceiling, marble mantelpiece, and all the woodwork of the room were designed by Robert Adam, whose cool, Neoclassical style contrasts strangely but attractively with the turbulent Rococo of the Gobelins. The furniture frames by the firm of Ince and Mayhew of London are also in the Neoclassical style.

Several wealthy Englishmen followed Lord Coventry's example and commissioned tapestries from the Gobelins to cover all the walls of a room and all the seating furniture; the architecture of the room was often also entrusted to Adam. Some of these tapestry rooms are still in the houses for which they were purchased. The Metropolitan Museum room remained at Croome Court until about 1900.





Left: Chair, Croome Court (58.75.18).

Above: Detail of wall hanging, Croome Court (58.75.3)

Boucher's paintings used for the large wall hangings show four mythological scenes representing the Elements. In one corner of the room (overleaf) are Pomona courted by Vertumnus in the shape of an old woman (Earth) and Neptune rescuing Amymone from a satyr (Water); the paintings are at Versailles and in the Louvre. The long-legged bird (above) amid the flowers of the border is a purple gallinule. The carpet is not the original floor covering, but an English one of the same period.



View of the Croome Court Room showing medallions with Vertumnus and Pomona (left) and Neptune Rescuing Amymone (right)





#### 29. America

French (Beauvais), 1790–91. Wool and silk. Wall panel 12 ft.  $\times$  15 ft. Sofa back 2 ft. 1 in.  $\times$  5 ft. 9 in., seat 2 ft. 8 in.  $\times$  6 ft. 8 in. Cat. no. 86a. Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Claus von Bülow Gift, 1978 (1978.404.1,5)

America is the feather-crowned woman in the clouds. Above her waves the flag of the young United States, tipped with a Cap of Freedom and held aloft by Liberty. Peace and Prosperity sit nearby, while France, holding the Bourbon shield and brandishing a thunderbolt, sweeps down upon a cowering Britannia and her felines. Above rises a nobly simple Tuscan column, to which a winged Victory is fastening a medallion with the head of Washington.

America is part of a complete set of *The Four Continents* owned by the Metropolitan Museum; as well as the four hangings, there is upholstery for two sofas and twelve armchairs. Each sofa represents two continents. On the back of the one illustrated, France sits beside Europe and holds out her hand to America; near Europe are a pile of her treasures, her symbol of a horse, and warriors in Roman armor. The seat has animals of the two continents, a parrot and a monkey for America and domestic animals for Europe, with the French cock conspicuously perched on a globe. Eighteenth-century furniture seats normally do not show human figures. There are three chairs for each continent, all with different upholstery.

The tapestries were designed by Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier the Elder and were woven when the Beauvais manufactory was under the direction of de Menou. Only two sets were made. The upholstery for this set was not mounted on frames until the middle of the nineteenth century. Louis XVI, for whom both sets were made, certainly never saw them. Soon after they were completed, the French Revolution brought about a temporary closing of the manufactory.

Sofa, America and Europe (1978.404.5)







## 30. Portrait of Countess Elizabeth Romanovna Vorontsova

Russian (Saint Petersburg), 1762. Wool and silk. 3 ft. 6½ in. × 2 ft. 10 in. Cat. no. 150. Gift of Alice F Van Orden, 1962 (62.105)

The weavers at the Gobelins manufactory were strictly forbidden to leave France, as it was thought that their training and skill should not be put to use for the benefit of a foreign country. The man whose name appears on the portrait of Elizabeth Vorontsova, Jean-Baptiste Rondet, was an officier de têtes, a highly paid worker who could weave the most difficult part of a tapestry, the figures, but he could not support his family in Paris. In 1756 he went to Saint Petersburg, where he worked at the imperial tapestry manufactory set up by Peter the Great. The records for 1762 list a portrait of Elizabeth Vorontsova. She was born in 1739 and became the mistress of Peter III, husband of Catherine the Great and czar for six months in 1762. She was a lady-in-waiting to Catherine, who described her as the plainest of all of them. When Peter was overthrown on June 29, 1762, she refused to leave him, but they were forcibly separated; she married another man later and lived until 1792.

As the tapestry portrait is dated 1762, it was presumably made before the end of June of that year. It is copied from a painting by an unknown artist, probably a Russian.

## 31. Portrait of Napoleon I

French (Paris, Gobelins), 1808–11. Wool, silk, and silver-gilt thread. 7 ft. 3½ in. × 4 ft. 9½ in. Cat. no. 62. Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1943 (43.99)

The Gobelins, like all the luxury manufactories in France, went through very difficult times during the French Revolution and immediately after it. Napoleon, however, was determined to revive all the enterprises as well as the splendor of the monarchy, and at the Gobelins this could be done while simultaneously glorifying himself. One of his commissions in 1808 was for tapestry portraits of himself and of the empress Josephine in coronation robes to be copied from paintings by François Gérard.

Gérard's portrait exists in several versions. The tapestry is probably after one in the Louvre, to which it corresponds with great exactness. In this portrait the emperor has taken over all the pomp and circumstance of the Bourbon kings—an imitation of the appearance of his predecessors that no modern dictator would think advisable.

The Gobelins records describe three weavings of the full-length portrait of Napoleon. This piece, the first woven, was given by Napoleon to Jean-Jacques-Régis de Cambacérès, archchancellor of the Empire, in 1811. The original frame of the tapestry records this gift.

## 32. Still Life, Autumn

French (Beauvais), 1846. Wool and silk. 2 ft. 1 in. × 1 ft. 9 in. Cat. no. 89. Bequest of Julie Heidelbach, 1932 (35.116.6)

Grau de Saint-Vincent, director of the Beauvais manufactory, wrote in a letter of 1845 that he had seen four little paintings of flowers representing the seasons by an artist called Grönland at a dealer's in Paris; he was thinking of borrowing them so that they could be copied in tapestry, as they would make pretty gifts. Theude Grönland, whose name appears on the tapestry, came from Schleswig-Holstein and studied in Copenhagen but worked for twenty-five years in Paris; he exhibited small paintings called *The Four Seasons: Fruits and Flowers* at the Paris Salon of 1845. One of them must have been copied for this tapestry. Here, Bacchus is still presiding over autumn, as he is in the first tapestry of this *Bulletin*.

Rigobert Milice, who signed the tapestry as the weaver with the date 1846, was head of a workshop at the Beauvais manufactory, where he received a silver medal in 1834. His technical skill was clearly very great; at a distance the *Still Life*, which is extremely finely woven, could be taken for an oil painting. This is certainly the effect Milice was seeking, and it must have delighted the purchaser.





#### 33. Greenery

English (Merton Abbey), 1915. Wool and silk. 6 ft.  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in.  $\times$  15 ft. 5 in. Cat. no. 136. Purchase, Edward C. Moore, Jr. Gift, 1923 (23.200)

William Morris took all the decorative arts under his wing. He set up a tapestry workshop at Merton Abbey, on the river Wandle, near Wimbledon, in 1881, as part of the plant of the firm of Morris and Company. As in the other manufactures undertaken by the firm, the Merton Abbey tapestry workshop imitated medieval techniques and style; *Greenery* is coarsely woven and rather self-consciously resembles an early verdure—or "forest work," to use the seventeenth-century English term—in its tightly packed design with little depth and somewhat mannered decorative quality.

The scrolls are like those found on medieval or Early Renaissance tapestries (see



fig. 1); the verses of the inscriptions in Gothic letters are by Morris, and each is related to the pear, chestnut, or oak tree shown below it. The tapestry was designed by Morris's pupil and chief assistant, John Henry Dearle. The cartoon was first woven in 1892 by John Martin and William Sleath for Clouds, a house owned by Percy Wyndham that was entirely furnished by Morris and Company; the tapestry is now in a private collection in Scotland. The Metropolitan Museum has the only other weaving, made in 1915 by John Martin. It was shown in an exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Society in London in 1916.



## 34. Comme par miracle

French (Aubusson), 1945. Wool. 8 ft. 1½ in. × 10 ft. 7 in. Cat. no. 104. Gift of Seward W. Eric, 1951 (51.193)

Just as William Morris reacted strongly against Victorian techniques and styles, so in this century a group of Aubusson designers and weavers has attempted to make tapestries that reflect contemporary artistic ideas. Outstanding in this group were Jean Lurçat, the designer of *Comme par miracle*, whose name is seen at the lower left, and François Tabard, the weaver, whose mark is at the lower right.

Inscribed along the bottom of the tapestry is a quotation from a poem by Jacques Prévert, which can be translated: "So, like a miracle, migrating birds pass, they pass, like a miracle." The long poem, which was not published until 1946, describes a man leaving his house at daybreak, picking and eating an orange, throwing away the peel, and returning to his wife, who is still in bed. They make love, while migrating birds pass high in the sky above them; outside, a priest, his nose in his breviary, slips on a piece of the orange peel. The words "comme par miracle" are repeated throughout the poem.

A very similar tapestry made in 1944 shows a table in the same position as the one in *Comme par miracle*, but the sun is underneath it. It has been suggested that this composition symbolizes occupied France. If this is so, *Comme par miracle*, with the sunlight pouring through the doorway on the right, as well as expressing the radiant joy of Prévert's poem, may be a symbol of the Liberation.

Comme par miracle was woven four times. The example in the Metropolitan Museum is the second weaving; the others are in private collections.



