



Threads Crossing the Warp

MODULE 7

TAPESTRY

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ΧΑΡΟΚΟΠΕΙΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
HAROKOPIO UNIVERSITY



What is tapestry?

- It is a weaving technique in which the pattern and the fabric are created simultaneously and interdependent (Graaff 1997, 8);
- A chosen polychrome weave with complex scenes (geometrical, religious, allegorical or historical) whose pattern is inserted in the structure of the woven cloth formed simultaneously with it;
- It is one of the oldest textile forms with an utilitarian insulating purpose;
- It is a textile art form with an aesthetic/ decorative purpose that imitates paintings;
- The tapestry technique was and still is used in order to create very diverse objects, starting with jackets, shawls or purses and ending with interior design pieces, some appreciated as textile decorative works of art;

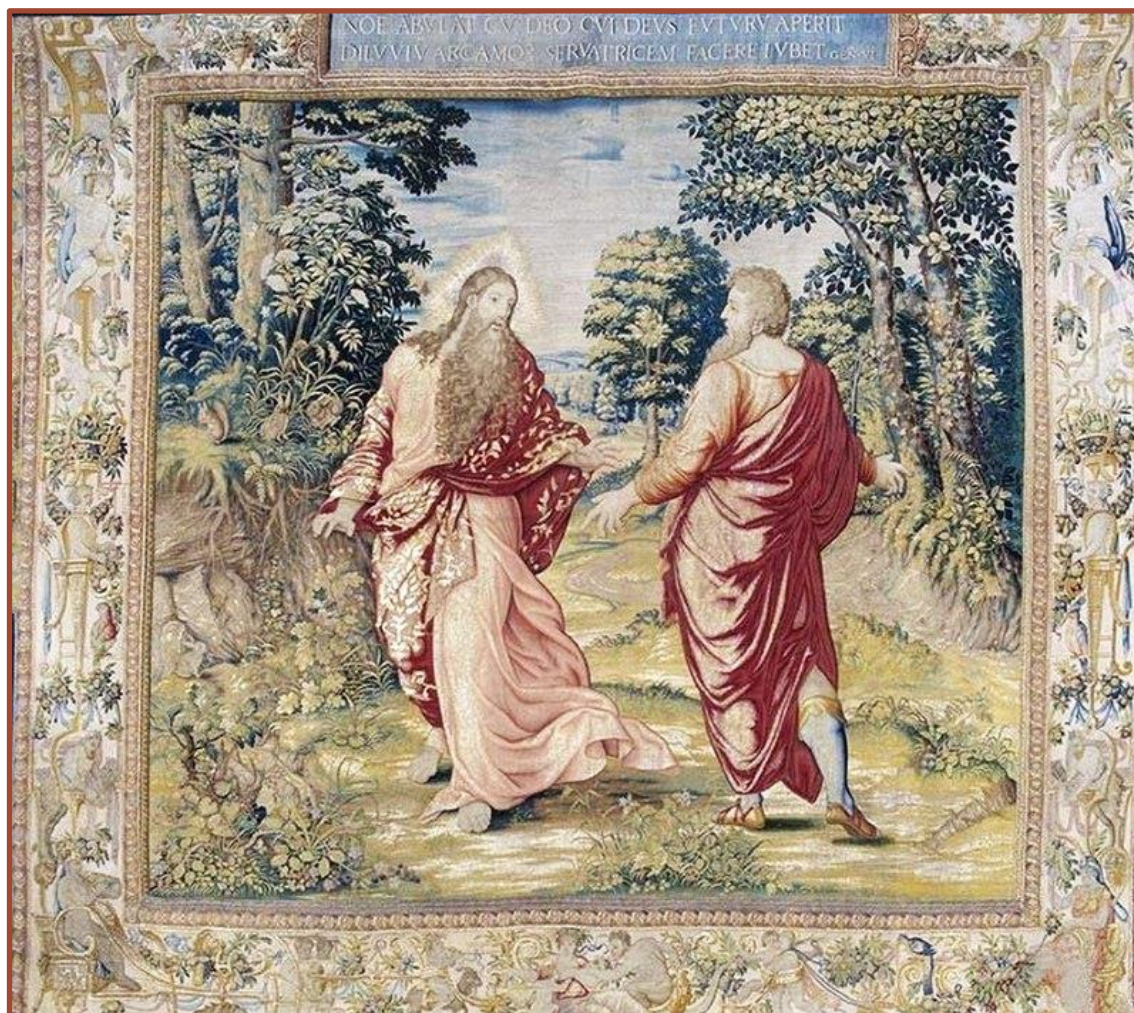


„The Harvest” tapestry, weaver Urbanus Leyniers, 1712-1728.

The term tapestry

- The word tapestry derives either from the French word “tapis” which means carpet, or from “tapisserie” defined as a textile object spread across the walls;
- „tapis” comes from the Latin word „tapes” which is the Latinized form of the Greek word „τάπης” (tapēs) or carpet, rug;
- On British soil the term “ tapestry” was first used in 1467; until those years terms such as „hangings” (a decorative piece of textile or drape hanged on a room wall or around a bed), „cloths” (a weaving or a wool, cotton or a different kind of felt) or “arras” (after the Arras Centre, France) were used;
- In French the situation is sometimes even more confusing because the term “tapisserie” is used to define a manual decorating technique of a textile done with the help of a needle similar to embroidery (example „The Bayeux Tapestry”);
- Other terms used to define a tapestry: arazzo (Italy), gobelin (Denmark and Hungary);

The term tapestry



Arras Tapestry model. Theme: „God's conversation with Noah” of the „History of Noah” Series.

The term tapestry

- In English the term “tapestry” has two meanings; first it describes the weaving technique used in order to create textile pieces and secondly it is used to describe a large weaving that has a symbolic or allegorical pattern which is usually hanged on a wall;
- In many European countries (among which Romania as well) along history the words carpets and/or tapestry were either mistaken or used to describe the same object due to the fact that both define objects designed to cover both the floor and the wall or the table or other furniture or interior design objects;
- In the specialized literature and in this field, the carpets that belong to the tapestry category as well as the techniques used in making them are named according to the country/region/ county/ city/ village where they were made example: Savonnerie tapestry or carpets; Gobelins tapestries; Flemish tapestries, Tabriz tapestries, Anatolian carpets, Persian carpets, Turkish knot, Tabriz carpet, Polonaise carpets, Chinese carpets etc.



Modern Tapestry Wall Hanging, model Bob Marley, Rasta, Reggae Jamaican.

Tapestry or Upholstery/Carpeting?

- **Tapestry** defines a wool weaving made in the loom or manually used for decorating the interiors or furniture pieces*

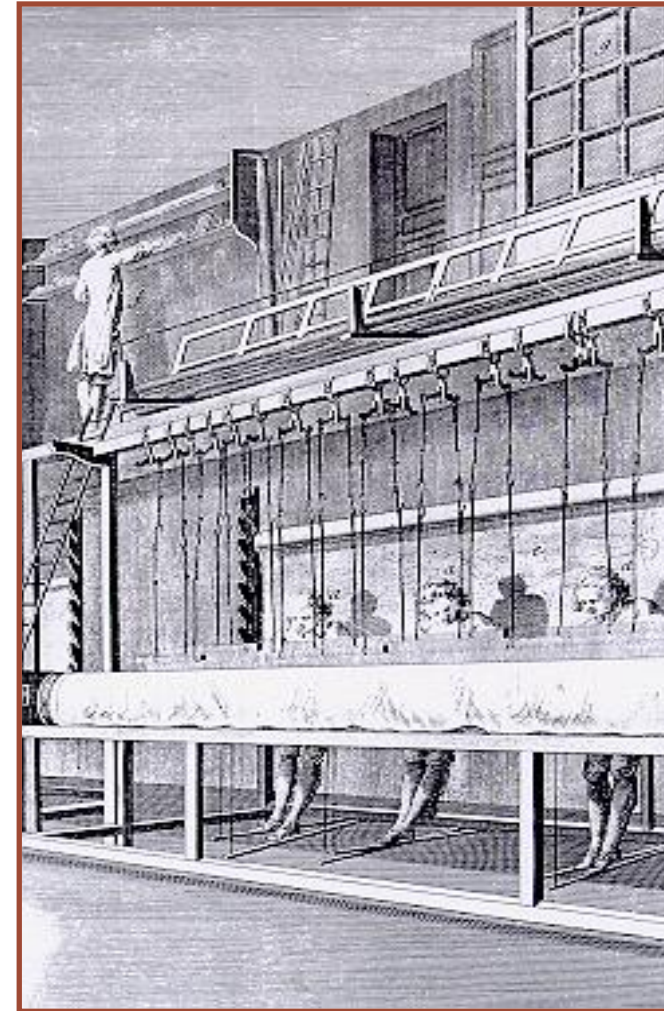


- The term carpentry/ upholstery denotes either the padded part of a furniture (chair, armchair, sofa, bed) or the craft and workshop where the carpenter works

Entrance to the *Strannopriemnitsa Hotel*, Etara, Bulgaria. Part of the Architectural-Ethnographic Complex ETAR, Gabrovo, Bulgaria. Foto: Găvan Elena, 2011.

Tapestry traits

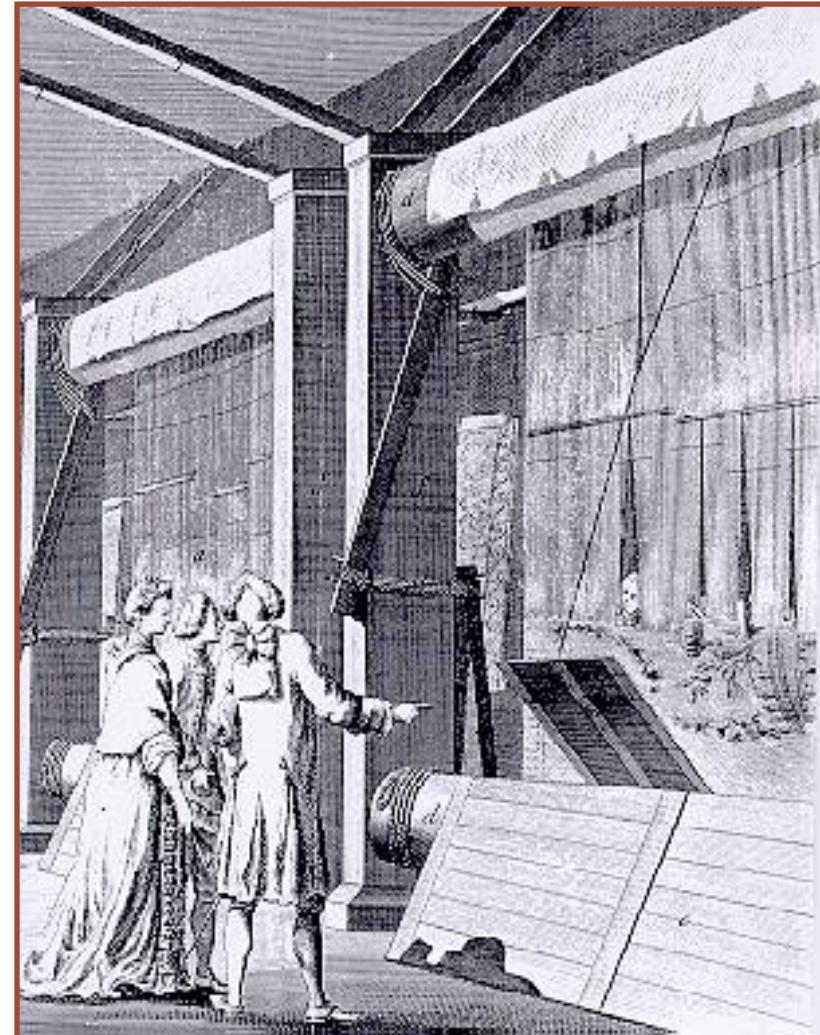
- A textile piece made traditionally by hand on a horizontal/wideness or vertical/ length loom
- Modern tapestries are done usually on a vertical loom
- When using a horizontal loom:
 - The warp is placed horizontally;
 - The weaver gradually lifts the warp threads with the help of the treadles so both of his hands are used to insert the weft;
 - The pattern is created on the weaving so it can be seen at all times by the weaver during the process;
 - The drawing, which is cut into vertical stripes is laced under the warp.



Horizontal/
bottom loom.
After Graaff,
1997.

Tapestry traits

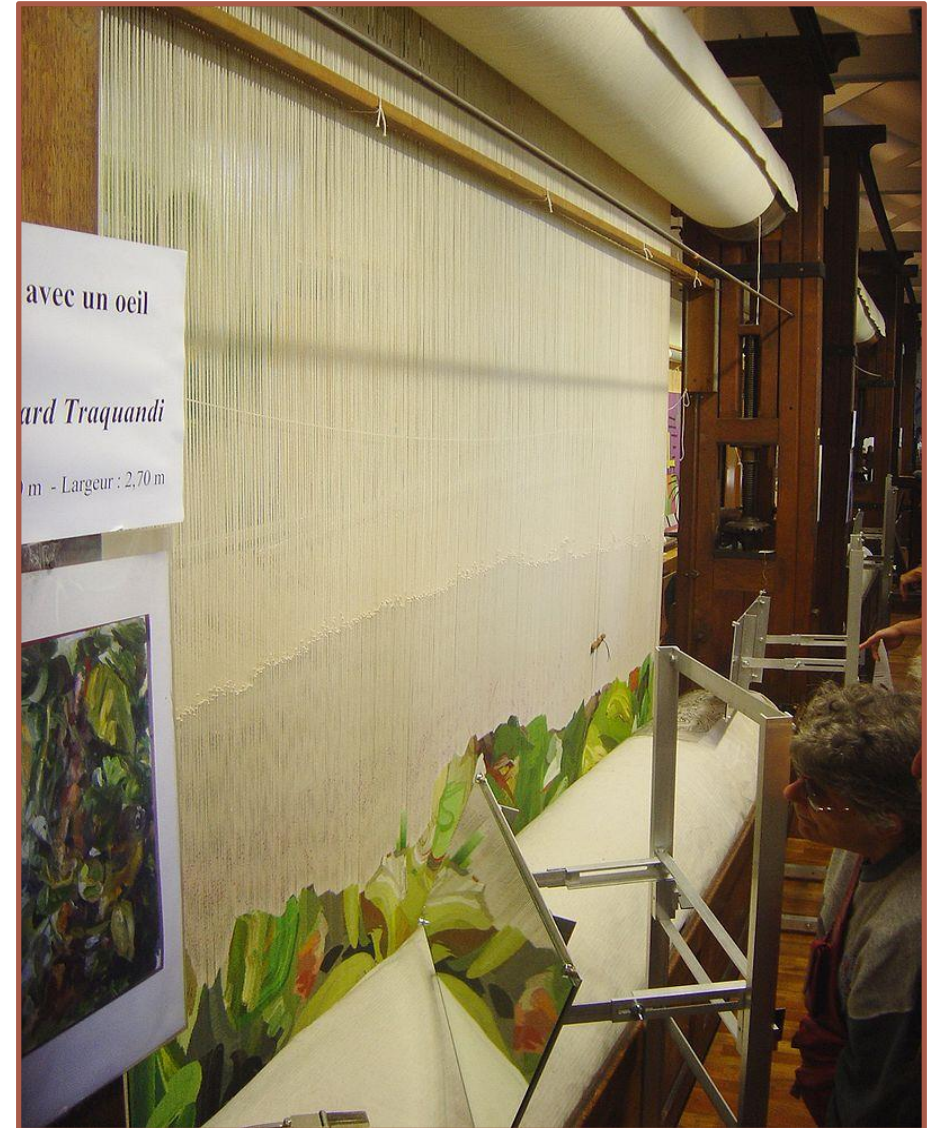
- When using a vertical frame loom:
 - the warp is placed vertically;
 - the weaver lifts one by one the warp threads with one hand and with the other he inserts the weft;
 - the pattern is created on the back of the weaving while this is woven;
 - there are usually two weft lines: one used to create the parts of the drawing and the second generates the weft;
 - the weaver uses a fork like tool to beat the weft;



Vertical/ tall loom.
After Graaff, 1997.

Tapestry traits

- the weaver is seated in front of the loom and uses a mirror in order to check the progress of the process;
- the drawing of the pattern is placed behind the warp in order to follow the lines of the drawing;
- the weaving's front and back are identical.



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tapestry#/media/File:Loom_haute_lisse_DSC08774.jpg (accesat 27 noiembrie 2020)

Tapestry traits



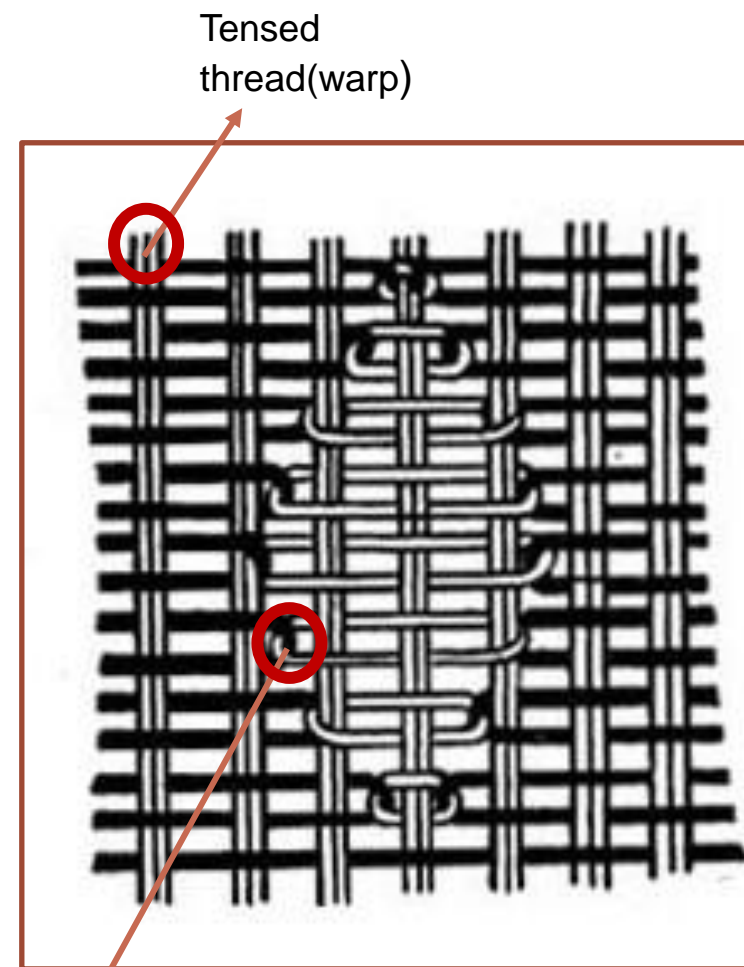
Front and back of a cotton warp tapestry with a wool weft. ASTRA Museum's Textile Collection, , Sibiu, Romania



Front and back of a cotton thread warp tapestry with a goat hair weft. ASTRA Museum's Textile Collection, Sibiu, Romania

Tapestry traits

- The structure of the tapestry is simple, made of two sets of threads:
 - ✓ the first set, called warp, represents the base and is placed along the loom, always tensed;
 - ✓ the second set, called weft, is made of colorful threads that are inserted in a right angle through the warp threads;
- The two sets of interwoven threads are not equal in traits, material or weight; the warp is rougher, usually without colour and is placed at an equal distance while the weft is thinner and it is usually coloured;
- During the weaving process the warp is completely covered by the weft which is tightly beaten;
- It is characterized by the representation of color tones of the pattern scheme;

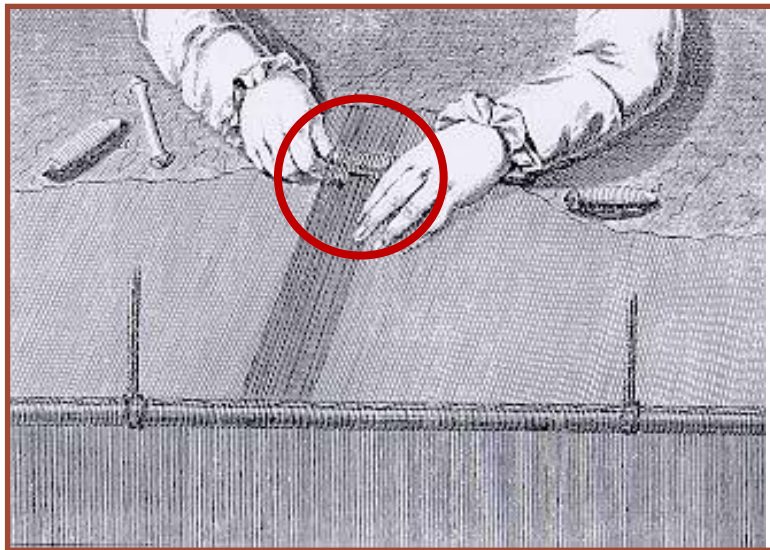


Example of structure.
After Christopher, 2013.

Colored weft threads
(weft)

Tapestry traits

- The weft threads can be discontinued; the weaver inserts each weft thread of different color before and after in his own small area



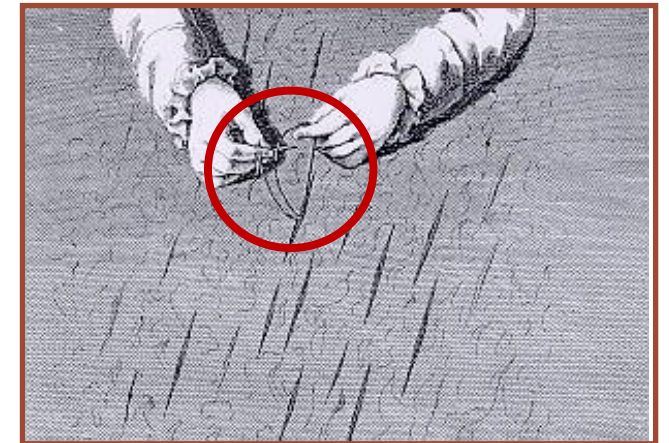
After Graaff 1997

- The weft does not spread on the whole width of the weaving (from edge to edge) but only as a color is needed when creating the pattern



Weaver from Sibiu County, Romania. ASTRA
Museum's Collection of Photography

- The meeting place of two colors on the same straight line parallel to the warp, creates a small gap in the weaving which, after the completion of the weaving can be sewn or can be left as it is to accentuate the pattern



After Graaff 1997

Tapestry traits

- The scenes/ themes presented are created following a predefined drawing called “cardboard” by the specialists , created by a designer/ painter and later it is used by the weaver;



Cardboard representation of the “Christ's Charge to Peter” created by Raphael during the Renaissance between 1515-1516 as ordered by Pope Leo X.

Tapestry traits



„Little Spinner Girl” drawing created by Barbara Burns, tapestry weaver artist, Harpswell, Maine, USA.



„Little Spinner Girl” tapestry woven by Barbara Burns, tapestry weaver artist, Harpswell, Maine, USA.

Tapestry traits

- In the traditional workshops several weavers used to work at the same time on the same piece;
- In the workshops usually men used to weave (due to the large dimensions of the resulting weave);
- Usually the name of the weaver is unknown, most tapestries are anonymous or bear the sign of the workshop where they were created; the name of the creator/designer of the paintings on which the tapestries are based is known;
- The tapestry technique was done world wide (Europe, China, India, Northern Africa, Near East and America) but the Europeans made it an art;
- In late Medieval Europe the tapestry was the greatest and most expensive interior design object. It continued its development and it reflected the artistic and decorum fashion changes until the end of the 18th century (the French Revolution) and the first quarter of the 19th century (the Napoleonic Wars). After a period of decline the art was revived in the 20th century.



The engraving illustrates a visite in the Gobelins workshop, 1691-1699.

A brief history of tapestry

- The lack of archeological discoveries, due mostly to the perishable character of the materials used in making the tapestries, and of graphic or written documents which through the description and language used could certify tapestry as an independent technique, make its origin unclear; probably at one point , during the Prehistoric period the tapestry technique appeared as an evolution result of one of the developing weaving techniques;
- The tapestry's place of origin is also unclear, scientists place it in Central Asia where it appeared as a necessity determined by the need of thermal proofing the tents of the nomadic tribes which inhabited the region;

A brief history of tapestry

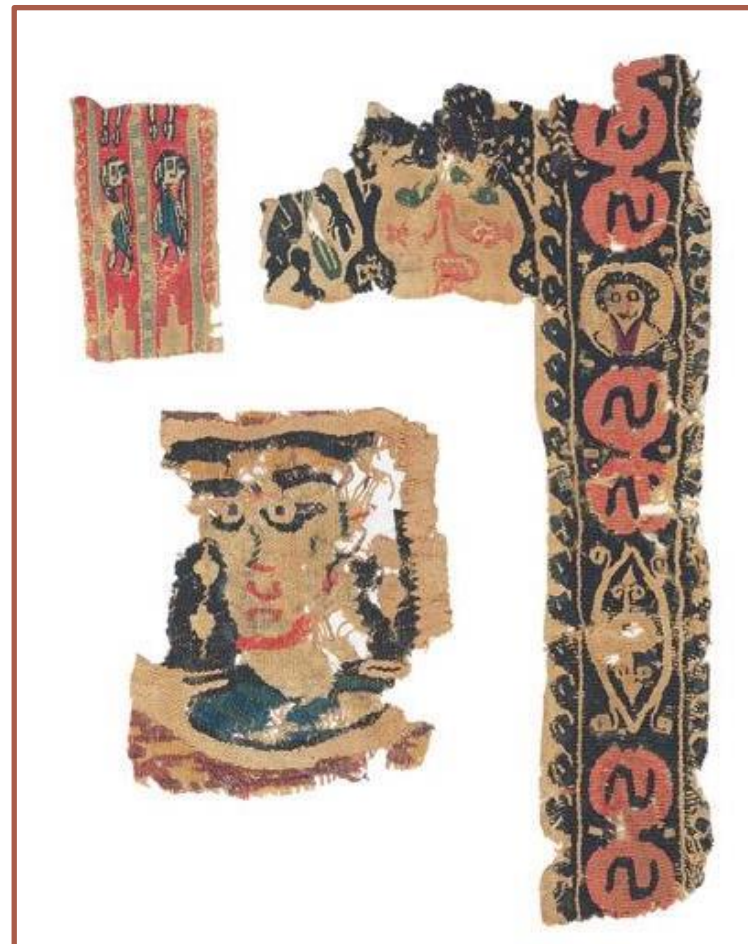
- The few archeological artifacts found prove the existence of tapestry since Antiquity, respectively the historic period between the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Middle Ages; examples:
 - A carpet discovered inside a Scythian tomb (5th century BC) found in Pazyryk Valley, the Altai Mountains, Siberia;
 - Three fragments made of hemp discovered in Egypt inside the tomb of the Pharaoh Thutmose IV (c. 1397 – 1388 BC)*;
 - A jacket and a glove woven as a tapestry discovered in Egypt inside Tutankhamun's tomb (c. 1323 BC)*;
 - Wool fragments discovered in caves in Ukraine, near the Crimean Peninsula (IV-III BC.)*;
 - A silk tapestry found in China, at Loulan, Xingjian Uyghur Autonomous Region (IV-III century BC).

A brief history of tapestry

Surse: https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Covor_persan#/medi%20a/Fi%20%99ier:Pazyryktull.jpg (accesat 26 octombrie 2021)



Pazyryk carpet, 5th century BC, archeological discovery in the Pazyryk Valley, the Altai Mountains, Siberia.



Greek tapestry fragments belonging to the Coptic period (the end of the 3rd century AD-middle of the 7th century AD) discovered in Egypt.

Surse: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/tapestry-education/educational-articles-on-tapestry-weaving/coptic-fabrics-fauves/> (accesat 26 octombrie 2020)

A brief history of tapestry



The Hestia tapestry, also known as “Hestia full of Blessings” Egypt, 6th century AD, Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Washington D.C., USA.



Loulan textile fragment, China

A brief history of tapestry

- The investigation of the technique/ materials/ decorum of the artifacts discovered; the researches concerning the social-historical developments during the named period (the emergence of head cities, merchants, warriors), the mobility of the Antiquity people especially due to the territorial conquests, show not only that carpet making was highly spread but also that, at the end of the Antiquity, it reached a certain development in Asia and that the decorum influences and textile circulation through commerce were already widely documented in Asia and Europe.
- There is not enough information to establish exactly the way, period and place of emergence of the tapestry technique in Europe, but this was done differently in the Western and Eastern Europe, hence the disproportionate development in the named areas;
- The Western-European tapestry bloomed mostly during the Gothic Period, 13th century and lead during the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Era, to a true textile Industrial Art that influenced the royal courts' fashion.



Joshua and David (from the Nine Heroes Tapestries), 1400-1410, South Netherland workshop

Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/468230> (accesat 30 iulie 2021)

A brief history of tapestry

- There are a series of theories concerning the emergence of the tapestry technique in Western Europe: brought and adopted by the Crusaders at their return from the Holy Land; introduced by the Moors in Spain after having conquered the Spanish Territory between 714-732 AD.
- The quantity and quality development reached between the 16 and 17th century by Persian workshops of the Safavide Dynasty period, whose products were exported to India, the Ottoman Empire and Europe is considered by specialists to be a crucial moment in the spreading of the tapestry technique;
- The spreading across Europe was facilitated mostly by the intense commercial exchanges between the European countries and the Orient.
- The oldest European tapestries are considered to be the textile discoveries found in the Church in the Överhogdal Village, Sweden and in the Saint Gereon Church in Cologne, Germany which is why it is considered that tapestries were woven by monastic people.



The Emperor's carpet, Safavid Court atelier, second half 16th century.

A brief history of tapestry



A representation of 5 tapestries found in 1909 in the Sacristy of the Överhogdal Village's Church, Sweden. Late Viking period (793-1066 AD) – Early Middle Ages (5th- 6th century AD).



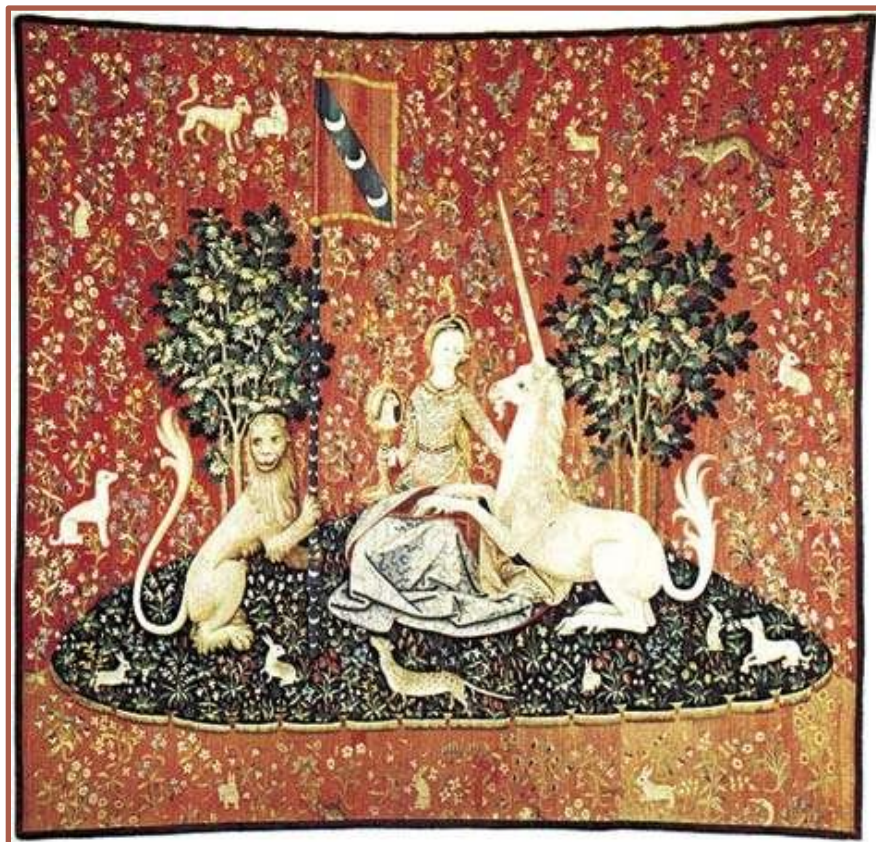
Mural tapestry fragment " Cloth of Saint Gereon",
Cologne, Germany. Dating: 11th century AD

A brief history of tapestry

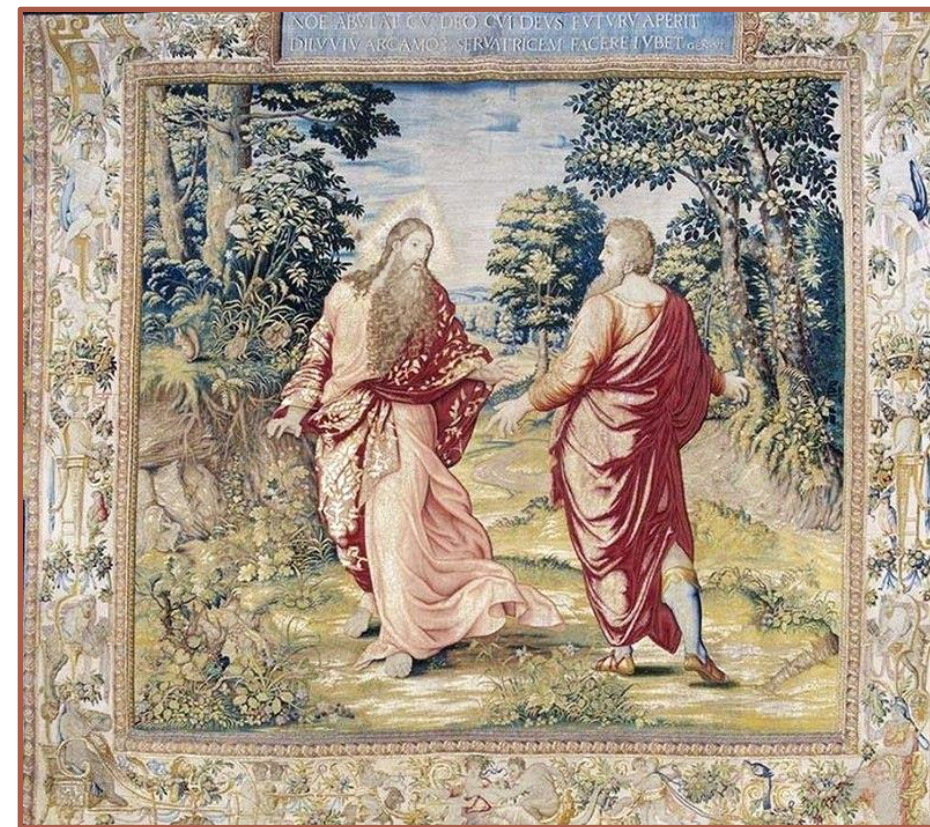
- West-European tapestry bloomed mostly starting with the Gothic period, 13th century and lead, throughout the Middle Ages and Modern era to a true textile industry which influenced the Imperial Courts' fashion;
- In the 14th century worldwide known workshops appeared mostly in France in Paris, Arras, Elzas and in Flanders, today known as Flemish tapestries;
- The international renown of the Arras center was so big that it lead to the emergence of certain words: arrazzo in Italian, drap de raz in Spanish and Arras in English, all derived from the name of this Flemish city.
- The tapestries were woven not only for churches and monasteries but also for royal families and noble people. The pieces are now large and expensive, usually made in sets and presenting narrative and allegorical complicated scenes with a large number of characters or religious figures. They are part of the so called noble furniture that accompanied the owner from one household to another and sometimes even at war. The tapestry becomes a symbol of richness, greatness and power.

A brief history of tapestry

Representations of Flemish tapestries woven by Parisian craftspeople, 14th century A.D.



„The Apocalypse” fragment. The series has seven tapestries and was started in 1377



„God's conversation with Noah” Tapestry.
The History of Noah series

A brief history of tapestry

- In the 15th century the Flemish cities Dornick (also known under the French name Tournai or the Welsh term Dornik) and Brussels's (today in Belgium) became important centers. During the 16th and 17th centuries they reached a huge development and that is why these centuries are called the “belle époque” of the Brussels's industry;
- For example: in 1545, almost 15.000 people were involved in the Brussels tapestry making when the city's population was of 60.000 people.



„*The Unicorn Leaps Out of the Stream*”, 1495–1505, detail. The Metropolitan Museum Of Art, New York, USA. The series' theme: The Hunting of the Unicorn. The piece is believed to have been drawn in France but woven in the (today) Belgian workshops.

A brief history of tapestry

- The tapestry centers are renowned and known especially for the themes approached, as for example the Flemish tapestry masters of Brussels (Belgium) were known in the 15th century for the quality and realism of the tapestries that reproduced religious paintings belonging to the Late Gothic style, or the masters of the late 15th and beginning of the 16th century for the production of “golden carpets” (tapis d’or) called like this due to the abundant use of gold threads. E.g.: *The Triumph of Christ*, popularly known as the Mazarin tapestry;
- Created on demand for the royal European houses: Spain, Portugal;
- The decline of the Brussels’ center was due to the Eighty Years War (1568-1648).

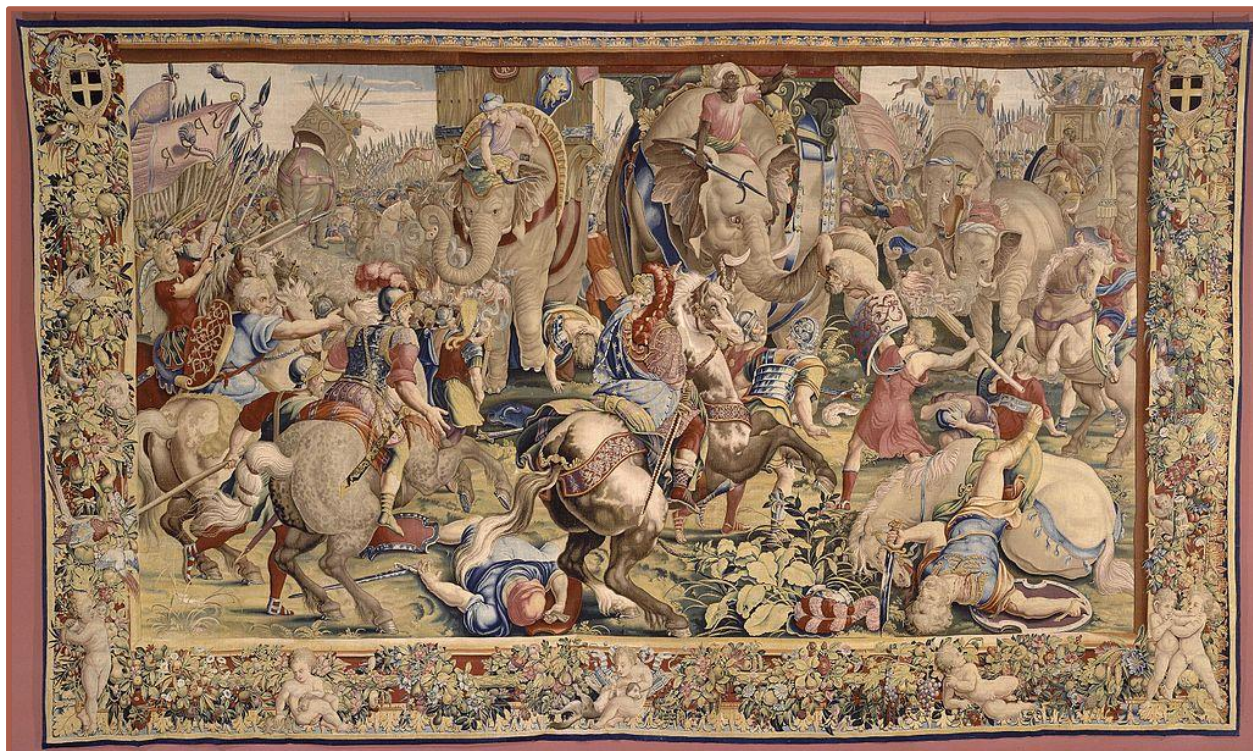


The Triumph of Christ or the Mazarin Tapestry, Brussels, cca. 1500. National Art Gallery, Washington D.C., USA.

A brief history of tapestry

- During the 17th and 18th centuries **FRANCE** surpasses Flanders in becoming the most prestigious country in the field especially through the activity of workshops found under the royal protection known as:
 - „Gobelins Manufactory” situated near Paris; active today. It produced for the royal court. Among the themes used: the series about the flora/fauna/natives/ African slaves found in the Dutch territory of Brazil in the 17th century; the “Royal Houses” series – 12 tapestries that showed a month of the year and a royal castle;
 - „Beauvais Manufactory” active until the French Revolution (which started in 1789). Its products were good for the „domestic” interior. Among the themes used: „the Grotesque” – 6 tapestries; the history of the Emperor of China; Psyche’s history. The first tapestries were influenced by the Flemish tapestry. Since 1737 the workshop produced sets of tapestries as diplomatic state presents;
 - „Savonnerie Manufactory” situated on the outskirts of Paris, its base was laid in 1615 in an old soap factory (hence the name Savonnerie). The carpets produced here during the 17th and 18th century represented a trademark in the field across Europe. A real carpet industry is born, an industry that uses the Turkish knot.
 - „Aubusson Manufactory” situated in the Center part of France became one of the most renowned carpet factories in the 18th century. The neo-classical rococo themes were used the most.
- The tapestry (that imitates the paintings more and more often) along side art and French furniture was a trendsetter during the 17th and 18th centuries for the European fashion;
- Today the Savonnerie and Aubusson carpets, the Beauvais and Gobelins tapestries are very appreciated among collectors and designers.

A brief history of tapestry



„The Battle of Zama” Gobelins Tapestry, woven between 1688-1690 for the emperor Louis XIV. Louvre Museum’s Collection, Paris, France.



„Les Astronomes”, Beauvais tapestry woven between 1697-1705. J. Paul Getty Museum’s Collection, Los Angeles, USA.

Surse: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beauvais_Manufactory#/media/File:BeijingObservatoryUpdateTapestry.png (Accesat 24 noiembrie 2020)

A brief history of tapestry

Savonnerie Carpet
(floor carpet).
J. Paul Getty
Museum's Collection,
Los Angeles, USA.
After Bremer-David,
1997.



Image from the Savonnerie workshop 2018

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Savonnerie_manufactory#/media/File:M%C3%A9tier_%C3%A0_tisser_de_haute_lisse.jpg (Accesat 24 noiembrie 2020)

A brief history of tapestry

Starting with the 16th century many rulers encouraged or even founded, after the French model, workshops capable of producing high quality products for decorating their own palaces, castles, etc.

At the beginning this thing was done with qualified Flemish weavers, a process favored by the fact that the production of the main tapestry centers in the Netherlands in the first two quarters of the 16th century was gravely affected by religious persecutions and by the Civil war that took place in the region between 1560-1570. In the last third of the century many weavers and professional designers migrated in centers in Northern Holland (such as Delft and Middelburg) or further in England, France or the German states where they founded new workshops or developed the existing ones.



Fragment of a tapestry or wall hanging, cca. 1420-1430, Basel, Switzerland

A brief history of tapestry

➤ Spain:

- Tapestry weaving appeared before the 5th century under Moor dominion and was in decline until the 18th century;
- In 1721 the Spanish King Philip V (Bourbon) founded in Madrid a royal tapestry factory known under the name Santa Bárbara* following the model of the French manufactories**, with the purpose to decorate the royal palace. Since 1744 it becomes an industry tied to the crown and financed by the state.
- The middle of the 18th century sees the spread of the Spanish knot ***;
- Since the 19th and 20th century custom orders are placed by private customers that prefer the traditional narrow format of the Spanish tapestry.



Portret of the Spanish King Philip V
(Bourbon)

Source: https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filip_al_V-lea_al_Spaniei
(accesat 25 noiembrie 2020)

* Active today as a foundation (since 1996), The Royal Tapestry Factory Foundation,
<http://realfabricadetapices.com/en/>.

** Some French style carpets are known as the Spanish Savonnerie.

*** Tied around a single warp thread.

A brief history of tapestry

➤ Great Britain:

- tapestry appeared as a result of trading;
- at the beginning the tapestry pieces or carpets were ordered and imported from Flanders;
- The first major workshops were founded after the middle of the 16th century in Barcheston (Warwickshire). Initially they produced pillow cases and small tapestries that presented heraldic and ornamental subjects, or topographic themes*.
- In the 18th century, Moorfields in London and Axminster in Devon are recognized → at first they copy and adapt the Oriental patterns that suited the Baroque architecture of the English buildings and later they follow a neo-classical style.



Carpet after a design by Robert Adam, 1770-1780,
Moorfields (?), England

*Many workers were Flemish, which escaped from the religious persecutions.
Surse: <https://www.britannica.com/art/tapestry/16th-century> (accesat 24 noiembrie 2020).

Surse: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/205226>
(accesat 24 noiembrie 2020).

A brief history of tapestry

- **SCANDINAVIA:** In Copenhagen and Stockholm royal tapestries appeared. The weavers and designers were usually of French and Flemish origin. A large number of workshops were placed in the rural communities: for example of the 1.300 Norwegian tapestries registered, 1.250 come from small rural communities. The tapestries produced were usually rough in texture, with a bold colored symbolic design.



Orphée jouant pour les Animaux, tapestry,
Northern Netherlands, first half of the 17th century.

A brief history of tapestry

➤ ITALY:

The production of tapestry production existed in several Italian cities in the 16th century, but the only recognized large workshop that survived until the 17th century was the one founded by Cosimo de Medici in Florence in 1540. The workshop enjoyed a revived prosperity during the ruling of Ferdinando II Medici (r. 1621–1670), by adapting designs by artists such as Agostino Melissi (cca. 1615–1683).

A new initiative was taken by the Cardinal Francesco Barberini (the nephew of Pope Urban VIII) who founded in 1633 a tapestry workshop in Rome (following a visit in Paris, France, where he received tapestries as gifts from Louis XIII). Although it was supported by the Pope this workshop produced tapestries only until 1679. Pope Clement XI tried to create a new tapestry workshop in 1710 but he was unsuccessful. In the 18th century there were small factories in Turin and Naples where workers from Florence arrived after the closing of the Medici factory.



The Medici wedding tapestry, designed by Alessandro Allori, Grand-Ducal workshop of Guasparri di Bartolommeo Papini, 1589

A brief history of tapestry

- **GERMANY:** in 1686 Pierre Mercier, a professional weaver from Aubusson, took refuge in Berlin where supported by the court he founded a tapestry manufactory. Other workshops functioned in Dresden and Munich.

- **RUSSIA** had high quality workshops. A tapestry workshop with „Gobelin” trained workers was founded in Sankt Petersburg in 1716 by the Tsar Peter the Great (1672–1725). It produced tapestries until 1859. The most impressive works are two „Grotesque” sets (created between 1733-1738) and the portraits, such the ones of Catherine the Great (created between 1729-1796)*.




Tapestry portrait of Augustus the Strong, workshop of Pierre Mercier, Dresden, 1713-1729.

Surse: <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/26340/lot/3/?category=list>
(accesat 24 noiembrie 2020).

*Surse: https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tapb/hd_tapb.htm (accesat 25 noiembrie 2020).

A brief history of tapestry

➤ SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE:

- Simultaneous influences from the Orient (especially Turkey) and from the West through the travelers and tradespeople  original style.
- Individual workshops are dominating in a household textile industry which ruled the land since the Middle Ages (Romania; Republic of Moldova).
- The tapestries were woven in monastery and royal workshops (Romania, Moldova); in specialized urban centers (Bulgaria, Serbia) or manufactories (Poland).*
- The term tapestry is rarely used, instead they used terms such as chimil or kilim (Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Serbia**, Ukraine, Poland), carpet, rug, wall carpet/scoarță (Romania) as it is proven by the documents of the late 18th century and early 19th century.

*Pascu 1998, 55-56.

**<https://craftatlas.co/crafts/pirot-kilim>.

A brief history of tapestry



Pattern on a kilim
carpet, Pilot, Serbia



Traditional Carpets,
Oltenia, Romania

A brief history of tapestry

- Starting with the middle of the 18th century due to the lifestyle changes and to the political and industrial improvements (the emergence of the mechanical loom) and because of its higher cost, tapestry loses ground against the old paintings, wood panels, silk drapes and wallpaper → numerous factories are closed (for example Holland in the third quarter of the 18th century) or their activity diminishes (France*, Spain**).
- A part of the traditional tapestry survives as a compulsory part of many great European palaces and ancestral homes by the end of the 18th century and early 19th century but it was relocated in the so called „tapestry chambers”. Other times, the tapestries were covered by paintings and mirrors. During and after the civil wars many were burnt in order to extract the precious metals or were simply tossed away.



Tapestry room -The Royal Reception Chambers, Christianborg Palace, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Source: <https://www.alamy.com/denmark-zealand-copenhagen-christianborg-palace-the-royal-reception-chambers-tapestry-room-image259647488.html> (accessed 25 noiembrie 2020)

*Graaff 1997, 10.

**The only tapestry center that continued to bloom until the early 1800's was the Santa Bárbara center, in Madrid were under the patronage of Charles III and Charles IV it produced a continuous flux of royal patterns and drawings, the most remarkable are those of Francisco de Goya (1746–1828).

A brief history of tapestry

- Simultaneously to the development of the European tapestry, the Oriental tapestry develops as well, the two having influence on each other during the years, for example in the 17th century Europe the Persian carpets produced especially in Tabriz, Persia (today Iran) become very popular. After an eventful period during the 19th and 20th century the Persian and Turkish products, especially carpets and rugs became a fashion in numerous areas across the globe, thus gradually giving up the traditional weaving for the commercial one aimed for the middle classes in Europe and North America.
- Even today luxury is associated with the Persian rug.



Tabriz carpet .
The end of the 9th
century. After:
Middleton 1996.

A brief history of tapestry

- During the 19th century new workshops appear, they resurrect the traditional technique of tapestry weaving: in England William Morris' Morris & Co (1834-1896) has invigorated the manual weaving of carpets using the tapestry technique, by preferring the Persian or Gothic patterns; Ireland is renowned for the so called „donegs” made in a technique similar to the Ushak (Turkey) one, produced in Alexander Morton & Co workshop, founded in 1890 in the Killybegs Village on the West Cost of Donegal.



Image of textile printing from Merton Abbey, 1890

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morris_%26_Co.
(accesat 25 noiembrie 2020)

A brief history of tapestry

- The 20th century brings forward the tapestry art which becomes an artistic, decorative object made both by artistic weavers and by craftspeople*.
- The tapestries become grand and often tri-dimensional.
- Art schools appear and so the work becomes individualized and the weaver uses new techniques (braiding, crochet, applied, printed) and new materials (jute, sisal) are used along side the traditional ones; varied/extravagant color and shapes are used; the size is sometimes reduced to the one of a painting.

*Characterized mostly by the artist's predominance as a weaver in the contemporary environment as well as a rural weaver. This new tendency originates in France in 1950 when Jean Lurçat, a former Aubusson tapestry designer initiated a simplification of the selection of colors used in tapestry, thus simplifying the production, furthermore he organizes a series of every two year exhibitions in Lausanne în Elveția.



Tapestry of *Christ in Glory*, 1962, Coventry Cathedral, England, designed by Graham Sutherland, Pinton workshops France

A brief history of tapestry

- New centers emerge influenced by the experience of participating to the Lausanne exhibitions, for example in the USA before the Second World War there were many weavers but there had never been a network of tapestry workshops so in time, associations and a true network of modern tapestry appears.
- Since 1980 the tapestry making art becomes an international movement, rewarding both in terms of artistic recognition and financially. Artists start to attend educational training programs held by the new center (for example the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop, in USA).
- International organizations, active even today, appear: American Tapestry Alliance (ATA) founded in 1982*, or the International Tapestry Network (ITNET) founded in 1988 with the purpose to connect the artists of ATA with the international community.
- Specialized university departments appear across Europe and the USA.



Biennale de la Tapisserie,
Lausanne, 1977

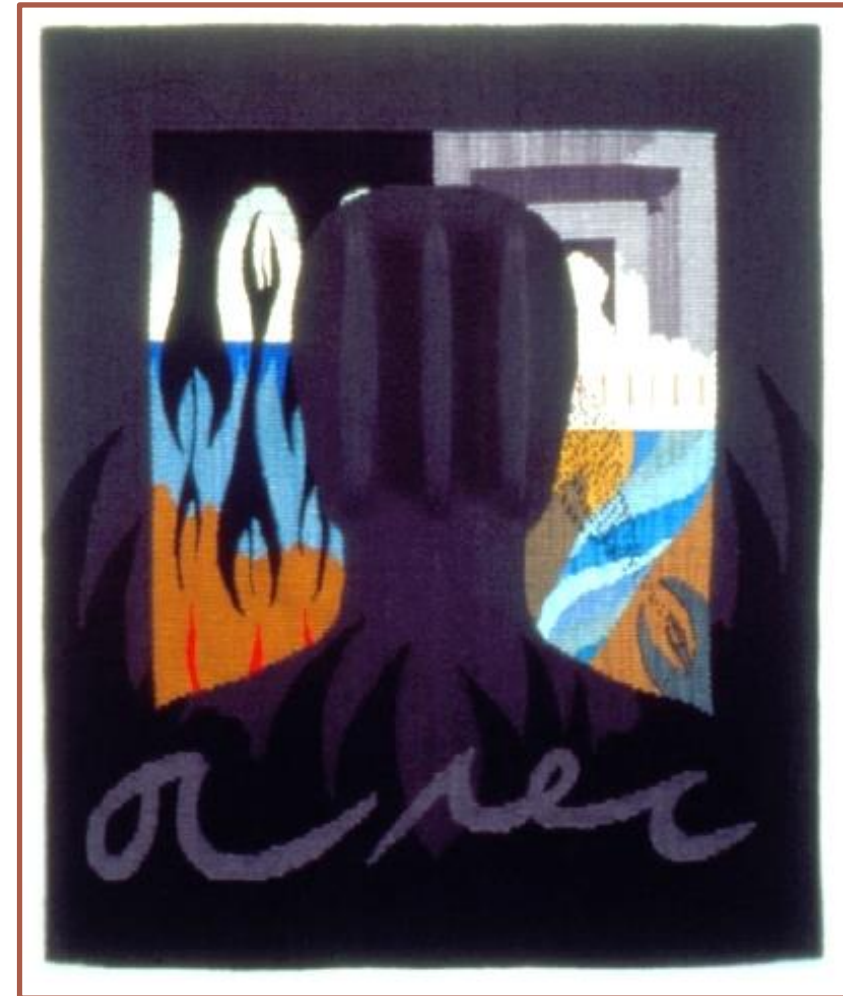
Biennale de la Tapisserie, Lausanne, 1981

Source: <http://www.toms-pauli.ch/en/les-biennales/documentation/>
(accesat 25 noiembrie 2021)

A brief history of tapestry

The openness and development of the contemporary tapestry art is best defined through the personal experiences of tapestry artists:

„...I fell in love with tapestry thanks to its simplicity – its direct traits. It allowed me to investigate the shape, imagery and texture and it has the structural integrity in order to keep its shape. I liked the substantial quality of a tapestry woven with heavier threads – the quality of its object...”, Susan Iverson, 2007*



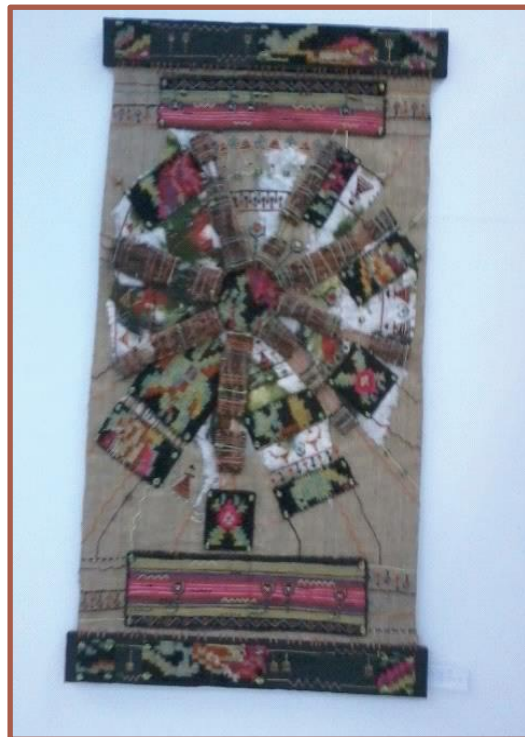
Tapestry detail „Futile dreams”, Susan Iverson

Source: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/Members/NLv30n4/NLv30n4p6.html> (accesat 26 noiembrie 2020).

A brief history of tapestry



„Scions”, 2015. Author N. Zimbroianu, Romania. Materials: sisal, felt, wool.
After Babin 2017, Des 6.



„Wheal of weather”, 2016. Author I. Burlaca, Romania. Materials: embroidery, felt, wool.
After Babin 2017, Des 2.



„Living” 2004. Author Joan Baxter, Scotland. Materials: cotton, wool, digital images, laminated written stripes, pebbles.*



„The school” and „The town hall”. Materials: coton, wool. Author Mihaela Găță, Romania.
Private photo collection of Mihaela Găță.

A brief history of tapestry

- Today's tapestry is a passion, an artistic form of expression, a means of living, an exhibition object, an exhibition/conference theme, a study object, a sold object, a collectible, a souvenir:

https://issuu.com/behappydigital/docs/3._catalogul_decorativearts_2012__2

<https://atelier.net/ro/mihai-moldovanu>

<https://www.icr.ro/pagini/artele-textile-romanesti-in-centrul-atentiei-la-bienala-de-la-haacht-prin-lucrarile-a-sase-artiste-consacrate>

<https://chisinauorasulmeu.wordpress.com/category/arte-decorative/>

<https://melindanemeth25.wordpress.com/2015/04/12/tapiseria/ORIZONT%20ALTERNATIV>

<https://tapestryforeurope.com>

<https://www.burns-studio.com/videotutorials/>

<https://melindanemeth25.wordpress.com/2015/04/12/tapiseria/>

<https://v21artspace.com/search?q=Pitt%20Rivers>

<http://www.mavgl.ro/index.php/en/evenimente/171-tehnici-in-tapiseria-romaneasca>

<http://www.artar.ro/firescul-locului-violeta-carp-galeria-foisor-centrul-cultural-palatele-brancovenesti-mogosoiaia/>

<https://www.lightinthebox.com/ro/p/tapiserie-de-luna-tapiserie-de-galaxie-copac-tapiserie-cer-instelat-tapiserie-arta-mistica-psihedelica-tapiserie-agatat-de-perete-pentru-decorarea>

<https://www.artizanat-cadouri-speciale.ro/produs/tapiserie-traditionala-7/>

https://www.artizanattraditional.ro/artizanat-traditional_4/tapiserii-si-covoare_34

<http://artapringauracheii.ro/scoala-romaneasca-de-tapiserie-ultimele-5-decenii-doina-mandru-dorina-horatau-viorica-sladescu-maria-musat-arta-prin-gaura-cheii-steluta-rosca-stanescu/>

<https://www.visarts.org/exhibition/the-color-of-no/>

And many more...

The function of tapestry

- The tapestry is exhibited vertically on a wall and it was considered a decorative art because it has elements that decorate the interior.
- The tapestry is a monumental art because it is big, it took over the walls of castles, palaces and impressive buildings having the capacity to influence the architectural aspect and to create the ambiance.
- Tapestry is a complex art that needs the effort of several people with different occupations (artists, designers, weavers).
- Tapestry has both an embellishing/decorative purpose and a protection/ insulating one as well: wall, furniture (table, bed*, chest).
- It is used as a panel/screen in order to protect either the person that changes its clothes or the occupants/players in a room against draft.
- The floor tapestry or carpets and rugs woven in the tapestry technique have the purpose to decorate the floors.
- A religious object in the Orient; Muslims kneel on the carpet for prayer.

*In the Middle Ages and Renaissance a rich tapestry panel, also called a canopy or state canopy, was hanged behind or above a throne as a symbol of authority. It presented symbolic shields, mottos or coat of arms.

The function of tapestry

- Tapestry had the role of an interior wardrobe: it could be folded (in large cloth bags) and transported (by wagons) easily from one residence to the other, so that many kings had entire departments dedicated to caring for, mending and moving the tapestries. The bigger and grand ones designed for public spaces were exhibited only for special ceremonies (crowning, weddings, processions) in order to avoid its damaging.
- Tapestries were gifted in the Medieval and modern past.
- Smaller pieces were created as furniture or pillow cases, curtains and canopy drapes.
- After their deterioration and obsolesce many tapestries were reused: bags, clothing, covering the furniture (the Beauvais manufactory becomes known for „upholstering” chairs with tapestry*).
- The end of the 17th century and beginning of the 18th century sees tapestries as compulsory objects in a room, and so the larger ones are cut in order to fit around windows and doors. On top of them paintings are hanged/ the paintings become the favorite art accessories for the royal households. Sometimes tapestry is used to demarcate textiles or part of textiles in which case it is woven in narrow long stripes.

The function of tapestry



Wall tapestry
„Psyché and the
chimney
sweeper” .
Beauvais
Manufactory
(cca. 1741-
1770). After:
Bremer-David
1997.



Panel representation. Savonnerie Manufactory, Paris (cca. 1719-1784). After:
Bremer-David 1997.

The function of tapestry

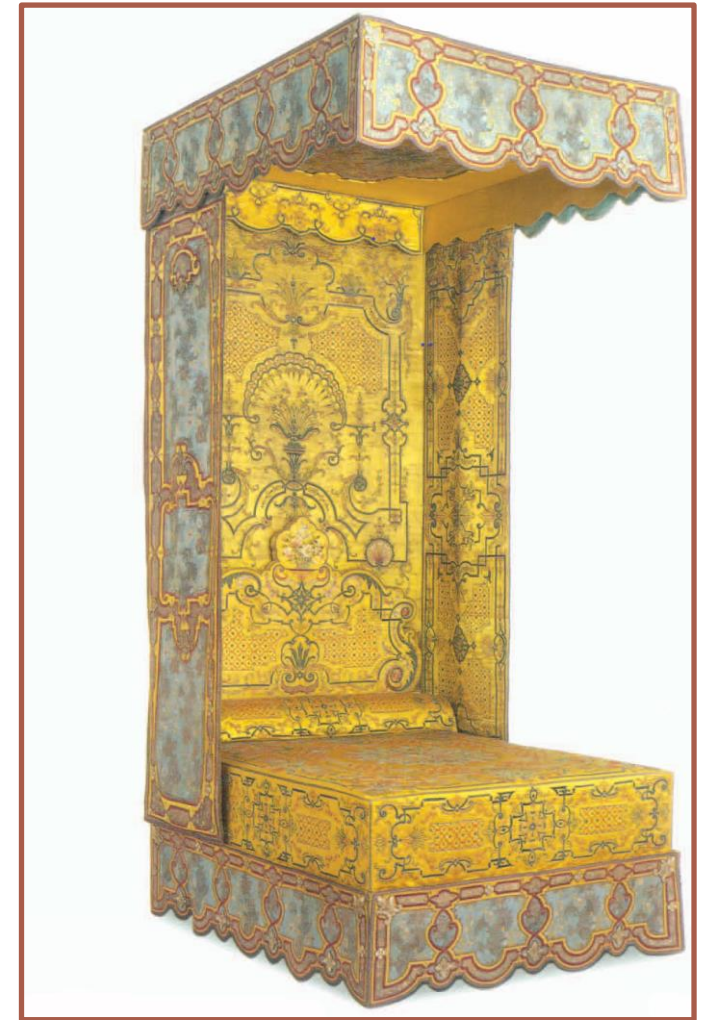


Door tapestry. Gobelins Manufactory (cca. 1728-1730). After: Bremer-David 1997.



Representation of Henry VIII of England (1509-1547) placed on a seating tapestry cloth.

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tapestry> (accesat 25 noiembrie 2021)



Representation of a „lit à la duchesse” or a Duchesses' bed covered by a tapestry weaving and manually embroidered with satin (cca. 1690-1715). After: Bremer-David 1997.

The function of tapestry



The tapestry chamber (covers the chairs as well) from Croome Court Manor from Croome D'Abitot, Worcestershire, England (the middle of the 18th century). Gobelins Manufactory. Today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.



Armchair, 1754-1756. Beauvais Manufactory. Today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.

The function of tapestry



Portrait of King George II. Woven in Robert Baillie's workshop (?), Dublin, Ireland. 1732-1735. Today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.

Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/203904>
(accesat 26 noiembrie 2020).



Portrait of Napoleon I. Designed 1805, woven 1808–1811. Gobelins Manufactory. Today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.

Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/199313>
(accesat 26 noiembrie 2020).

The function of tapestry



Grand Salon from the Hotel de Tessé, 1768-1772. Savonnerie Manufactory. Today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.



Carpet, third quarter 17th century. Savonnerie Manufactory. Today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.

Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/206502>
(accesat 26 noiembrie 2020).

The function of tapestry



Double Saddlebag, 1875, Iran.

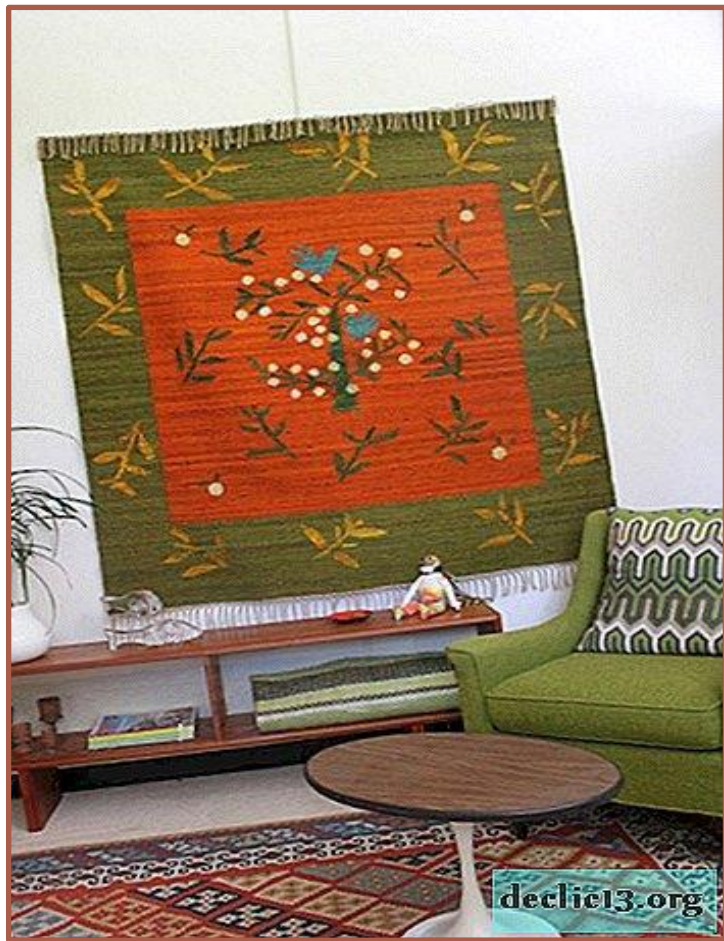


Antique Turkish kilim prayer rug,
early 20th century, Anatolia.

Surse: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/681774>
(accesat 26 noiembrie 2020).

Surse: <https://www.kilim.com/detail/k0005980-antique-erzurum-kilim-rug>
(accesat 15 iulie 2021).

The function of tapestry



Urban interior tapestry, the end of the 20th century – beginning of the 21st century.

The function of tapestry



Traditional peasant interior, half of the 19th century Câmpulung Moldovenesc, Suceava County, Romania . ASTRA Open air Museum, Sibiu, Romania.



Traditional peasant interior, second half of the 20th century-beginning of the 21st century, Nucet, Sibiu County, Romania.
Foto: Elena Găvan, 2018.

Materials used

- **The warp threads** are the most important, they must be firm, since they support the weft and the knots. For this reason, during the years, wool and cotton threads were used most of the time, but also silk, goat hair, camel hair, jute or hemp threads were used. Cotton threads are used the most for modern tapestries.
- **The weft threads** are smaller in diameter than the warp threads; they can be thinner, softer or spinner. Along history, depending on the function and value of tapestry, materials such as silk*, metallic gold or silver threads, colored wool**, wire or strings were used. Today cotton is used for warp while the weft thread is chosen by the weaver: wool, melana, string, textile or leather waste, raffia, silk or crystals, and so on.



Vier Diana, Hîrjsuca, R. Moldova, 16th years old. Materials: coton, wool.

Photo: Iulia Teodorescu, 2019.

*silk was initially used in Europe for small decorative area, but towards the end of the 17th century, was used to cover larger areas (Graaff 1997, 10)

**the color can be representative, as the designs, for a certain type of carpets (Stone 2000, 13)

Technique

- The cultural, religious and geographical factors had an important role in developing the tapestry technique, materials used and decorum.
- The tapestry weaving is a discontinued weft weaving, its direction is reversed many times in order to produce an area of a certain color.
- Its base is a simple woven structure (plain weave or tabby weave) created by intertwining the continuous weft threads through the warp (which many times become hidden), this is why it has an identical pattern on both sides. For this weave, the warp thread is interwoven on top of the weft thread by lifting and descending the first threads, that is each weft thread underneath and above the warp threads on it width. The resulting cloth is characterized by its durability and good quality. The most used traditional techniques used mostly for carpet/rug weaving: kilim, knots and suomak weaving, can overlap this structure.



Technique

1. THE KILIM TECHNIQUE:

- Some specialists consider this technique to be the oldest tapestry weaving technique.
- Structural type: simple, formed exclusively of warp and knotless weft, this is also called plain weave.
- Weaving: the weaver passes the weft threads through each warp thread from edge to edge; when a new color is needed the weft is passed partially through the warp until the point where the pattern changes, then the new color is inserted and it continues until the pattern changes again or the edge is reached. A vertical gap is formed at each changing of pattern. The gaps are sometimes sewn in once the weave is done.
- It is not suitable for floor tapestries.
- It has mostly a home usage.
- Typical for the Orient and South-Eastern Europe.
- Chinese tapestry is based on silk, it is also known as “ke-si” (cut silk).

Technique

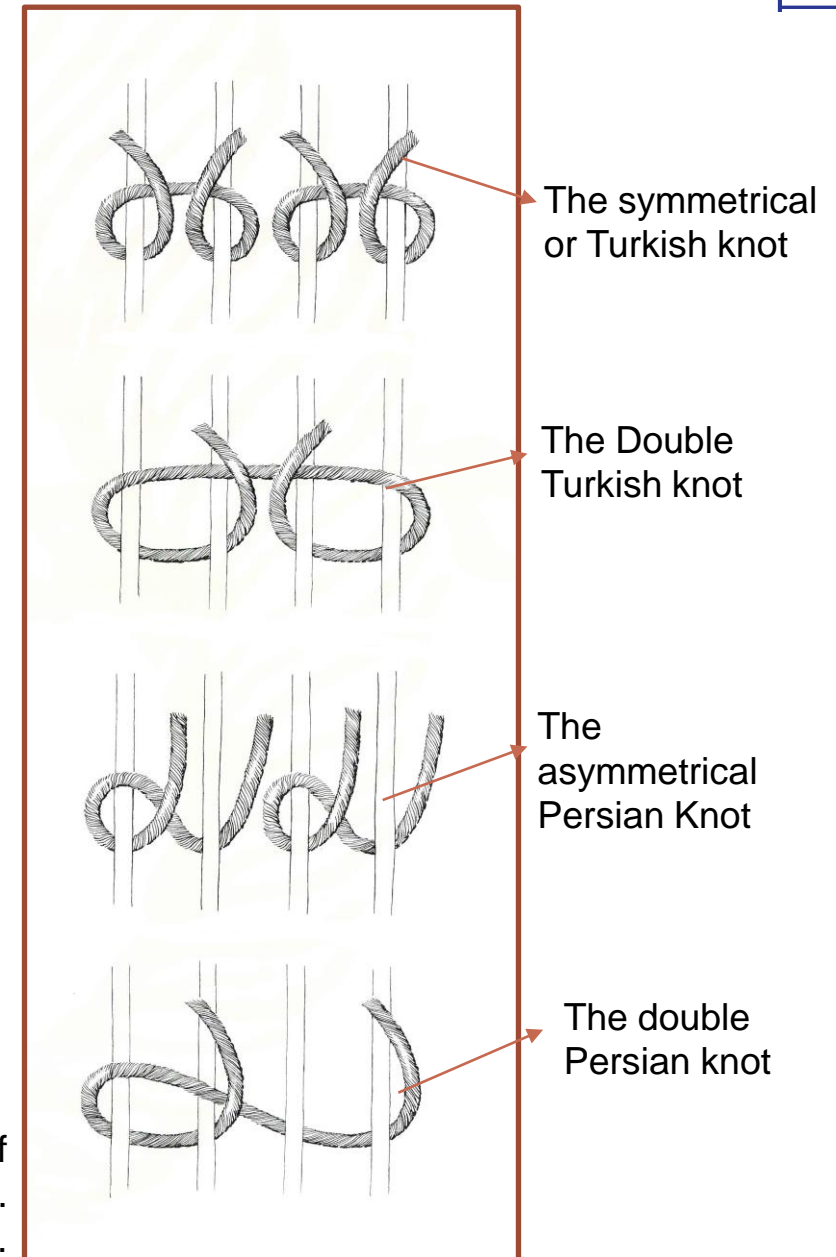
POZĂ COVOR CU KILIM colectie

Technique

2. THE PILLED WEAVE/ THE KNOTTED WEAVE

- Structural type: simple, made of warp and knotted weft.
- The knots are tied to the warp (usually to two or more threads) and fixed by wefts threads.
- Typical to the East and preferred by Western Europe.
- It involves a higher degree of work which is why the objects woven in this technique are very .
- It allows following the design in the smallest details.
- Knot types: symmetrical or Turkish; asymmetrical or Persian.

Representation of
types of knots.
After Middleton 1996, 20.



Technique

Weaving technique: it starts from the plain weaving of a cloth piece and then the knots* are tied in row to the warp. The loose ends of the knot form the pile. When the knots are tied/beaten the weaver pulls down the ends thus giving the pile a certain direction**. The first row is tied to the bottom or end of the weave. The piles are placed so that their ends could be distributed on the bottom part of the carpet; as each knot is tied the created pile covers the preceding knot row. After each knot row one or several new wefts are inserted***. The knots are beaten by the weaver with the help of a comb.

The resulting cloth is soft and insulating.



Source: <http://therugsmith.com/hand-knotted> (accessed 16 iulie 2021)

*The knot density is very important, the more knots, the finer the cloth (Stone 2000, 18).

**The pile is very important, according to its direction the colors seem darker if the weave is seen from the bottom up (the light is absorbed by the pile's ends) or they seem lighter if seen from above (Stone 2000, 16).

***A single beating of the warp is called „pulling”. The number of wefts between the knot rows can be indicative of a certain area zone (Stone 2000, 13).

3. THE SOUMAK TECHNIQUE

- Origin: Azerbaijan Provence in the Caucasus*;
- It is described as a weave with an extra weft, the first one is the structural one along side the warp and the second one, the extra one, is the soumak weft which crosses the warp at certain intervals.
- The extra weft does not cross from one edge to the other and crosses the warp on an uneven number of threads** gathered in a loop, one before and one after. The weft crosses the warp threads in the direction of the loops, before pulling them down under the last two, thus wrapping the ends in a manner which resembles the embroidering stitch. The process is repeated on each row. The bottom weft threads could be left uncut for several centimeters in order to give a better warmth.



Source: <https://www.rugandkilim.com/product/antique-soumak-traditional-burgundy-red-and-blue-wool-rug-12727/#tab-description> (accesat 16 iulie 2021)

* Today part of the Republic with the same name. Collinwood 1968, 183.

**usually a technique implies the insertion of the weft over four warp threads

Technique

4. THE VERNEH TECHNIQUE

- It is a name given to weaves made through the combination of the kilim and soumak techniques;
- Usually used in the Caucasus and Anatolia;
- Unsuitable for floor tapestries.



Source: <https://www.etsy.com/listing/1025482705> (accesat 16 iulie 2021)

Decorum and design

- The decorum and design of tapestries has evolved continuously during the years: from naturalistic themes to abstract ones – geometrical representations of naturalistic themes*; from mythological and allegorical ones to religious or lay themes glorifying the life of kings**.
- The patterns are, most of the times, specific to a certain tapestry workshop/manufactory or to an area even if the influences are also defined.***
- In a tapestry you can identify the any parts that form the design: a central dominant field; the main and secondary edges that determine/complete and add a certain balance of the decorum.

*Dominate the floor tapestries or carpets/rugs.

**Found on the wall tapestries or on those that cover different furniture elements dedicated to royal or rich class.

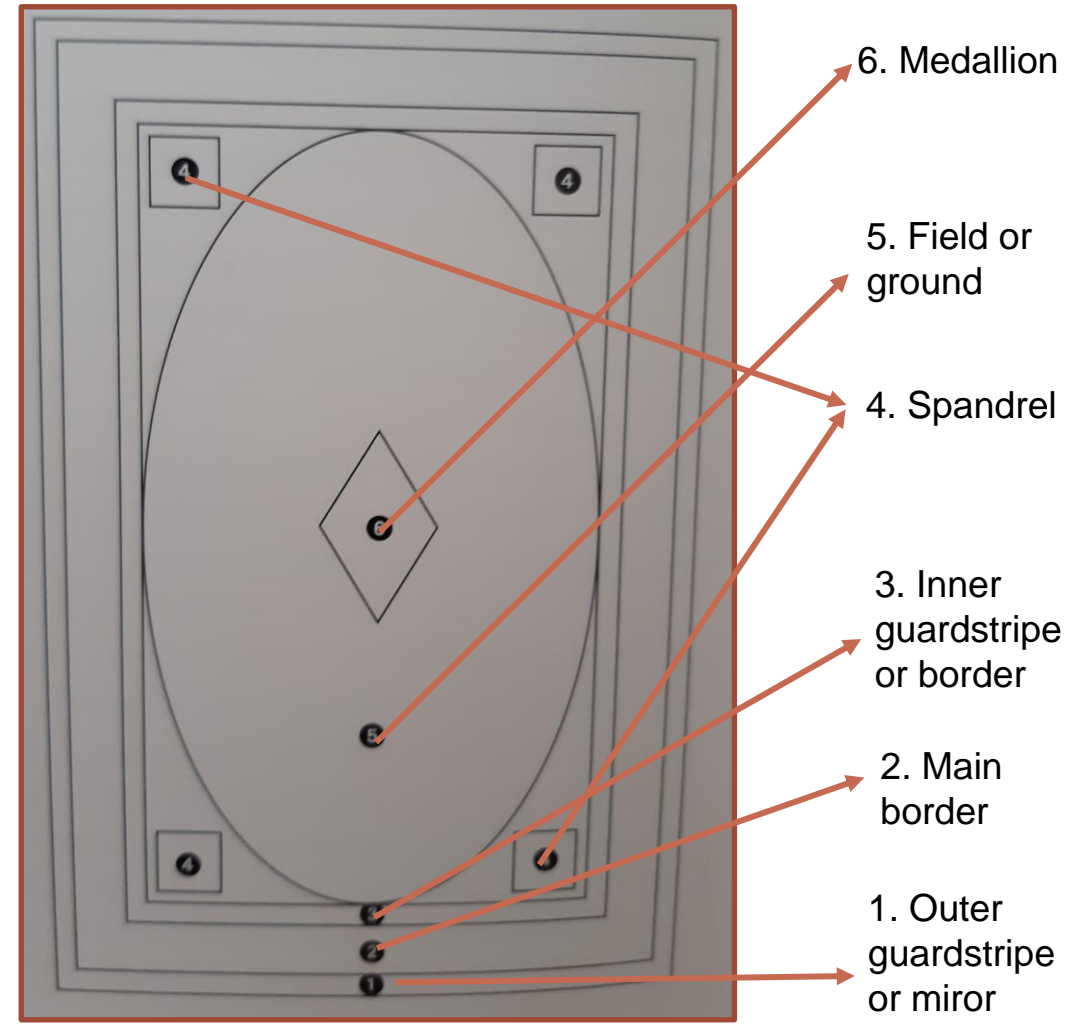
***Middleton 1996, 26.



Representation of a carpet. After Middleton 1996.

Decorum and design

- Specific traits:
 - the decorum and color areas are clearly defined, they are separated by overlapping clear contours;
 - repetitive;
 - the presence of a singular or multiple medallions placed in a single or in more;
 - placed in a panel or garden type image;
 - painting resemblance;
 - undirected pattern that can be seen from both sides/ends of the weave;
 - the usage of edges: the main frame is surrounded by a main frame which in its turn is surrounded on both sides by other secondary/ narrow edges also called interior and exterior stripes.



Graphic representation of the design of a carpet. After Middleton 1996.

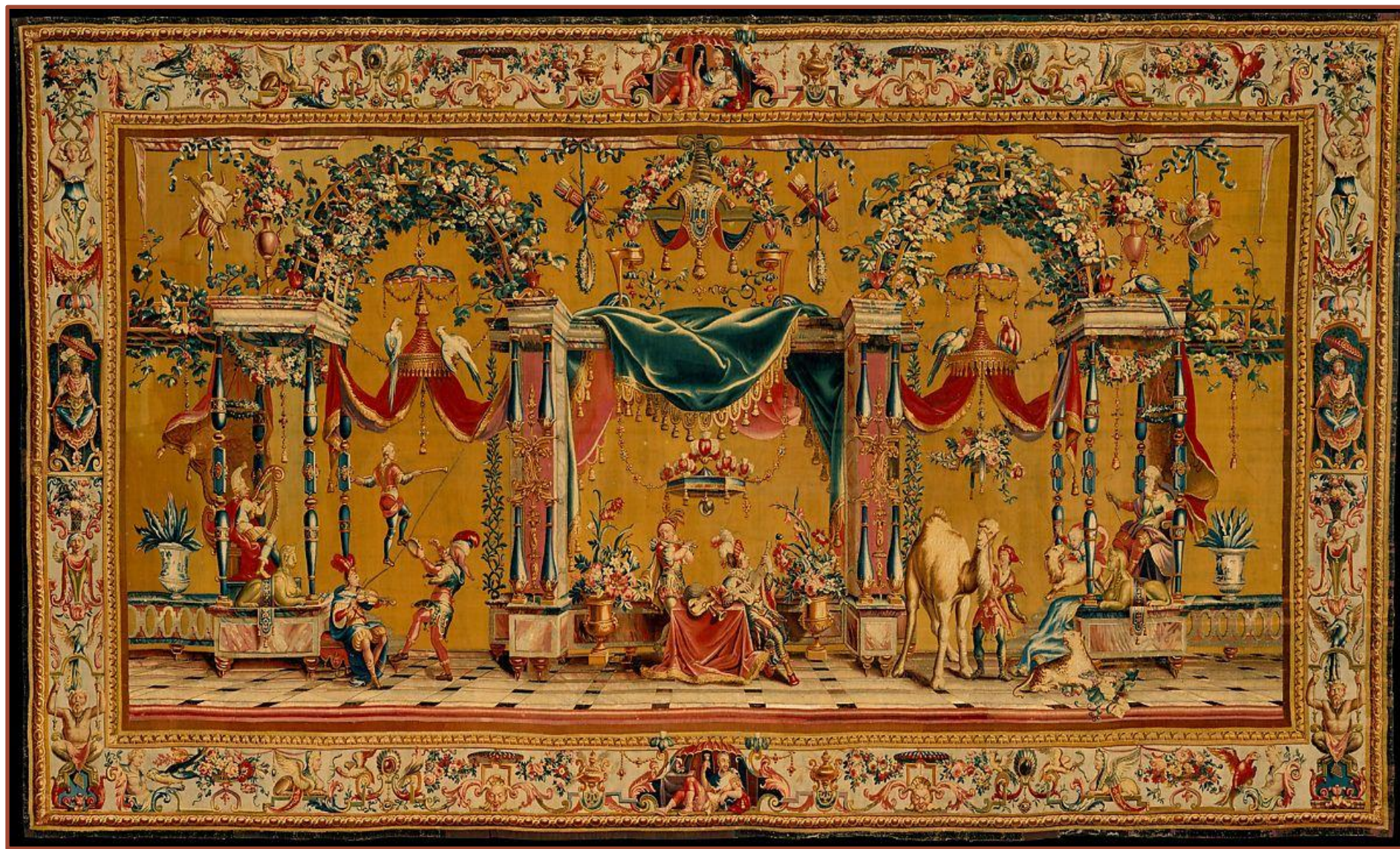
Decorum and design

- serial – during the Middle Ages the European tapestries were usually made in sets so that one big room could be covered with tapestries that had the same theme (example: the „Honores” set contains 9 pieces of moralistic and allegorical scenes tied to the royal ethical principles of the 17th century*; „The Spheres” set contains three drapes with different spheres that praised the heroic travels of the Portuguese travelers under the protection of the Aviz Royal house**; „The story of Scipio” is made up of 22 pieces that explore the triumph of Scipio Africanus as it is described in the History of Rome written by Livy in 59 BC***;
- the motifs can also be clearly seen: on the background ones which are present on the whole surface; the ones placed at the edges on the lateral stripes or on shapes designed to complete the decorum of the main field or of the edges;
- inscriptions or dates appear on certain tapestries.

*The set was woven by Pieter van Adst, Bruxelles Manufactory.

**The set was woven in Bruxelles, in the third quarter of the 16th century.

***Made after the design of Giulio Romano la cererea on request by Francis I of France in 1532.



„The Camel” from a set of five „Grotesques”, designed Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer, cca. 1688, woven cca. 1690–1711. Beauvais manufactory. Today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.

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COMPLEXUL NAȚIONAL MUZEAL ASTRA, SIBIU, ROMÂNIA

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