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KUNST
HISTORISCHES
MUSEUM
WIEN

Threads of power

JULY 14 TO SEPTEMBER 20, 2015

»It seems a thankless task to describe the wealth and the beauty of this collection (the Kunsthistorisches Museum's Collection of Tapestries), thankless because few realize or can realize how moving and wonderful these woven artworks are. These are not merely the joys experienced by an art historian who suddenly discovers a treasure trove of rich but totally unknown material, they offer the purest and highest artistic enjoyment that will surely also enchant a complete layman.«

From: Ludwig Baldaß, *Die Wiener Gobelinsammlung*, Vienna [1920]

INTRODUCTION

The use of luxurious textiles to decorate significant architectural spaces is documented for some of the earliest civilisations. In the Middle Ages precious textiles were predominantly found in the courtly sphere, where they served to display the wealth and status of the ruler and the nobility. Woven tapestries were an especially popular form of textile decoration. Their luxurious character derived above all from the use of precious materials such as gold and silver thread, silk and wool, and from the fact that they took several years to make and were thus costly to manufacture.

The subjects depicted in these tapestries were carefully chosen to reflect the stately character of this narrative medium as well as its use as an instrument of propaganda. Courtly life was a popular subject, as were events from history, mythological themes or stories from antiquity, together with episodes from the Old and New Testaments and the lives of the saints. Depicted in almost life size and occasionally even in contemporary costume, the protagonists served as role models, functioning as representatives of a courtly elite to which the owners of such tapestries themselves belonged. Today, these monumental wall hangings provide us with important evidence of life at court and the ideals it propagated.

It was Brussels above all that made a name for itself as the centre of tapestry production

during the sixteenth century. The designs for these monumental textiles were supplied by renowned artists such as Barend van Orley, Pieter Coecke van Aelst, Michiel Coxcie and Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen. A number of their works can be seen in the exhibition. The purchasers of these textiles came from elite circles who could afford such precious artefacts. They included members of the Habsburg dynasty. The exceptional purchases of tapestries made by Emperor Charles V (1500–1558) are legendary, and set a correspondingly high standard for the other European courts. They also attest to the contemporary status of tapestry, which at that time was more highly esteemed than painting.

This booklet was printed with the kind support of the Friends of the Kunsthistorisches Museum. It offers detailed descriptions of most of the exhibited objects you will see in the galleries.

PAUL THE APOSTLE BEFORE KING AGRIPPA

Series title: *Scenes from the Life of Paul the Apostle*

Design: Pieter Coecke van Aelst, c. 1529/30

Woven under the direction of Paulus van Oppenem (?), Brussels, c. 1535

Wool, silk, metal thread
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Kunstkammer,
inv. no. T III/3

Based on the accounts in the New Testament, depictions from the life of Paul the Apostle were among the most popular tapestry projects in the sixteenth century, with no fewer than nine editions being executed over a period of around thirty years. The French king Francis I, Henry VIII of England and Mary of Hungary all owned one of these series. The tapestry exhibited here belongs to a suite that once belonged to dukes of Lorraine.

As a persecutor of the Christians, Saul of Tarsus (as Paul was known before his conversion) was present at the stoning of Stephen, who was later canonised as a saint. Paul's encounter with the risen Christ led to his conversion, from which point on he devoted himself to spreading the Gospel. In the tapestry Paul stands in the foreground on the steps of the loggia where the tribunal is taking place. Opposite him on a throne is King Herod II Agrippa flanked by his sister, Queen Berenice, and the prefect Porcius Festus.

1 A

PREPARATORY
STUDY FOR THE
TAPESTRY *PAUL THE
APOSTLE BEFORE
KING AGRIPPA*

Pieter Coecke van Aelst,
c. 1529/30
Pen in brown ink on
brown-tinted paper,
washed, white highlights
Vienna, Albertina, inv.
no. 7851

This preparatory study for the tapestry displayed in the same room bears the signature Pieter van Aelst on the base of the foremost column. Due to the production process, the tapestry reproduces the study in lateral inversion. It also reduces the composition and focuses solely on the central scene, with the massive loggia in which the tribunal is taking place dominating the pictorial space. Here Coecke's early interest in classical architecture is clearly reflected.

The scene depicted in the sketch takes place after the arrival of Paul in Caesarea (Cappadocia) following his sojourn in Jerusalem, and in contrast to the tapestry includes two further incidents. The narrative begins on the right in the background, where Paul meets the Roman procurator of Judea, Antonius Felix, and his wife Drusilla. In the background on the left the episode concludes with Paul's embarkation for Rome.

THE MEETING OF
ABRAHAM AND
MELCHIZEDEK

Series title: *History of
the Patriarch Abraham*

Design: Pieter Coecke
van Aelst, attr.,

c. 1537/38

Woven under the
direction of Willem
de Kempeneer and
an unidentified
manufactory, Brussels,

c. 1550

Wool, silk

Vienna,

Kunsthistorisches

Museum, Kunstkammer,

inv. no. T II/4

As the founding father of Israel, Abraham is one of the most important figures in the Old Testament. His unswerving faith together with his loyalty and strength of character made him an exemplary role model. The English king Henry VIII possessed a set of tapestries devoted to the patriarch Abraham. The suite in Vienna bears the arms of Charles, Duke of Chevreuse (1524–1574), a cousin of Duke Charles III of Lorraine.

The narrative begins on the left in the background with the military attack to free Lot, Abraham's nephew, who had been taken prisoner by the king of Elam. At the centre stand Abraham and Melchizedek of Salem (Jerusalem), the 'king of righteousness', who raises his right hand in a gesture of blessing. Exhausted by the fighting, the warriors are being tended to in the middle ground on the left.

THE GIBEONITES
URGE JOSHUA TO
CONCLUDE A COVE-
NANT

Series title: *Depictions
from the Book of Joshua*

Design: Pieter Coecke
van Aelst, before 1538
Woven under the
direction of Jan
Dermoyen and/or Gielis
Imbrechts, Brussels,
before 1544

Wool, silk, metal thread
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Kunstammer,
inv. no. T XIX/5

The Book of Joshua, the sixth book of the Old Testament, relates the military conquest of Canaan by the Israelite tribes. The tapestry displayed here depicts the covenant concluded between Joshua and an embassy of the Gibeonites. The latter appeared in ragged clothing, carrying mouldy bread and torn and mended wineskins to suggest that they had come from far away, in order to persuade Joshua to conclude a covenant with them. When Joshua arrived in Gibeon three days later and discovered the deception he was forced to spare the Gibeonites since he was now bound by the oath he had sworn.

Probably once owned by Emperor Charles V, the Vienna Joshua series is the only example of this subject to have been preserved. Paradoxically, the prestigious character of the textile medium is expressed in the ragged clothing of the Gibeonites which has been executed in a lavish profusion of precious metal threads.

SLOTH (ACCIDIE)

Series title: *The Seven Deadly Sins*

Design: Pieter Coecke van Aelst, c. 1533/34

Woven under the direction of Willem de Pannemaker, Brussels, c. 1548/49

Wool, silk, metal thread
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Kunstammer,
inv. no. T XXXV/5

In depictions of the Deadly Sins, the viewer is eloquently confronted with the consequences of a life of vice. The didactic spirit is clearly evident in the tapestry exhibited here. The personification of Sloth sits on a triumphal car drawn by two listless donkeys. The procession is led by Somnus, the god of sleep, who bears a snail on his banner. Three victims have fallen beneath the wheels of Sloth's chariot. The two monumental figures of an older and younger man in the foreground on the right may represent Alexander the Great and his tutor Aristotle, who preserved the young Macedonian prince from a life of sloth and excess.

The *editio princeps* of this series belonged to King Henry VIII of England. The set preserved in Vienna is an edition made at a later date from the same cartoons.

CES MOEURS
ET FACHONS DE
FAIR DE TURCZ
(CUSTOMS AND
FASHIONS OF THE
TURKS)

Design: Pieter Coecke
van Aelst
1553, published by
Mayken Verhulst
Woodcut
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Kunstkammer,
inv. no. KK 6624,
no. 134

Created by Pieter Coecke van Aelst, this woodcut frieze was probably intended as a basis for a set of tapestries. However, these were never executed. Coecke drew his inspiration from a journey he undertook to Constantinople in 1533, probably at the request of several Brussels manufactories, in an effort to persuade Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent to purchase tapestries.

Reading the frieze from left to right, it begins with a depiction of a military camp at night. The figure at the fore-edge of the picture in the centre is possibly a self-portrait of the artist. From the fourth scene onwards, van Aelst devotes himself entirely to the world of the Ottomans, depicting Sultan Suleiman on horseback against the backdrop of Constantinople in the final segment. An almost identical exotic figure was used as a stock image in the tapestry depicting Sloth that is also exhibited in this room (no. 4).

VERTUMNUS AP-
PROACHES POMONA
DISGUISED AS A
TENDER OF VINES

Series title: *Vertumnus
and Pomona after*

Ovid's Metamorphoses

Design: Pieter Coecke
van Aelst, Brussels,

c. 1544

Made in Brussels,

between c. 1548 and 1575

Wool, silk, metal thread

Vienna,

Kunsthistorisches

Museum, Kunstkammer,

inv. no. T XX/4

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* exerted a great fascination on the cultured elites and were quoted extensively in the visual arts from the Middle Ages to the Baroque. Book XIV contains the story of Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit trees and orchards, who shunned men. She was admired by Vertumnus, the god of seasons, who could change shape at will. He appeared before her in eight different shapes – here as a tender of vines, for example – but she rejected his advances. Not until he assumed the shape of an old woman and told her an admonitory story was he able to soften her heart, whereupon he revealed his true identity to her.

The particular appeal of this series lies in the way the episodes are set in Renaissance garden landscapes. When all nine tapestries are hung in one room, they create the illusion of an indoor landscape setting.

DANAË

Series title:

Mythological

Scenes, the so-called
Fontainebleau Series

Design: Francesco

Primaticcio

Cartoon: Claude

Badouin inter alia,

1539/40

Made by Jean Le Bries,

Pierre Le Bries inter
alia, Fontainebleau,

1540/47

Wool, silk, metal thread

Vienna,

Kunsthistorisches

Museum, Kunstammer,

inv. no. T CV/1

The Great Gallery at the Château of Fontainebleau, 70 km south of Paris, was designed mainly by the Italian artists Francesco Primaticcio and Rosso Fiorentino between 1528 and 1530. In order to surround himself with this fashionable modern setting wherever he happened to be, Francis I had part of its architecture transferred into the medium of tapestry, including the frescoes, stuccowork and wooden panelling of the gallery. Just like the gallery itself, the tapestries were intended to idealise Francis I as a man and as French king, and to legitimise his universal claim to rule. This is the only example in sixteenth-century tapestry art of an extant interior architectural structure serving as a model for wall hangings.

You can view this tapestry in the Kunstammer of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, room XXIX.

THRONE BALDACHIN

Design: Hans Vredeman de Vries and Michiel Coxcie (figures)
Woven under the direction of Master FNVG, Brussels, c. 1561
Dated 1561
Wool, silk, metal thread
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstammer,
inv. no. T XLV/1-8

An integral part of the ceremonial associated with the ruler was the canopy of state. As a rule it dominated the room, drawing all eyes towards it, and served to identify the ruler without question. This exhibit is one of the rare examples executed in tapestry technique to have been preserved in its entirety.

Enthroned at the centre of the illusionistic architecture designed by Hans Vredeman de Vries is Pluto, god of the Underworld, and his wife Proserpina, the daughter of Ceres. The two legends refer to the myth of the creation of the seasons caused by Pluto's abduction of Proserpina to the Underworld. Accordingly, the four roundels contain scenes representing the four seasons.

JUNE - MERCURY
WITH THE SIGN OF
CANCER

Series title: *The Twelve Months*, so-called *Grotesque Months*

Design: after 1556

Made in Brussels,

c. 1560/70

Wool, silk, metal thread

Vienna,

Kunsthistorisches

Museum, Kunstkammer,

inv. no. T XI/6

The eternal relevance of the seasons and months more or less predestined them to become the subject of tapestries made in suites of four or twelve. During the sixteenth century, a particular form of representing the months developed which came to known as the Grotesque Months, of which the present object is an example. It is distinguished by its striking red background and grotesque motifs. The month of June stands under the aegis of the Roman god Mercury, who as a symbol of his patronage over learning is accompanied by a cockerel. Once customarily depicted with a plethora of attributes, here the messenger of the gods is identified solely by his winged helmet and caduceus. In his left hand he holds the sign of the zodiac for Cancer.

The small scenes placed to the right and left of Mercury represent sheep shearing, which Mercury is said to have invented, and the cherry harvest.

Further tapestries in this series can be seen in the painting by Josef Jungwirth in Cabinet 14 (no. 20).

FORTITUDO

Series title: *The Seven Virtues*

Design: Michiel Coxcie,
c. 1545

Woven under the
direction of Frans
Geubels, Brussels,
before 1549

Wool, silk, metal thread
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Kunstammer,
inv. no. T XVII/7

The series of Virtues preserved in Vienna includes Faith, Hope, Charity, Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude, the latter of which is displayed here.

At the centre of the composition sits the personified Fortitudo, armed with helmet, shield and cuirass. At her feet lies the lion that is guarding her, a common symbol of strength. On the left in the surrounding landscape is Jael, who as related in the Bible (Book of Judges) is using a mallet to drive a tent peg into the skull of Sisera as he sleeps. On the right is Samson, another figure from the Book of Judges, depicted destroying the temple of the Philistines. In the background Judith can be seen cutting off the head of the Assyrian general Holofernes, as recounted in the Book of Judith. Although the exploits of the protagonists in these subsidiary scenes may seem barbaric, they were regarded as biblical heroes who were worthy of emulation. The owners of these objects were duly invested with their courage and fortitude.

HERCULES STRIKING OFF THE HEADS OF THE LERNEAN HYDRA WITH HIS CLUB

Series title: *The Labours of Hercules*

Design: c. 1550/60

Woven under the direction of Michiel van Orley, Oudenaarde, c. 1550/65

Wool, silk

Vienna,

Kunsthistorisches

Museum, Kunstkammer,

inv. no. T CI/2

The exploits of the ancient Greek hero Hercules were a popular subject in Flemish art from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. The owners of such sets of tapestries identified themselves with the hero's courage and strength. Some potentates even stylised themselves as descendants of Hercules.

After Hercules had strangled the Nemean lion, the skin and head of which he wore as his armour and helmet, he turned to his second Labour, the slaying of the Lernean hydra, a monster with nine heads. It was thought to be invincible and immortal, for whenever one of its heads was struck off, two new ones grew in its place. Hercules is depicted in his struggle with the hydra, while his cousin Iolaus plunges a burning torch in the monster's bleeding wounds to prevent new heads from growing.

THE RAPE OF THE SABINE WOMEN

Series title: *Scenes from
the Legend of Romulus
and Remus*

Design: c. 1560

Woven under the
direction of Frans
Geubels, Brussels, from
1560

Wool, silk, metal thread
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Kunstammer,
inv. no. T XXI/8

With the growing interest in the Rome of antiquity and the publication of increasing numbers of works by Roman historiographers during the Renaissance, the founding story of Rome with the figures of the twin brothers Romulus and Remus became ever more popular. Tapestry series mostly glorified the brothers' heroic courage, making them role models and figures for princes to identify with. Romulus ruled prudently over the city he had founded. However, there were not enough women for the growing number of male inhabitants. Romulus thus invited the neighbouring cities to a festival of martial games, during the course of which the Romans abducted the young Sabine women who were attending the games. The two couples in the foreground of the tapestry, however, seem rather to be treating each other in an affectionate manner. Executed with lavish use of precious metal threads, the object is clearly of a highly prestigious character.

DISPLAY OF THE
CAPTURED ARMOUR
AND WEAPONS

Series title: *Exploits and
Triumph of Dom João
de Castro*

Design: c. 1550/57

Woven under
the direction of
Bartholomeus

Adriaensz. (?), Brussels,
after 1557

Wool, silk, metal thread
Vienna,

Kunsthistorisches

Museum, Kunstkammer,

inv. no. T XXII/9

The military achievements of Dom João de Castro, who was appointed governor of Portuguese India in 1545 and viceroy in 1548, were of far-reaching historical significance for the Portugal. After the model of the major tapestry projects of his times – for example, the glorification of the successful Tunisian campaign of Emperor Charles V (no. 14) – Castro himself seems to have developed the plan for a series of wall hangings depicting his own successes.

The anonymous artist who designed the tapestries evidently received detailed reports of the military ventures as well as the triumphal procession and ceremonial reception in Goa after the liberation of the fortress of Diu, which had been under siege for months by the army of the king of Cambaia. It is unlikely that the artist visited the scene of the action, but he sought to capture the character of this far-off land by using exotic motifs such as turbans, elephants and camels, elements that were not least familiar from the spectacular tapestries and woodcuts of Pieter Coecke van Aelst.

You can view a further tapestry of this set in the Kunstkammer of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, room XXV.

13 A

THE TRIUMPH OF DOM JOÃO DE CASTRO IN GOA

Flemish, after 1550
Pen and ink drawing on
paper, washed in brown,
laminated on card
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Kunstammer,
inv. no. KK 9996

After his successful military operations Dom João de Castro held a triumphal entry into Goa on 22 April 1547. This small sketch shows the Portuguese soldiers of various branches of the forces on the march, accompanied by musicians. At the same time the prisoners and military trophies (armour, helmets and lances) are proudly displayed, as was usual in the context of ceremonial triumph processions. The figures sitting in two small carts in the middle ground surrounded by vegetal motifs are presumably the married couples who supported Dom João in his campaign, for example by providing funds, guarding the fortress and feeding the soldiers.

The tapestry also displayed in this room reproduces the sketch in lateral inversion. It must therefore have been woven in reverse on a *basse-lisse* loom.

THE UNSUCCESSFUL
TURKISH SORTIE
FROM LA GOLETA

Series title: *The*

Conquest of Tunis 1535

Design: Jan Cornelisz.

Vermeyen

Woven under the

direction of Jodocus de

Vos, Brussels, between

1712 and 1721

Wool, silk, metal thread

Vienna,

Kunsthistorisches

Museum, Kunstammer,

inv. no. T X/9

The popularity of the tapestries depicting the military campaign of Emperor Charles V against the Turks at Tunis is reflected by the fact they continued to be reproduced. As late as the eighteenth century the ten surviving cartoons (two had been lost) were used to make a set for Emperor Charles VI (r. 1711–1740), who liked to compare himself with Charles V and continued the latter's tradition in many respects. The present piece belonging to this series shows the Cape of Carthage with a view to the east. In the background one can see the lagoon of Tunis and the fortress of La Goleta.

Charles V is shown on horseback in the background. The foreground is dominated by mounted Ottoman troops valiantly hurling themselves into the fray. The barbaric practices of the imperial foe is eloquently illustrated at the front right-hand edge of the picture where Turkish foot soldiers are holding up the decapitated heads of two enemies to their leader as trophies.

14 A

TEN TAPESTRY CAR- TOONS: *THE CON- QUEST OF TUNIS*

Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen
and Pieter Coecke van
Aelst

Brussels, 1546/50
Charcoal, coloured
with watercolour and
gouache

Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Picture
Gallery, inv. nos.
2038–2047

Successful military campaigns provided a popular subject for tapestries. A prominent example is the series depicting Charles V's campaign at Tunis in 1535. It glorifies the strategic qualities of the emperor, his courage and fortitude, and celebrates him as the defender of Christendom against the Turks. The designs for the twelve tapestries in the set were executed eleven years after the campaign by the court artist Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen. As the latter had accompanied the emperor to Tunis to record the events of the campaign, he was able to make use of the drawings and sketches he had made at the scene. Vermeyen was aided by the Flemish painter Pieter Coecke van Aelst in the making of the full-sized cartoons for the weavers. Ten of the originally twelve cartoons have been preserved. Each tapestry depicts one or more phases of the campaign.

The cartoons are displayed on the second floor of the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

14 B

THE LANDING OF THE ARMY AT THE CAPE OF CARTHAGE

Frans Hogenberg after
Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen
c. 1555/60

Copperplate engraving

From: Michael
Aitsinger, *De leone
Belgico*, 1583 (?)

Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Library,
inv. no. 13.189

The tapestries designed by Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen depicting Emperor Charles V's campaign against the Turks at Tunis were so popular that they were not only repeatedly woven over the following centuries but also circulated during the sixteenth century in the form of prints by the copper engraver and etcher Frans Hogenberg (1535–1590).

This engraving shows the arrival of the army on the Tunisian coast in June 1535. The city can be seen in the background, protected by the fortress of La Goleta on the lagoon. The flagship in the foreground is that of the commanding admiral Andrea Doria. Accompanied by his wife, he sits on the quarter deck while the boatswain blows his whistle from the prow of the ship, giving the order to haul in the lateen sail.

TAPESTRY WITH
THE COAT OF ARMS
OF EMPEROR
CHARLES V

Design: c. 1540
Woven under the
direction of Willem de
Pannemaker, Brussels,
c. 1540
Wool, silk, metal thread
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Kunstkammer,
inv. no. T XXXIII/3

Heraldic wall hangings formed an essential part of any aristocratic collection of tapestries. More clearly than with any other subject these pieces expressed their owners' political and dynastic claims. The present wall hanging, once owned by Charles V, is no exception. It shows the imperial double-headed eagle with the quartered arms of the emperor. The escutcheon is divided between the arms of Flanders and Tyrol. The first quarter is itself quartered into the arms of Castile and León, while the quarter beside it is divided between the arms of Aragón and Sicily. In between the two quarters in an incurved triangle is the pomegranate of Granada. The third quarter is divided between Austria and Old Burgundy, and the fourth between New Burgundy and Brabant.

The burgeoning floral background symbolises in very immediate fashion the emperor's flourishing dominions. Even in the ruler's absence, wall hangings of this kind could represent his territorial claims.

You can view a further tapestry of this set in the Kunstkammer of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, room XXX.

MEDAL OF EMPEROR CHARLES V

Hans Reinhart the Elder
1537
Cast gold
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Coin Cabinet,
inv. no. 696bβ

Medals represented a »social medium« in the widest sense of the term. Not only were they an indication of social status, they were also a sophisticated commodity that could be collected, exchanged or given away, thus establishing and reinforcing social ties as well as political and diplomatic relationships. They were used to preserve the memory of persons in a special way, and document society's growing interest in the individual since the Renaissance. Portrait artists were able to create persuasive impressions in their lifelike paintings, thus imparting effects, associations and subtexts to the observer even if the person represented – and hence their image too – was fictitious. Portrait medals, on the other hand, allow us to see how a person was seen, or wanted to be seen to people around them – and indeed to posterity. Thus medal culture gives us insights into people's conception of themselves.

Medallic art has always been overshadowed by the »greater arts«, which is why they are often forgotten or overlooked in art exhibitions, or are shown only in illustrations. For many years now, the Kunsthistorisches Museum has therefore taken particular pains to incorporate this medium in its exhibitions.

Among the medals it is worth highlighting a medal of Emperor Charles V cast in 1537. The

front side shows a bust portrait of the emperor with his sceptre and royal orb, whilst the reverse is entirely taken up by a double-headed eagle with a coat of arms on its breast. Apart from the addition of a collar of the Golden Fleece, this is essentially the same eagle with the coat of arms of Emperor Charles V as that shown on the tapestry (no. 15), which was made in Brussels at about the same time. It is this medal in particular that reflects the intentions of the exhibition in a very special way: The representation of the emperor covers the entire medal, and the coat of arms on the reverse stands for the potentates. The execution is also exquisite, though the finishing is evidently rather mediocre. Apart from their representative function, similar medals made it possible to give away large amounts of money without loss of face – hence quality was of secondary importance. It was less embarrassing to hand over a single medal than 50 ducats – or »hard cash«, in other words.

ROMANESQUE ARMOUR

In the style of Giovanni
Paolo Negroli
Milan, 1545/50
Iron, brass, gold and
silver plated metal
components, leather
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Collection of
Arms and Armour,
inv. no. A783

Giovanni Paolo Negroli created this so-called »Romanesque armour« for horse and rider for Archduke Ferdinand II of Austria, who subsequently became ruler of Tirol. For the most part, the armour consists of chain mail made up of two different types of rings – matte grey iron and golden iridescent brass rings. These chain rings are joined together in patterns. The chain mail is supplemented by embossed iron reinforcements in fantastic shapes. The shoulder pieces and the open helmet are in the form of imaginative faces, the knee cops are shaped as lions' heads, and the gold-plated caps of the armoured boots are in the form of naked toes. This armour *all'antica* gave the artist an opportunity to toy with individual elements of the ancient world, and it astonishes the observer with its imaginative shapes and realistic details.

NOCTURNAL
BANQUET

Wolfgang Heimbach
Vienna (?), 1640
Copper
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Picture
Gallery, inv. no. 599

Although we do not know whether this painting on copper immortalises a particular occasion, the place in which the northern German artist Wolfgang Heimbach (c. 1613 – after 1678) has set his nocturnal banquet is unmistakable: the *Ritterstube* (Knight's Chamber) of the Vienna Hofburg. Dating to 1640, the painting has an immediate appeal, with the mysterious light brightly illuminating the long table and the faces of the diners assembled around it while the figures depicted from the back cast sinister shadows in the foreground. It also lights up the tapestries hanging between the windows, allowing the identification not only of some of their subjects but even the models on which they are based. Thus the two wall hangings on the left, representing the *Triumph of Charity* (outer left) and the *Triumph of Temperance*, belong to a series depicting the Seven Virtues that was woven in Brussels around 1560.

**BANQUET AT THE
COURT OF EMPER-
OR LEOPOLD I**

Jan Thomas
Flemish, 1666
Canvas
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Picture
Gallery, inv. no. 7660

This painting shows a festive banquet presided over by Emperor Leopold I and his wife Margarita Teresa. The occasion it celebrates is no longer known. It is taking place in the Ballroom, which in the mid-seventeenth century was the most important venue for festive celebrations and theatrical performances. On the right in the background is a heating stove and in the middle the entrance to the ante-chamber. The two visible walls and the window façade facing the Rosstummelplatz (present-day Josefsplatz), have been hung with tapestries for the occasion.

Jan Thomas (1617–1678) has successfully depicted a teeming crowd of people, including more than sixty individual portraits and capturing the details of each costume and important pieces of jewellery. He has also accurately recorded the dishes of food that are being served. The painting is notable for its striking light effects, with the glow of the numerous candles that hang from the ceiling to the level of the tapestries enhancing the sheen of the precious metal threads used in their making and thus creating a splendid courtly ambience.

THE VIENNA CITY
COUNCIL PAYING
HOMAGE TO
EMPEROR CHARLES I

Josef Jungwirth
1917
Canvas
Privately owned

By paying homage to Emperor Charles I and Empress Zita, the Vienna City Council recognises the authority of the monarch in an act of state and pledges its allegiance. The ceremony takes place in a room furnished with tapestries. Here the details of the subjects depicted on them are of lesser importance; the role of the tapestries is to provide an appropriately stately setting for this constitutional act and to emphasize the high rank of the emperor.

By the beginning of the twentieth century tapestries were no longer being produced for the Viennese court. Instead the centuries-old tapestries from the ancestral holdings were used in order to suggest dynastic continuity. The imperial couple were thus aligning themselves with the tradition of their predecessors and thus legitimising their rule as sovereign monarchs. Like numerous older depictions of similar rituals, paintings such as this record moments of significance and convey the magnificence of such ceremonies, here enhanced by the use of valuable antique tapestries.

FREYDAL - THE
TOURNAMENT
BOOK OF EMPEROR
MAXIMILIAN I

Southern German,
c. 1512/15
Laminated paper
binding, 273 folia, of
which 255 with pasted-in
miniatures
Tempera and
watercolour over pen
drawing, gold and silver
highlights
Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Kammer,
inv. no. KK 5073

Freydal is one of the most magnificent tournament books of the Renaissance. Made around 1512/15 for Emperor Maximilian I, it contains 255 lavishly gilded miniatures depicting sixty-four chivalric tournaments. Each of these tournaments consists of two mounted jousts as well as one combat on foot. Each of these tournaments ends in a masquerade known as a mummery.

The *Freydal* tournament book is one of the major printing projects commissioned by Emperor Maximilian for propaganda purposes. These projects also include the *Triumph of Maximilian* and the *Ehrenpforte* as well as the books *Weisskunig* and *Theuerdank*. Together with the latter, *Freydal* forms a trilogy depicting the biography of the emperor in allegorically heightened form.

THE TOURNAMENT
WITH THE SAMSON
TAPESTRY

Lucas Cranach the
Elder
1509
Woodcut
Vienna, Albertina,
inv. no. DG 1929/126

In 1508 the Prince-Elector Frederick III issued invitations to a tournament in Wittenberg. This event was recorded in a series of woodcuts by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553), who had been court painter to the prince since 1505. This image depicts the narrow tiltyard, in the middle of which two knights are jousting with lances, surrounded by numerous other knights on horseback and on foot. Part of the balustrade with the high-ranking audience can also be seen. From one of the balconies hangs a tapestry showing Samson wrestling with the lion.

Tournaments often accompanied important events at court in which tapestries played a salient role as portable yet precious elements of decoration that demonstrated power, riches and chivalric courtly elegance.

Very often, one of the duties of a court painter was to plan and design such festivities. It is thus quite possible that Lucas Cranach not only depicted this scene but had also actually been responsible for staging it.

23 // 24

THE GREAT FESTIVE
BANQUET IN THE
DINING CHAMBER
OF THE HOFBURG
ON THE OCCASION
OF THE TOURNA-
MENT AT VIENNA IN
1560 //

THE GREAT COURT
BALL IN THE CERE-
MONIAL HALL

Hans Sebald Lautensack
Etchings
From: Hans Francolin,
*Warhafftiger Ritterlicher
Thate [...]*, 1560
Vienna,
Theatermuseum, inv.
nos. GS GFeS4242 and
GS GFeS4243

In his tourney book the imperial herald Hans Francolin describes the events that took place on the occasion of the grand festivities held in Vienna and its environs in 1560 in honour of Emperor Ferdinand I and Duke Albert V of Bavaria. Lasting from 24 May to 24 June and accompanied by the ceremonial entrées, hunts, tournaments, mock combat and banquets etc., this celebration was without doubt one of the most spectacular events to take place in Austria during the sixteenth century.

The first illustration (no. 23) shows a *prandium*, a sort of second breakfast or early luncheon, in the Large Dining Chamber of the Vienna Hofburg. At the head of the long table sit the emperor and his wife Anna under a canopy of state. Opposite them is a so called *Schaubuffet* (a dresser displaying rich holdings of plate), an essential element in the context of such a high-ranking event. Equally impressive is the décor of the room with precious tapestries reaching to the ceiling. The second illustration (no. 24) depicts a ceremonial hall erected especially for the occasion on the Spanish Bastion (the part of the city fortifications by the Hofburg). Here too the walls are decorated with tapestries. The emperor is seated on a dais at the centre of the composition accompanied by his daughters and female guests, here once again under a baldachin or canopy of precious cloth.

THE ABDICATION
OF CHARLES V IN
1555

Frans Hogenberg
c. 1556/72
Copperplate engraving
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-P-OB-78.784-10

On 25 October 1555 King Philip II of Spain received sovereignty over the Netherlands from the hands of his father, Charles V, in the Aula Magna of the Château de Binche in Brussels. This official act on the part of the emperor, like so many before it, took place against the backdrop of a fitting textile décor. The walls are hung with tapestries from Tournai that had been made for the Chapter of the Order of the Golden Fleece. The emperor's throne is heightened with a canopy of state decorated with the double-headed eagle symbolising his high office. The heraldic bird is surrounded by the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece. Philip is kneeling before the throne. Among those present, in addition to the representatives of various courts, are the statesman and later cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle as well as the emperor's sister, Mary of Hungary, who had governed the Netherlands for twenty-five years.

**THE MARRIAGE OF
MARIA THERESA**

Vienna, 1736
Etching
Vienna, Albertina,
Wiener Historische
Blätter, vol. 2, no. 35

The collecting activities of the dukes of Lorraine made a significant contribution to the holdings of tapestries preserved in Vienna. Part of the wall hangings that passed into the ownership of the last duke of Lorraine, Franz Stephan (1708–1765), are still held in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, a circumstance deriving from the duke's marriage to Maria Theresa, heir to the last Habsburg emperor Charles VI, in 1736. As can be seen in this etching, the Augustinerkirche in Vienna was hung with tapestries on the occasion of the couple's wedding.

When Franz Stephan (as Holy Roman Emperor Francis I) died in 1765, his estate passed to the House of Habsburg-Lorraine. One of the spectacular objects from this estate is the throne baldachin displayed in this exhibition (no. 8). This was probably commissioned by Duke Charles III of Lorraine (1543–1608), who ruled over the duchy for sixty-three years. An idea of the duke's extensive holdings of tapestries can be gained from the series of etchings by Friedrich Brentel recording his funeral, one of which is also displayed in this room (no. 29).

27 A-C

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE CORONATION OF LOUIS XIV

From: Jean le Pautre,
*Cérémonies du Sacre de
Louis XIV*, 1654
Copperplate engravings
Vienna, Albertina,
Historische Blätter,
vol. II, nos. 34 to 36

SÉANCE DE S.M. DES DUCS ET DE TOUS LES OFFICIERS DE LA COURONNE (ASSEM- BLY OF HIS MAJESTY WITH THE DUKES AND OFFICERS OF THE CROWN)

Jean Le Pautre (1618–1682) was one of the most prominent decorative artists and copperplate engravers of his time. His illustrations for the coronation of Louis XIV (1638–1715) in the year 1654 are a unique source charting the course of this complex ceremonial.

This copperplate engraving shows the king's assembly prior to his coronation in Reims Cathedral. The future king gave his oath in the presence of the dukes and great officers of state of the French Crown. The assembled nobles were then asked whether they wished to accept Louis as their king. Once they had given their consent, the royal insignia were blessed.

The illustration shows a view of part of the nave of the cathedral. Not only the specially erected stands, but especially the walls themselves are completely covered with tapestries, which – as no. 27 B shows – extend upwards as far as the triforia.

SACRE ET COURONNEMENS DU ROI
(ANOINTING AND CROWNING OF THE
KING)

The most important ceremony during the course of the coronation festivities for the French king was the anointing (*Sacre*). This act alone is of decisive importance for the legitimacy of the coronation, representing the sovereign's God-given right to rule and the symbolic unification of the king and the Christian Church.

This copperplate engraving shows a view down the nave of Reims Cathedral to the chancel, where the king kneels before the altar waiting to be crowned. Special boxes were erected in the nave for the secular and religious dignitaries, as well as the court society taking part in the ceremonies.

The walls of the nave and the chancel were decorated with precious tapestries hung on top of one another in two rows as far as the triforia. Further tapestries adorn the mighty pillars, and decorative fabrics are also affixed to the pews in the nave. The copious use of these costly furnishings transformed the episcopal cathedral into a royal coronation church.

LE ROI SÉANT DANS SON TRÔNE PENDANS
LA CÉLÉBRATION DE LA MESSE, APRÈS
SON SACRE (THE KING SEATED ON HIS
THRONE AFTER HIS ANOINTING DURING
THE PONTIFICAL MASS)

This sheet is the last in the series of illustrations of the coronation of Louis XIV. After the *Sacre* (no. 27 B), the king is advancing in solemn procession towards the screen-like stand, where he will participate in the Pontifical Mass enthroned beneath a baldachin. To the left and right of it, the six spiritual and six secular dignitaries who have already assisted the archbishop during the *Sacre* are waiting for the sovereign. In the left-hand front corner of the copperplate engraving is the box of the Queen Mother, Anne d'Autriche (1601–1666), from which she watched the progress of the ceremony together with her entourage. As with the other two sheets, the rich wall coverings of tapestries can also be clearly seen here. Apart from historical and mythological content, the choice of the scenes to be depicted was determined above all by the deeds of the Apostles after Raphael. This copperplate engraving also illustrates another use of decorative fabrics: for the lining of the boxes and the throne.

LE ROY ALLANT À
L'ÉGLISE (THE KING
ON HIS WAY TO
CHURCH)

From: Pierre Dulin et al.,
*Le Sacre de Louis XV,
Roy de France et de
Navarre, dans l'Église
de Reims, 1722*
Copperplate engraving
Vienna, Albertina, inv.
no. Cim.I.30.

Ever since the 16th century, precious tapestries were used to festoon acts of state and other ceremonial occasions. They were used to decorate not only the interiors, but also streets and squares, as spectacularly illustrated in this copperplate engraving from one of the most sumptuous French books of ceremonies.

This sheet shows the solemn coronation procession of the then 12-year-old Louis XV (1710–1774) to Reims Cathedral. The future king and his entourage are proceeding along a gangway lined with precious fabrics. He is flanked to the left and right by temporary screens completely lined on the inside with sumptuous tapestries visible only to those taking part in the coronation procession. As laid down in the coronation rites, this prevented the common people from glimpsing the king before the end of the official ceremony. It was only after the celebrations that all the king's subjects were able to marvel at the magnificent decorations, which therefore had two more important functions: the representation of royalty and a demonstration of political power.

THE CORPSE OF
CHARLES III OF
LORRAINE

From: Friedrich Brentel,
*Les Pompes Funèbres
de Charles III (1608)*
Published by Jean
Savine, Nancy, 1609
Hand-coloured
copperplate engraving
Vienna, Austrian
National Library, inv.
no. 83950r-I

Like other European royal houses, the dukes of Lorraine also possessed an extensive collection of tapestries. A series of engravings published in 1609 with texts by the master of ceremonies Claude de la Ruelle gives us an insight into the high-quality of this inventory and the uses to which it was put. The series documents the funeral ceremony marking the death of Duke Charles III.

The body of the duke lay in state beneath a baldachin on a stage erected in the ducal palace in Nancy. Two sets of tapestries with biblical themes were mounted on the walls: scenes from the life of Moses, as well as scenes from the life of Paul the Apostle. The Moses themes are clearly visible in this engraving. This is probably the series of tapestries on the same themes from the estate of Emperor Francis I. that still survives in Vienna to this day.

LE REPOSOIR DU
SAINT SACREMENT
(THE FEAST OF
CORPUS CHRISTI IN
PARIS ON 12 JUNE
1648)

Stefano della Bella
c. 1648
Copperplate engraving
Privately owned

This copperplate engraving is of the Corpus Christi procession in Paris on 12 June 1648. It shows a ceremonial structure erected outdoors in the courtyard of the Palais Royal with tapestries suspended from its sides. This is a later version of the celebrated Apostle tapestries. Pope Leo X commissioned Raphael with the designs in 1515. The first series was intended for the decoration of the Sistine Chapel, and the decision to have it produced by a Brussels manufactory was of far-reaching significance to the Flemish tapestry industry. This first intensive contact with the achievements of the Italian Renaissance led to a stylistic revolution in the textile sector.

The tapestries that can be seen in della Bella's copperplate engraving are a later edition of the remarkable Vatican series. Since they belonged to the French Crown, the implication is that the potentate was present. Although this is a religious festival, the presentation clearly establishes a secular reference.

GONE

Nives Widauer (*1965 in Basel, lives and works in Vienna)

2011

Video projection on a tapestry

Loan from the artist

A slightly faded historical tapestry, probably dating from the late 18th century, shows a beautifully beautiful landscape with trees, herons, an ibis. Onto this tapestry, Nives Widauer projects a video sequence in a continuous loop showing a woman dressed in a coat walking into the depths of the landscape until she finally disappears completely, followed by a strange shadow. The brown, beige and green colours of the tapestry can be seen briefly before the scene is repeated. The mood is set by a deep shade of blue that is cast over the stationary relic over and over again, thus forming an important element of the video.

By means of this sensitive film overlay, the artist suggestively invites the observer to identify with the rear view of the woman, creating a subtle tension between times and realities, the historical material and today's evanescent video, between presence and disappearance. The digital pixel structure of the video is superimposed on the analog pattern of threads in the tapestry, and the resulting fuzziness is open to interpretation, and has a lasting effect on us.

**MAJOR NAVAL
BATTLE**

Margret Eicher (*1955 in
Viersen, lives and works
in Ladenburg)

2003

Digital installation/
jacquard fabric (edition 3)
Karlsruhe, ZKM |
Zentrum für Kunst und
Medientechnologie

Like a pirate, Margret Eicher plunders more or less recent media images of all kinds, col-
laging and mounting them on her monitor. She then has the hybrid results of this process transferred to the textile medium by means of a digitally controlled mechanical weaving loom in Flanders, the country where the art of tapestry-making originated. With the motif of a naval battle, she embarks on a classical representation of power politics, underscoring this by a citation from the blatantly historical tapestry border that frames the combat scene. But this one comes from a very different era: Pearl Harbor 1941! However, the artist does not use a photograph of the actual event, but takes instead a still from Michael Bay's film adaptation (starring: Ben Affleck) shot in 2001, a film severely criticized for its lack of authenticity. Eicher combines fantasy pterosaurs and Tarzan taming a crocodile in the style of a picture by the influential fantasy and science fiction illustrator Frank Frazetta (1928–2010). This betrays the critical irony with which she questions both contemporary and historical visual media.

THE GREAT PIECE OF TURF

Margret Eicher (*1955 in
Viersen, lives and works
in Ladenburg)

2013

Digital installation/
jacquard fabric (edition 3)
Karlsruhe, ZKM |
Zentrum für Kunst und
Medientechnologie

The extremely disquieting effect of this work is attributable not only to its central motif – a soldier firing his machine-gun – but also to the irritating combination of visual objects and image planes. Whereas the landscape in the background is based on a historical tapestry, some of the plants in the foreground are quotes from one of Albrecht Duerer's best-known watercolours: *The Great Piece of Turf* (1503)!

At the bottom the surrounding border is overlaid by the menu bar of a first-person shooter computer game, undermining the realism of the soldier. His weapons bears the inscription »SIMULATION«, while the menu bar carries a text asserting that the sign is indistinguishable from reality. Thus Eicher makes direct reference to Jean Baudrillard's socio-critical simulation theory. And this of all places in a medium of power representation par excellence, the tapestry or a simulation of one! This aggressive combination of high and low, of affirmation and subversion blurs all our standards in an almost hallucinatory manner. The enormous toadstools are also an unmissable, humorous reference to this.

LECTURES*

- THU 16.7.
5.30 P.M.
- Tapestries from the era of Charles V and The Notre-Dame du Sablon in Brussels*
Dr. Ingrid De Meûter
Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire – Musée du Cinquantienaire, Brussels
- THU 30.7.
5.30 P.M.
IN GERMAN
- Tapisserien – fragile Kunstwerke! Zur Herstellung, Konservierung und Pflege*
André Brutillot
Tapestry conservator, formerly Bavarian National Museum, Munich
- THU 3.9.
5.30 P.M.
IN GERMAN
- Warum Tapisserie? Die Macht eines repräsentativen und politischen Mediums im 16. Jahrhundert*
Dr. Katja Schmitz-von Ledebur
Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna
- TUE 8.9.
7 P.M.
- Lecture Series organised in collaboration with the Dorotheum
Flanders and Italy. Italian artists as designers of flemish tapestries in the 16th century (1510–1550)
Prof. Dr. Guy Delmarcel
Emeritus Professor for Art History at the Catholic University Leuven
Reservations: altemeister@khm.at

LUNCHTIME

in German, at 12.30 p.m.

LECTURES*

duration c. 30 min.

meeting point: Entrance Hall

TUE 7.7.

Der Triumph der Liebe

Dr. Rotraut Krall

TUE 14.7.

Triumphzug des João de Castro

Dr. Rotraut Krall

TUE 21.7.

Herkules und die lernäische Hydra

Mag. Andreas Zimmermann

TUE 28.7.

Jaël tötet Sisera

Mag. Andreas Zimmermann

TUE 4.8.

Die Schlacht in den Ruinen von Karthago

Mag. Barbara Herbst

TUE 11.8.

Baldachin

Mag. Daniel Uchtmann

TUE 18.8.

Danae

Mag. Barbara Herbst

TUE 25.8.

Raub der Sabinerinnen

Mag. Daniel Uchtmann

* Admittance is free with a valid entrance ticket,
reservation not necessary (except 8.9.)

**CURATOR'S
TOUR***

Wed 22.7., 4 p.m., in German
Dr. Katja Schmitz-von Ledebur
meeting point: Entrance Hall

GUIDED TOURS

Thu 7 p.m., in German
Sat/Sun at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.
duration c. 60 min.
meeting point: Entrance Hall
tickets € 3

**SPECIAL
TOURS***

Wed 9.9. and 16.9., in German
4 p.m.
duration c. 60 min.
Mag. Andreas Zimmermann
meeting point: Entrance Hall

**CHILDREN'S
TOURS ****

Sat 5.9. and 19.9., in German
Wolle an der Wand – Teppiche als Bilder
5 to 8 years of age: 3 p.m.
9 to 12 years of age: 4 p.m.

* Admittance is free with a valid entrance ticket,
reservation not necessary

** Entrance for children free, reduced entrance
for accompanying adults, guided tour free,
reservation not necessary

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Thurs 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.

June – August open daily!

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

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Cover: Hercules striking off the heads of the
Lernean hydra with his club // Series title:
»The Labours of Hercules« (detail) //
Woven c. 1550/65

EDITOR

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SCIENTIFIC CONCEPT

Katja Schmitz-von Ledebur

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