

Italian Silk Needlework Tapestries

Three Needlework Panels Embroidered in Silk

(A) *A Cavalry skirmish, a dismounted Saracen trampled underfoot*
89/91 × 340 cm (2 feet 11 inches × 11 feet 2 inches)

(B) *Cavalry fording a river in front of a fortified citadel*
89/91 × 218 cm (2 feet 11 inches × 7 feet 2 inches)

(C) *Six equestrian figures galloping together*
89/91 × 218 cm (2 feet 11 inches × 7 feet 2 inches)

[Rome, circa 1640?]

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUE

For all three panels, the ground is plain-weave (tabby) linen, on which the design is drawn and shaded with a grey-brown colour wash. The surface is entirely covered with polychrome floss silks in long or short needle-painting stitches; the outlines are worked in split and stem stitches, and details (costume, architecture, etc.) are in laid and couched work, French knots, satin and spaced satin stitches (some stitches are worked slightly differently on panel A, on which padded satin and brick stitches are used, the latter notably on the trees). Additional outlines are of couched metal thread and a little metal strip; for details such as stirrups, sword hilts, and costume features, the metal thread is laid over a cord to give a raised effect; other, larger details are worked with laid metal thread couched in decorative patterns (some areas are padded). Faceted glass studs are used for decorative features such as buttons, rings, rivets on the armour, and bridles.

CONDITION

The panels are relatively clean and still retain a fresh colour although the silks have faded, in particular the bright salmon pink, the reds, purples, sharp greens and yellows, and the dark brown and black. Different dye batches have faded to different shades (as can be seen in the sky of panel B). The embroidery silk has dropped out in many areas (particularly in panel A). Some of the silk is rubbed and there are a few loose metal threads.

Some olive-green and yellow stitches down the left edge of panel A, some orange-brown spots on one horse in panel A and on another horse in panel C, are 19th-century repairs (they were not, however worked through the backing fabric, which was sewn on by machine in the late 19th or early 20th century); otherwise the panels are virtually untouched.

There are rust marks from a previous set of nails and it would seem that the panels have always been mounted on stretchers (there is no sign that they ever had borders).¹

Newly framed and glazed with ultraviolet filtering acrylic Perspex.

PROVENANCE

[presumably commissioned in Rome by either Giovanni Francesco (1578–1641) or Nicolò (1594–1663) Guidi di Bagno] — [reputedly acquired by Charles Talbot (1660–1718), 12th Earl and 1st Duke of Shrewsbury, during his residence in Rome 1701–1705, afterwards Heythrop Park, Oxfordshire — by family descent to John Talbot, 16th Earl of Shrewsbury (1791–1852), Alton Towers, Staffordshire] — by family descent to John Chetwynd-Talbot, 21st Earl of Shrewsbury and Waterford (1914–1980), displayed at Ingestre Hall, Staffordshire, until 1960, thereafter at Waterford House, Ingestre, Staffordshire — by family descent to Charles Chetwynd-Talbot, 22nd Earl of Shrewsbury and Waterford (b. 1952), Wanfield Hall, Kingstone, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire — consigned ‘The Property of the Earl of Shrewsbury and Waterford’ to Sotheby’s, ‘Important French and Continental Furniture and Tapestries’, London, 13 December 1991, lots 19–20 (catalogued as ‘17th century, probably Roman or North Italian’) — the present owner

EXHIBITED

Fort Worth, Texas, Amon Carter Museum, 24 January–31 March 1963²

LITERATURE

Gerald A. Lowther, *Ingestre Hall: an illustrated survey of the Staffordshire residence of the Chetwynd Talbot family* (Derby: English Life Publications, [1957]), pp.[9, 14, 16] and plate 8 (panels A and C, displayed to the left of the chimney-piece), plate 10 (panel C)
Gordon Nares, ‘Ingestre Hall, Staffordshire – III’ in *Country Life* 122 (31 October 1957), pp.924–927, fig. 2 (panels A and C, displayed flanking the chimney-piece) fig. 3 (panel A)
Lanto Syngé, *Art of embroidery: History of style and technique* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors’ Club, 2001), p.117 fig. 103 (panel C)

THESE LARGE AND SPECTACULARLY WELL-PRESERVED Italian silk ‘needle paintings’ were designed to be hung high on the walls of a room as elements of frieze decoration. It is likely that they have always been mounted on stretchers and were displayed above wall hangings of silk or painted and gilded leather, in summer, according to the prevailing

¹ ‘Materials and Technique’ and ‘Condition’ are excerpted from a technical report prepared by Santina M. Levey (dated 24 August 1993). The complete text of her report is appended below.

² The embroideries arrived too late for inclusion in the exhibition catalogue, *Appaloosa, the spotted horse in art and history*, by Francis Haines, Thomas Lawton, and H.G. Hesslein (Austin, TX 1963); they were shown only in the Amon Carter venue, and photographs substituted for the originals when the exhibition travelled in the north-western United States (private communication dated 29 April 1991 from Sarah Cash, Assistant Curator, Amon Carter Museum, 3501 Camp Bowie Boulevard, Fort Worth, TX 76107).

fashion, and were replaced in winter by wool tapestries.³ It was not uncommon for Italian rooms to receive such lavish and sumptuous wall decoration and other fabric room valances are recorded in seventeenth-century inventories.⁴ Most are woven (*arazzi*) or relatively simple embroidered cloth (*panni ricamati*); few pictorial embroidered room valances are documented, and fewer still appear to have survived.

The historical event – or episode in a chivalric adventure – narrated by these wall hangings remains after much research still a matter of speculation. The diversity, or incongruity, of the apparel, weapons, and architecture, indicates dependence on multiple design sources, of which one only – an engraving first published at Rome *circa* 1610 – is recognised. The materials, technique, and reputed provenance of the embroideries support conjecture that they were in fact made in Rome in the mid-seventeenth century, when a minor industry of craftsmen producing pictorial embroidery for the major families of the city flourished. The heraldic insignia prominently displayed in the long panel (on the breast collar of the hero's horse; see **Fig. 2**) was borne by the Guidi di Bagno, represented in Rome at this time by two eminent prelates, the brothers Giovanni Francesco (1578–1641) and Nicolò Guidi di Bagno (1584–1663), both passionate collectors and plausible commissioners of such costly furnishings. Although the provenance of the embroideries is certain only since the 1950s, according to Shrewsbury family tradition they were acquired in Italy by the 12th Earl on his 'Grand Tour' (1701–1705), and retained by the family for almost three hundred years, until their sale in Sotheby's on 13 December 1991.

The long panel (A) (**Fig. 1**) depicts an assault by mounted Christian Knights on a tower defended by Muslims. The scene is laid in early times: the soldiers in the vanguard carry jousting spears, those in the rear lances or pikes, and all wear ancient Roman military dress; Eastern surroundings are suggested by the turbaned Saracen, though not by architecture depicted in the background. The left half of the panel (including the Saracen, but excluding the soldier behind him sounding a horn and also the cityscape) is derived from a single-sheet engraving by Francesco Villamena (1566–1624) after Antonio Tempesta (1555–1630), first published in Rome about 1610, and reissued (after successive alterations to the

matrice) in the 1620s and 1630s.⁵ The design source for the right half of panel (A), showing four horsemen advancing on their strategic objective – a curious round tower situated in the middle of a lake or river – has yet to be identified (**Figs. 6–7**).

Panel A is dominated by the leader, who turns his horse to gallop toward the spectator. In the original state of Villamena's print (**Fig. 3**), he is shown wearing a helmet adorned by the 'Borghese dragon'; in the sky above appear the 'Borghese eagle' and symbols of Pope Paul v Borghese (1605–1621), and the breast collar of his horse is adorned by a shield charged with three chalices. In subsequent states of the print, the dragon is replaced by a feather plume, and appropriate heraldic insignia are substituted in the sky; the three chalices are erased; and the breast collar of the horse is blank.⁶ In our embroidery, the leader wears a feathered helmet and the breast collar of his horse is emblazoned *per saltire Or and Azure* (using dots and horizontal lines to indicate the tinctures). Several Italian families used this form, however during the seventeenth century only one prospered: the Guidi di Bagno.⁷

³ Patricia Waddy, *Seventeenth-century Roman palaces: use and the art of the plan* (New York & Cambridge, MA 1990), pp.15, 21, citing as evidence for seasonal changes of decoration Cesare Evitascandalo's *Il maestro di casa. Dialogo* (Viterbo 1620), p.78. Painted friezes (on canvas or directly on the wall) were typically two or three *palmi* high (45 to 67.5 cm); see Waddy, *op. cit.*, pp.86, 101, 108, 306–307.

⁴ See Pascal-François Bertrand, *Les tapisseries des Barberini et la décoration d'intérieur dans la Roma baroque* (Turnhout 2005), pp.211 (no.565), 215 (no.626); for English examples, see Santina M. Levey, *The embroideries at Hardwick Hall: a catalogue* (London 2007), pp.29, 300–311.

⁵ The subject of the untitled print is identified as 'Alexander the Great at the Battle of Arbelá' by Dorothee Kühn-Hattenhauer, 'Das grafische oeuvre des Francesco Villamena', Inaugural-Dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin, 1979, p.251 (first state described); see now Eckhard Leuschner, *Antonio Tempesta: ein Bahnbrecher des römischen Barock und seine europäische Wirkung* (Petersberg 2005), pp.225–227, reproducing an impression in first state (fig. 7.9), and identifying the subject as 'Alexander defeats the Persians at Gaugamela'.

⁶ In the second state of the print, a swarm of Barberini 'bees' and insignia of a Barberini cardinal (designating either Francesco, Antonio, or Antonio *juniore*, created cardinal in 1623, 1624, 1627 respectively) appears in the sky; see Leuschner, *op. cit.*, p.243 note 42. The third state features the cardinalial insignia of Alessandro Cesarini (created 1627) and other insignia (possibly Borghese-Orsini) at lower left; see Leuschner fig. 7.11. In the fourth state the cardinalial insignia of Francesco Maria Brancaccio (created 1633) appears; see *La battaglia nella pittura del XVII e XVIII secolo*, edited by Patrizia Consigli Valente (Parma 1986), no.266 (the empty breast collar is decorated by pen on the impression reproduced).

⁷ Jan van Helmont, *Dictionnaire de Renesse* (Louvain 1992), p.745, lists seven Italian families bearing the arms *in quartato in croce di S. Andrea d'oro e d'azzurro*: Di Bagno-Talenti and Talenti (both of Mantua), Bagni (of Siena) and Di Bagno (of Montebello), are all relations or surrogates of Guidi di Bagno; Buonfantini and Marabottini (both of Florence) have sunk into obscurity, their members ignored in all accessible biographical dictionaries (cf. G.B. Crollanza, *Dizionario storico-blasonico delle famiglie nobili e notabili italiane estinte e fiorenti*, reprint Bologna 1977, I, pp.183; II, p.70).



Fig. 1. Panel (A) *A Cavalry skirmish, a dismounted Saracen trampled underfoot* (89/91 × 340 cm : 2 feet 11 inches × 11 feet 2 inches)



Fig. 2 (above). Detail from Panel A: Insignia of the Guidi di Bagno family

Fig. 3 (left). *Papal allegory with Alexander the Great on horseback in the centre, arms of Paul V above supported by two angels*, engraved by Francesco Villamena after Antonio Tempesta (362 × 483 mm; British Museum, Prints & Drawings, Registration Number V, 10.60)



Fig. 4. Panel (B) *Cavalry fording a river in front of a fortified citadel* (89/91 × 218 cm : 2 feet 11 inches × 7 feet 2 inches)

Panel B is centred on a broken tree and depicts the departure of the knights from a devastated battlefield. Here the round tower has a large arched aperture at first-floor level, the door of which is open; a ladder leans against it (**Fig. 7**), and two men ride away on a single horse – one rider presumably liberated from the tower. In the background is a fortress with steeply scarped walls and protruding pentagonal bastions for defence against gunpowder artillery. The soldiers all wear breeches (instead of Roman tunics) and one carries a gun of a shape appropriate to the first quarter of the seventeenth century. The design sources of panel B thus contrive a scene set in more contemporary times.

Panel C is centred on a healthy tree and depicts the knights returning home (**Fig. 5**). Their palace is situated in a place evidently accustomed to peace: despite battlements, all its façades have large windows (we see almost forty of them), and a tower with a pitched roof seems to be a belvedere or loggia. Two of the horses – like some depicted in the other panels – are ‘spotted horses’ of the kind bred at the Equile Lipizzano near Trieste, and distributed to nobles serving with the imperial armies in the long campaign against the Turks. One soldier is armed with a swept-hilt rapier of a style that dies out in the 1620s.



Fig. 5. Panel (C) *Six equestrian figures galloping together* (89/91 × 218 cm : 2 feet 11 inches × 7 feet 2 inches)

The story narrated in the three embroideries is unrecognised; it could be factual, or literary (as is suggested by the image of the cloud-borne tower), or historical and allegorical elements could be mingling freely. One possibility is that the three scenes are derived from Tasso's *'Gerusalemme liberata'*, an idealised account of the 1st Crusade which ended with the capture of Jerusalem in 1099. In this reading, panel A may depict one of the early battles between Christians and Muslims, with Jerusalem shown in the background; panel B may depict (left) the two Christian knights, Carlo and Ubaldo, departing with Rinaldo after rescuing him from Armide's castle on the enchanted island in the Orontes river (shown

here as if cloud-borne); and panel C could depict the return of the knights through the 'Enchanted Forest'.⁸

⁸ In the Victoria & Albert Museum are five seventeenth-century Italian embroidered wall panels illustrating Tasso's *'Gerusalemme Liberata'* (Acc.178–182.1869). The panels are fragments, each 13 to 14 feet in height (widths range from 3 feet 7 inches to 12 feet 9 inches). Santina Levey writes 'The technique is basically the same as for your pieces, although there is little metal thread or raised work and no glass ornaments' (private communication, 24 August 1993). See also Silvana Musella Guida, 'Percorsi incrociati: la fortuna degli arazzi ricamati nella Napoli di fine Seicento' in *Confronto* 6/7 (2005/2006), pp.97–121.



Fig. 6 (left). Detail from Panel (A) — Fig. 7 (right). Detail from Panel (B)

Guidi di Bagno

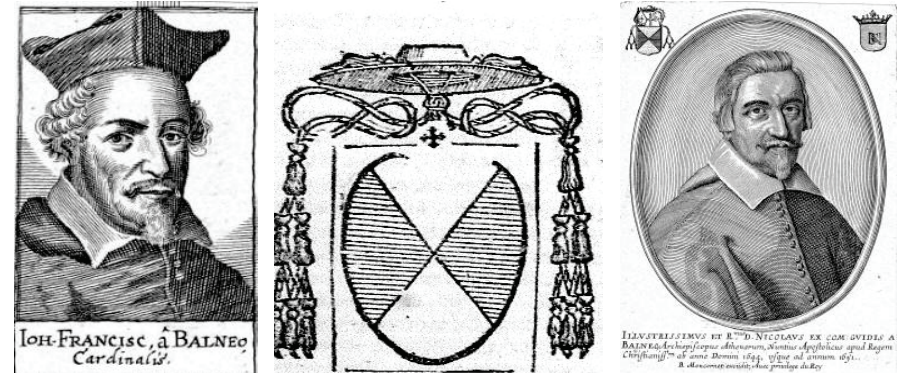


Fig. 9 (left). Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno — Fig. 10 (centre). ‘Inquartato in croce di S. Andrea’ (Guidi di Bagno) — Fig. 11 (right). Nicolò Guidi di Bagno

The Guidi di Bagno is a branch of the Guidi, an ancient feudal family which once dominated Tuscan Romagna, distinguished for its military valour. Giovanni Francesco (b. 1578) and Nicolò Guidi di Bagno (b. 1583) were related on their mother’s side to the Roman princely family of Colonna – Marcantonio and Girolamo Colonna were respectively their great-uncle and uncle – and both gravitated to Rome at early dates. After humanistic studies in Pisa and Bologna, Giovanni Francesco entered the ecclesiastical establishment, and in 1597 was appointed protonotary apostolic *participantium* by the Florentine Pope Clement VIII Aldobrandini. In 1600 he became secretary to Cardinal Ippolito Aldobrandini, whom he accompanied on a legation to France to congratulate King Henri IV upon his marriage to Maria de’ Medici. He was legate at Avignon (1614–1621) and nuncio in France and Flanders (1621–1623, 1627–1630); in 1627 he was created Cardinal, and in 1644 he was the official French candidate (proposed by Richelieu) to succeed Pope Urban VIII.⁹ He led meanwhile an immensely cultivated life, corresponding with numerous scholars, including the brothers Pierre and Jacques Dupuy, Claude-Nicolas Fabri de Peiresc, and

⁹ One of the most influential men of his age, Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno is known now only to specialists; see Georg Lutz, *Kardinal Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno: Politik und Religion im Zeitalter Richelieus und Urbans VIII* (Tübingen 1971); Rotraud Becker, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 61 (Rome 2003), pp.336–341.

René Descartes, and in 1631 he brought Gabriel Naudé from Paris to Rome to serve as his librarian and secretary.¹⁰

In 1622, Giovanni Francesco purchased the palace in the Piazza Montecitorio which had belonged formerly to Cardinal Domenico Toschi, and slowly set about its redecoration.¹¹ Fine buildings require fine furnishings, which in the seventeenth century would have been dominated by textiles. Already in 1612 Giovanni Francesco had shown an interest in textiles, commissioning from the Medici workshops ‘un quadro ad arazzo in oro e seta’ depicting the Madonna and Child with Saint Francis.¹² That interest developed further, in 1625, when Giovanni Francesco accompanied Cardinal Francesco Barberini on a legation to Paris, where they beheld the magnificent tapestries decorating the French court, and Barberini returned with an extraordinary royal gift – a series of tapestries depicting the ‘History of Constantine’ woven in Paris from designs by Rubens.¹³ Giovanni Francesco had already met Rubens, perhaps as early as 1600, when they both were in Florence attending the proxy wedding of Maria de’ Medici, certainly before his posting to Brussels (1621). In 1622 he had bought a painting by the artist to send to Rome, and by 1627 Rubens counted him as ‘one of the best patrons and friends that I have’.¹⁴ Giovanni Francesco once requested Philippe Chifflet to ask Rubens to design a tapestry series representing the story of Saints Aglae and Boniface, but the commission was never carried out.

¹⁰ Paola Delbianco, ‘Il cardinale Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno e Gabriel Naudé. Religione, politica e cultura’ in *Seicento inquieto: arte e cultura a Rimini*, catalogue of an exhibition held in Castel Sismondo, Rimini, 27 March–27 June 2004, edited by Angelo Mazza and Pier Giorgio Pasini (Milan 2004), pp.227–231. One of the exhibits, a binding decorated by the cardinalial hat above the family insignia (illustrated p.229 no. 39), evidently belonged to Giovanni Francesco’s brother Nicolò, since the imprint is Rome 1658. None of Giovanni Francesco’s manuscripts are in armorial bindings; see Annie Lesage, ‘Les manuscrits du cardinal Guidi di Bagno’ in *Scriptorium* 51 (1997), pp.104–151 (especially p.110).

¹¹ Tommaso Manfredi, ‘Peparelli, Borromini, Carlo Rainaldi e il palazzo Toschi, Guidi di Bagno, dei Padri della Missione a Montecitorio’ in *Quaderni del Dipartimento Patrimonio Architettonico e Urbanistico* [Università di Reggio Calabria] 13 (2003/2004) no.25/26, pp.131–142.

¹² Lucia Meoni, *Gli arazzi nei musei fiorentini: La collezione medicea: Catalogo completo. I. La manifattura da Cosimo I a Cosimo II (1545–1621)* (Livorno 1998), pp.112, 118 (note 144), 518.

¹³ Pascal-François Bertrand, *Les tapisseries des Barberini et la décoration d’intérieur dans la Rome baroque* (Turnhout 2005), pp.33–36.

¹⁴ ‘uno degli miei maggior padroni ed amici ch’io ho in questo mondo’, see *Correspondance de Rubens et documents épistolaires concernant sa vie et ses œuvres... Du 29 octobre 1626 au 10 août 1628*, edited by Max Rooses and Charles Ruelens (Antwerp 1904), IV, p.246 (Letter xdvii, 22 April 1627); Elizabeth McGrath, *Rubens: Subjects from history*, Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, 13 (London 1997), II, pp.169, 173.

Toward the end of his nunciature, in 1630, Giovanni Francesco commissioned a magnificent ‘Turkish’ carpet from Simon Lourdet of the Chaillot workshops at the Savonnerie manufactory.¹⁵ He returned to Rome with trunks laden with Parisian ‘tappezerie’ (valued at 5000 *livres*), more than a hundred metres of Genoese velvet (intended for the decoration of an antechamber), luxurious textiles for clothing purchased in Brussels, and furs.¹⁶ Subsequent purchases of *arazzi* were made in Paris through the agency of Cardinal Mazarin.¹⁷ A post-mortem inventory of the contents of Giovanni Francesco’s palazzo in Rome and villa in Castel Gandolfo reveals a collection of more than one hundred paintings (including works attributed to Titian, Dürer, Correggio, Bassano, as well as Rubens), numerous busts and other sculptures, and much opulent decoration, notably a silver-gilt service for sixty and about 185 objects in silver (their combined weight was in excess of 90 kg).¹⁸ His particular regard for textiles (and their relative status as works of

¹⁵ Jean Vittet, ‘Les manufactures de tapis’ in *Un temps d’exubérance: les arts décoratifs sous Louis xiii et Anne d’Autriche*, catalogue of an exhibition, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, 9 April–8 July 2002 (Paris 2002), p.179 (contract notarized 18 January 1631). The carpet was sold by Sotheby’s, Paris, 20 April 2012, lot 42, for €1,856,750.

¹⁶ Lutz, *op. cit.*, p.486, citing Archivio Guidi di Bagno, Carteggi 56. The archive has since been transferred from Mantua to the Rocca dei Guidi di Bagno at Montebello (Torriana, RN). For the previous arrangement of the archive, see Lutz, *op. cit.*, pp.XLII–LII; and Marina Raffaelli Cammarota, ‘L’archivio Guidi di Bagno’ in *Clio: rivista trimestrale di studi storici* 12 (1976), pp.235–243. For its present arrangement, see Maura Plachesi, *L’Archivio dei conti Guidi di Bagno (secc. XII–XIX) a Montebello: Ricognizione e strumenti di Corredo propedeutici all’inventari*, tesi di laurea, Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione, Università degli Studi di Bologna, 1996–1997.

¹⁷ A commission in June 1637 is documented by Patrick Michel, *Mazarin, prince des collectionneurs: les collections et l’ameublement du cardinal Mazarin (1602–1661); histoire et analyse* (Paris 1999), pp.27, 33 (note 55). Mazarin also had close relationships with the Parisian embroiderers Nicholas La Fage and Sigismondo Libenauer and commissioned on behalf of Cardinal Francesco Barberini a number of figurative panels; see Patrick Michel, ‘Mazarin et les Barberini’ in *Mazarin: les lettres et les arts*, edited by Isabelle de Conihout and Patrick Michel (Saint-Rémy-en-l’Eau 2006), p.59.

¹⁸ Excerpts from this inventory (‘le parti che riguardano oggetti d’arte’) were published by Pietro Torelli, ‘Notizie e documenti rubeniani in un archivio privato’ in *Ad Alessandro Luzio gli Archivi di Stato Italiani. Miscellanea di studi storici* (Firenze 1933), I, pp.173–194 (transcription pp.184–191). Torelli studied the version of the inventory found in the Archivio Guidi di Bagno in the so-called ‘Libro delle Famiglie’. This ‘Libro delle Famiglie’ was still in the archive when Lutz visited Mantua in the early 1960s, although by then the document transcribed by Torelli had been extracted and mislaid (Lutz, *op. cit.*, p.li note 54 and pp.505–506 note 85). The volume was lost – or separated from the archive – during the move to Montebello; it is not mentioned by Plachesi (*op. cit.*), and could not be found during a visit by the writer (April 2010). Another version of the inventory survives among documents classified ‘Bene di Romagna Varie (già Libri 26, 27, 28)’, Libro 26 no. 8, ff.64r–86r: ‘Inventario generale del Heredità del Card. Gio. Franc. di Bagno’ (ff.81v–83r: arazzi, cuscini, paramenti, sedie, etc.).

art) is proved by a separate heading in the inventory leading to a list of thirty-eight pieces; a clause in the *fidecomesso* expressly forbade the sale of these textiles.¹⁹

The textiles are described in the inventory as *arazzi*, with brief descriptions of their subjects ('arazzi non figurati' were not inventoried), and size (height in *palmi romani*): 'L'istoria di Giacob' (six pieces, height approximately 3.71 metres), 'Diverse boscaglie et animali' (ten pieces, height approximately 2.47 metres), 'L'istoria del Pellegrino' (seven pieces, height approximately 1.57 metres), 'Pezzo n. uno d'arazzo con oro e seta con diverse figure e un Christo morto disceso dall croce in mezzo' (one piece of unstated size), and 'Pezzi n. quattordici d'arazzi antichi che rappresentano diverse istorie e di diverse altezze' (fourteen pieces of varying dimensions). If the notary should have failed to distinguish between embroidery (*ricami*) and tapestry (*arazzi*), our embroidered frieze might be contained within this last entry.

Many of Giovanni Francesco's ancestors were renowned *condottieri* and it would have been natural for him to celebrate the exploits of the family in defence of the Church in the public chambers of his Roman palazzo or villa, representing them either as historical characters, or transfigured in allegorical or mythological compositions. It is thus conceivable that our wall hangings depict a now-forgotten episode in the military career of his grandfather and namesake, Conte Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno (d. 1569), who in a long career fought against the Turkish troops of Sultan Solimon II (1532) and took part in Charles V's ill-fated Algerian expedition (1541);²⁰ alternatively, the embroideries may commemorate deeds of distant ancestors, of whom one or two participated in Crusades, another was imprisoned at Spoleto and liberated by the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in person (1155), and yet another faced Manfred of Sicily's Saracen light horse at the battle of Benevento (1266).

In his testament, Giovanni Francesco left his entire estate (after bequests of paintings to certain cardinals, the three Barberini brothers, and others) to his younger brother Nicolò. Nicolò had followed a military career throughout his youth, seeing action in Flanders, and serving for seven years as general of the papal troops. After the death of his wife in 1633,

¹⁹ 'Prohibisco di più l'alienatione di tutti i Panni di Arazzo, e Tappeti, quali voglio servino per uso de' miei Heredi, e Fideicomissari, sinchè dureranno' (from Cardinal Giovanni Francesco's testament, written by Gabriel Naudé, at Rieti, 24 March 1638, and published as *Testamento dell'Eminentissimo Sig. Card. de Bagno*, Rome: Lodovico Grignani, 1641, p.3). Copies of the publication are located by Lesage, *op. cit.*, p.104 note 5; others are Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, K-948; and Perugia, Biblioteca comunale Augusta.

²⁰ Giulio Roscio, *Ritratti et elogi di capitani illustri* (Rome 1646), pp.331–333; Pompeo Litta, *Famiglie celebri italiane. Dispensa 149. Guidi di Romagna, Parte 1* (Milan 1865), Tav. VII.

he had entered the ecclesiastical state, was consecrated titular archbishop of Athens in 1644, appointed nuncio in France 1644–1656, and was created cardinal in 1657.²¹ Nicolò was the Baroque embodiment of the soldier-intellectual: a decorated warrior as well as patron of the arts.²² He shared his brother's enthusiasm for textiles and early during his nunciature commissioned a group of twelve *arazzi* and *portieres* featuring the family arms (quartered with the cardinalitial arms of the Barberini), woven in the Louvre manufactory under the direction of Maurice II Dubout.²³ On behalf of his uncle Cardinal Girolamo Colonna, he commissioned from an unidentified Parisian workshop a set of fourteen *portiere d'arazzo* featuring the Colonna coat of arms.²⁴

Nicolò became obsessed by the Turkish peril and in 1656–1657 responded to a papal appeal to finance the war in Austria by disposing of a large part of his possessions, including the family palace in Piazza Montecitorio (sold to the Signori della Missione, or *Lazzaristi*)²⁵ and the villa at Castel Gandolfo. What remained was bequeathed after his death (27 August 1663) to Conte Giulio de Bagno (b. 1628) of the Mantuan branch of the family, with certain exceptions – among them 'quattro pezzi d'arazzo con la storia della regina Ester,' which had been acquired by Nicolò himself.²⁶

Nicolò's testament permitted 'la vendita de' stabili e mobili per pagare debiti' and sales of his possessions commenced immediately. On 31 October 1663, his heir sold a large quantity of textile furnishings, including 'undici cushini d'arazzo', 'Un fregio di brocato d'oro in sette pezzi', and 'Una Pietà d'arazzo con oro' (all to the Monte della Pietà in

²¹ Giampiero Brunelli, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 61 (Rome 2003), pp.341–346.

²² Among works of art commissioned by Nicolò are paintings by Thomas Blanchet (active in Rome 1645–1653); see Lucie Galactéros-de Boissier, *Thomas Blanchet (1614–1689)* (Paris 1991), pp.57, 59.

²³ Niccolò arrived in Paris 26 July 1644 and his commission for 'douze pièces de tapisserie et portières' is dated 1 January 1645; see *Chefs-d'œuvre de la tapisserie parisienne, 1597–1662*, catalogue of an exhibition, Orangerie de Versailles, 9 June–1 October 1967 (Paris 1967), p.18; and Pascal-François Bertrand, *Les tapisseries des Barberini et la décoration d'intérieur dans la Rome baroque* (Turnhout 2005), pp.35–36, 150 (note 33). These may be the textiles sold by his heir in March 1664 to the Monte di Pietà, described as 'otto portiere di arazzo cardinalizie con l'arma di casa quartata con la Barbarina' (Archivio Guidi di Bagno, Cassetta 85, Fascicolo 394, 'II. Nota di vari mobili, ed argenti parte venduti, e parte dati in pagamento a vari creditori verso l'eredità del Card.le Nicolò. dalli 11: Marzo 1664: a tutto li 29: Ap[ri]le 1664', f.5r.

²⁴ Florence Patrizi, 'Tapestries in the Colonna collection' in *Tapestry in the Baroque: new aspects of production and patronage*, edited by Thomas P. Campbell and Elizabeth A.H. Cleland (New Haven 2010), pp.237, 258 (note 51), 263.

²⁵ Torrelli, *op. cit.*, pp.191–192; Lotz, *op. cit.*, p.35.

²⁶ See excerpt from Nicolò's testament printed by Torelli, *op. cit.*, pp.191–192; compare with the list of 'arazzi' in the post-mortem inventory of Giovanni Francesco (Torelli, *op. cit.*, p.188).

Rome).²⁷ On 29 November 1663 were sold ‘il Parato d’arazzo d.o li mamalucchi di pezzi undici per scudi sessanta, e più tre portiere d’arazzo antiche, e ventidoi pezzi d’arazzi, cioè di verdura, e compresi li Beretoni’ (sold to a Jewish merchant, ‘Lion da Modona’).²⁸ During the first months of 1664, textiles collected by Giovanni Francesco were sold, including ‘un Parato d’arazzi di pezzi sei detto di Giacob’ (to ‘Sig.re Mauro Rambotti romano’), ‘quattro pezzi d’arazzo detti dell’Istoria di Esseau’ (to ‘D. Gioseffo Tosati’),²⁹ ‘Boscaglie, et animali di pezzi dieci’, and ‘vita umana di pezze sette’ (all to ‘Padre Girolamo Ripa agostiniano’).³⁰ As the sale documents of Nicolò’s property do not include any entry descriptive of our embroideries, it could be that they were retained within the family, and sold years later.

Comparative Needlework

There was a minor industry in seventeenth-century Rome of craftsmen producing silk embroideries for the major families of the city and for the papacy.³¹ Although relatively few *quadri di ricamo* have survived, archival documentation allows conjecture about the quantity produced, subjects, and the location and manner of display. Small devotional images made for domestic use predominated, particularly Ecce Homo, Assumption of the Virgin, Madonna and Child, and various Saints, typically measuring one *palmò romano* in height (22.5 cm), and enclosed usually by black or gilt frames.³² Less common are

embroidered still lifes of flowers.³³ Large panels of embroidery, especially those depicting figures, seldom appear in Roman inventories;³⁴ it may be that demand for such pieces was met by woven tapestries, made in the Barberini manufactory or imported from abroad.

Embroiderers were attracted to Rome from all over Italy and abroad,³⁵ of whom a few – such as the Frenchman Nicholas de la Fage – became famous (on his return home he was named embroiderer to the king). The names of numerous craftsmen are known from registers of payments,³⁶ but it is rare for pieces to be associated with them. Some embroiderers (such as La Fage) are also known as draughtsmen and presumably worked out the designs themselves; others doubtless depended on an artist to prepare a cartoon of the required size, or draw the design onto the ground.³⁷

²⁷ Archivio Guidi di Bagno, Cassetta 85, Fascicolo 410: ‘Nota de mobili venduti da me Giulio de’ Conti Bagni’, f.1r.

²⁸ Archivio Guidi di Bagno, Cassetta 85, Fascicolo 394: ‘I. Nota de’ Mobili venduti dal M.se Giulio dell’ eredità de Card.le Nicolò. Dalli 31: 8bre [octobre] 1663: a tutto li 8: marzo 1664’, ff.8v–9r.

²⁹ Archivio Guidi di Bagno, Cassetta 85, Fascicolo 394, ‘I. Nota de’ Mobili venduti dal M.se Giulio dell’ eredità de Card.le Nicolò. Dalli 31: 8bre [octobre] 1663: a tutto li 8: marzo 1664’.

³⁰ Archivio Guidi di Bagno, Cassetta 85, Fascicolo 394, ‘II. Nota di varij mobili, ed argenti parte venduto, e parte dati in pagamento a varj creditori verso l’eredità del Card.le Nicolò. Dalli 11: Marzo 1664 : a tutto li 29: Aprile 1664’.

³¹ For artists and designers of ecclesiastical embroidery, including *pallotti* (coverings for the altar), see Marzia Cataldi Gallo, *Le vesti dei papi: i parati della Sacrestia pontificia: Seicento e Settecento* (Genoa 2011), pp.27–30, 33, 47 etc.

³² These entries are typical: ‘Un quadretto con un Christo in croce fatto a ricamo’ (post-mortem inventory of Livia Capranica Bonelli, 28 March 1627; Getty Provenance Index, Archival Document I–858, item 0022); ‘Un Christo in croce con la Madonna, e San Giouanni fatto a ricami d’oro e seta cornice nera e rabbescata, e profilata d’oro di mano incerta’ (post-mortem inventory of Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi, 1595–1632; Getty Provenance Index, Archival Document, I–822, item 0086); ‘Due quadri d’un palmò con cornice intagliata dorata rappresentante uno S. Marta, e l’altro La Madalena di Ricamo’ (post-mortem inventory of Cardinal Prospero Marefoschi, 1654–1732; Getty Provenance Index, Archival Document I–616, item 0015a).

³³ ‘Due quadri di fiori di Ricamo in cornice nera’ (post-mortem inventory of Cardinal Urbano Sacchetti, 1640–1705; Getty Provenance Index, Archival Document I–880, item 0410b); ‘Due Quadri di p[al]mi 4 e 3 di ricamo, con cornice di velluto cremise trinati d’oro con una figurina; con un cagnolo con vasi de fiori, e prospettiva, et all’altro un moretto, con una scimmia, con un bacile de frutti, e una chitarra’ (inventory taken 1 May 1692 of Cardinal Flavio Chigi, 1631–1693; Getty Provenance Index, Archival Document I–249, item 0481). On account of their secular subject matter, the latter two embroideries (each 73 × 96 cm) are described by Daniela Di Castro as ‘un unicum nella storia delle arti decorative a Roma nel secolo XVII’; see *Fiori: cinque secoli di pittura floreale*, catalogue of an exhibition held at Museo del territorio, Chiostro di San Sebastiano, Biella, 21 March–27 June 2004, edited by Francesco Solinas (Rome 2004), pp.198–200 nos. 68–69 (private collection; acquired from Finarte Casa d’Aste, ‘Mobili, arredi, maioliche e dipinti antichi’, Rome, 6 October 1998, Lire 96m [£34,910]).

³⁴ ‘Un studiolo tutto ricamato d’oro, e seta di varij colori con fiori del naturale con una prospettiva davanti... il detto studiolo palmi 4 ¼ in circa alto palmi 2 ¼ in circa dentro una Cassa d’albuccio liscia fodrata di tafetà verde imbottita di dentro Palmi 51 di tela rossa cremesino’ (post-mortem inventory of Cardinal Ippolito Aldobrandini, *juniore*; 1596–1638; Getty Provenance Index, Archival Document I–1008, Item 0586); ‘Un altro quadro grande tutto di ricamo con fregio attorno di diversi fiori dal naturale con diversi lavori di canotigli in mezzo vi è la Cena del Signore con gl’apostoli di ricamo sopra raso bianco con cornice di legno tutta intagliata trasforata, e tutta indorata, che in mezzo mostra una testa di lione con due zampe, che l’abbraccia lungo palmi 7 1/2 et alto palmi 6 150’ (post-mortem inventory of Cardinal Federico Cornaro, 1580–1653; Getty Provenance Index, Archival Document I–999, item 0437).

³⁵ See Antonino Bertolotti, *Artisti belgi ed olandesi a Roma nei secoli XVI e XVII: notizie e documenti raccolti negli archivi romani* (facsimile reprint Bologna 1974), p.335 and ‘Giunte’ pp.40–42; *Artisti francesi in Roma nei secoli XV, XVI e XVII: ricerche e studi negli archivi romani* (Mantua 1886), pp.203–207.

³⁶ See Vincenzio Golzio, *Documenti artistici sul Seicento nell’Archivio Chigi* (Rome 1939), pp.359–364, recording payments to four *ricamatori*: Francesco Vezzi (1657–1658), Cesare Rossetti (1667–1670), Lorenzo de Sanctis (1671–1673), and Giovanni Serini (1674–1689).

³⁷ See Daniela Di Castro, *op. cit.*, p.199, noting stylistic affinities with Michele Pace. A group of embroidered pictures mostly of Florentine origin, including a ‘Vaso di cristallo con fiori’ embroidered

Recent provenance

The embroideries were re-discovered in the 1950s at the country seat of the Shrewsbury family, Ingestre Hall, Staffordshire, ‘rolled up and tucked away in an unfrequented corner of an attic where they had evidently been since their removal from Alton Towers [vacated by the family in 1924, following the death of the 20th Earl]’;³⁸ by 1957, they had been framed and placed on display in the Great Hall.

According to family memory, the embroideries were acquisitions of Charles Talbot, 12th Earl and 1st Duke of Shrewsbury, who lived in Rome for about three years (21 November 1701–27 April 1705) and married the widowed Bolognese countess Adelaide Paleotti in September 1705.³⁹ The 12th Earl developed in Italy an interest in architecture and the fine arts and bought modern paintings, prints, and works of art, for himself and for his friends.⁴⁰ On his return to England, he built a palace modelled after the Villa Borghese, at Heythrop Park, near Witney, Oxfordshire. In 1814, the 15th Earl began to develop the garden and lodge at Alton, and in 1820 Heythrop was leased (furnished) to the Duke of Beaufort. During the latter’s occupation, in 1831, the house was almost completely gutted by fire;⁴¹

circa 1680 by Pietro Lemolyse after a drawing or cartoon by Andrea Scacciati, is reproduced by Lucia Meoni, ‘Quadri e quadretti in ricamo’ in *Arte Tessile* 2 (1991), pp.21–33 fig. 4; see also Maria Rosaria Mancino, ‘Francesco Solimena e Ignazio Mirabile autori di un tappeto ricamato per la chiesa della Sapienza a Napoli’ in *Paragone / Arte* 49 (1998/1999), series 3, no. 20, pp.47–59.

³⁸ Gerald A. Lowther (see LITERATURE), who continues ‘By great good fortune they had been carefully rolled and had escaped exposure to the light; it is doubtless to this they owe their beautiful clarity of colour and their remarkably good state of preservation’. The embroideries were stretched and framed and then hung in the Great Hall at Ingestre on either side of the fireplace; a photograph of the room *circa* 1956 is provided by Lowther pl.8, and another by Gordon Nares (see LITERATURE) fig.2.

³⁹ Lita-Rose Betcherman, ‘The Duke of Shrewsbury and Roman Art’ in *History Today* 24 (1974), pp.563–569; Johnny Madge, ‘A “virtuoso” in Rome, Charles, Duke of Shrewsbury (1660–1717)’ in *Country Life* 173 (27 January 1983), pp.232–233; John Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish travellers in Italy 1701–1800* (New Haven & London 1997), pp.855–857. These accounts are based on ‘A Journal by his Grace, Charles, Duke of Shrewsbury, from November the 1st 1700... to January 7th 1706’, entirely in Shrewsbury’s hand and paginated by him 1–493, formerly in Montagu House, Whitehall, and now in Northampton Record Office; excerpts are published in *Report on the manuscripts of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry preserved at Montagu House, Whitehall. Vol.2. Pt.2. The Shrewsbury Papers* [continued], edited by R.E.G. Kirk (London 1903), pp.746–799.

⁴⁰ In 1702 Shrewsbury exported ‘30 quadri moderni diuersi assieme con due tavole di marmo giallo’; see Antonino Bertolotti, ‘Esportazione di oggetti di belle arti da Roma per l’Inghilterra’ in *Archivio storico artistico, archeologico e letterario della città e provincia di Roma* 4 (1880), p.78.

⁴¹ ‘Only a small portion of the furniture could be saved, and none of the superb paintings, owing to their being secured to the walls too fast; the rich tapestry, beautiful specimens of sculpture, all are

fortunately, some paintings and *objets d’art* collected by the Shrewsbury family already had been removed to Alton. After the death of the 17th Earl in 1856, the contents of Alton Towers were sold by auction. His heir bought bravely in the sale and refurbished, however, upon the death of the 20th Earl, in 1921, retention of the house became untenable; the contents were again dispersed by auction, in 1924, whereupon the family seat became Ingestre Hall.

The supposition that the embroideries adorned Heythrop Park in the eighteenth century and Alton Towers in the nineteenth century is not proved by descriptions of Heythrop published before the disastrous fire,⁴² nor by the catalogues of the auctions held at Alton in 1856⁴³ and 1924.⁴⁴ It is possible therefore that the embroideries were not in fact acquired in the early eighteenth century, but at a much later date.⁴⁵ A possible source is John Talbot, 16th Earl of Shrewsbury (d. 1852), who after his succession to the earldom and its estates in 1827, bought artworks on a vast scale to furnish Alton. He was a frequent visitor to Rome (his two daughters married into the Borghese and Doria Pamphilij families, in 1835 and 1839 respectively) and he acquired there many works of art, including the entire collection of nearly two hundred paintings belonging to Letizia Bonaparte.⁴⁶

lost...’ from an anonymous account of the fire at Heythrop, in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, April 1831, p.762.

⁴² The earliest description of Heythrop dates from 1759, after it already had undergone modernisation and redecoration. The following have been consulted: *The new Oxford guide... To which is added, a tour to Blenheim, Ditchley, and Stow... Containing, An accurate Description of their Tapestry, Paintings, Sculptures, Temples, Gardens, and other Curiosities. By a gentleman of Oxford* (London 1759); and *A New Pocket Companion for Oxford: or, Guide through the University... To which are added, descriptions of... Blenheim, Ditchley, Heythrop, and Nuneham... A new edition* (Oxford 1804), pp.139–144.

⁴³ Christie, Manson & Woods, 6 July 1857 and twenty-nine following days (4000 lots).

⁴⁴ Bagshaw & Sons, ‘The contents of Alton Towers’, 15–29 January 1924; nor are the embroideries shown in the principal record of the refurbished interior, a series of watercolours executed about 1870, reproduced by Michael Fisher in *Country Life* 195 (5 July 2001), pp.112–115.

⁴⁵ An inventory made of works of arts surviving a fire which occurred at Ingestre in 1882, with additional entries for works brought there from Alton Towers and elsewhere between the years 1882 and 1935, might resolve the issue; unfortunately, it can not now be located. This document is cited by Anthony Crofton, ‘A Catalogue of the Pictures at Ingestre Hall, Staffordshire, belonging to the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Shrewsbury and Waterford’ in *Collections for a History of Staffordshire 1950–1951* (1954), pp.55–56.

⁴⁶ A picture gallery was built to accommodate the Bonaparte collection; see Michael J. Fisher, *Alton Towers, a Gothic wonderland* (Stafford 1999), p.73. Maria Elisa Tittoni Monti, ‘L’Esilio Romano di Letizia Bonaparte’ in *Palazzo Bonaparte a Roma* (Rome 1981), pp.11–33.

APPENDIX

‘Three Seventeenth Century Embroidered Panels’ Technical Report by Santina M. Levey (prepared 24 August 1993)

The panels consist of one long panel (A) and two shorter panels, of which B is centred on a fortified castle on an island, and C is centred on a tree before a grand palace.

Measurements

The three panels are all between 89 & 91 cm (35" & 36") deep, the largest is about 340 cm (11' 2") long and the other two each measures about 218 cm (7'2"). (The edges, which are slightly out of true, are wrapped around the stretchers.)

Materials and technique

For all three panels, the ground is a plain weave (tabby) linen, on which the design is drawn and shaded with a greyish-brown colour wash. The surface is entirely covered with polychrome floss silks (i.e. untwisted) in long or short needle-painting stitches. The outlines are worked in split and stem stitches and details of costume, building, etc. are in laid and couched work, French knots, satin and spaced satin stitches. Some stitches are worked slightly differently on panel A, on which padded satin and brick stitches are used (the latter notably on the trees). Additional outlines are of couched metal thread and a little metal strip; for more important details such as stirrups, sword hilts, costume features etc., the metal thread is laid over a cord to give a raised effect. Other, larger details are worked with laid metal thread couched in decorative patterns, some areas are padded. N.B. The metal now appears to be of tarnished silver but it is likely that at least some of it will be silver-gilt. Glass ornaments are used for such decorative features as buttons, rings, rivets on the armour, etc.

Condition

Given their age and the fragility of the technique, the panels are in good condition. They are relatively clean and still retain a fresh colour although the silks have faded, in particular the bright salmon pink, the reds, purples, sharp greens and yellows, and the dark browns and black. Different dye batches have faded to different shades, as can be seen in the sky of

panel B. (The sky of panel A was skilfully shaded and this is still visible despite the fading.)

The embroidery silk has dropped out in many areas, particularly in panel A although, given the faded colours, and the colour wash underneath, this is not too obvious. It is possible that the orangey-brown ‘spots’ on the dappled horse to the right of the panel C and on the right-hand horse on panel A, together with some olive-green and yellow stitches down the left-hand edge of panel A, are 19th century repairs. However they are not worked through the backing fabric, which was sewn on by machine in the late 19th or early 20th century, and the panels are virtually untouched. There are rust marks from a previous set of nails and it probably safe to assume that they have always been mounted on stretchers. There are no signs that they ever had borders.

Other defects include the rubbed surface of some of the silk and quite a few bits of loose metal threads. Some metal threads may have been retouched, not entirely accurately.