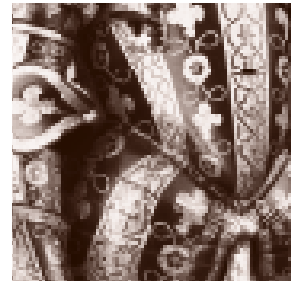


# ARMOR OF GEORGE CLIFFORD, THIRD EARL OF CUMBERLAND

SLIDE 27

This magnificent suit of steel and gold was made for an English knight, Sir George Clifford, third earl of Cumberland, who lived from 1558 to 1605. His life and career were closely allied with service to his monarch, Elizabeth I.

Suits of armor originally were designed to protect knights during battle. The rounded, overlapping steel plates offered protection by blocking and deflecting blows from swords and lances. For flexibility, many small, moveable plates were riveted together. By the sixteenth century, however, gunpowder had been invented, and steel plates thick enough to deflect bullets would have made a complete suit of armor too heavy to wear. Suits like Clifford's were worn for jousts, tournaments, and parades. Because of the lavish gold decoration and the excellent condition of the suit, it is doubtful that Clifford ever wore it for anything other than ceremonial duties. It combines the cut of a fashionable doublet with the decorative effect of rich brocaded fabric, executed in techniques and with materials often identified with jewelry. Its visual impact is heightened by the associations of metal and armor with strength and power.



This suit was made in the royal armory established at Greenwich in 1515 or 1516 by King Henry VIII, father of Elizabeth I. The elegant and shapely silhouette of the suit of armor was the result of careful measuring, cutting, and shaping of flat steel plates hammered to three-dimensional forms that would overlap to suggest the contours of an Elizabethan doublet with its pointed peascod belly and flaring tassets. Extra protection was provided to the neck, elbows, and shoulders, and the helmet visor could be pushed up or left down, in which case the knight looked through two narrow slits cut into the metal. The gauntlets or gloves extended over the wrists while allowing each finger to move separately.

Alternating bands of decoration—gilded emblems against a dark background and dark linear designs against a gilt background—accentuate the height and stance of the knight. The bands taper and widen to emphasize the body's contour, and the designs retain their continuity on the leg, arm, and finger areas where several plates telescope together to allow for movement.



SLIDE 27  
*ARMOR OF GEORGE CLIFFORD, THIRD EARL  
OF CUMBERLAND*  
English, Greenwich, ca. 1580–85  
Steel, blued, etched, and gilded; height 69 in.  
Munsey Fund, 1932 (32.130.6)

The rich decoration was the result of three different processes:

- **ETCHING** Designs were painted onto the metal with an acid-proof substance. Acids applied to these areas would eat away at the exposed metal, leaving high and low areas defining the design;
- **GILDING** The low areas of the design were filled with a paste made of gold powder and mercury. When this paste was heated, the mercury burned away, melting the gold into the etched design;
- **BLUING** Finally, the metal plates were heated slowly. At a certain temperature, the surface of the metal would darken and take on an iridescent quality.

George Clifford would have needed assistance from his squire to dress in his armor, which as assembled here would have weighed 60 pounds. A variety of hooks, hinges, straps, and laces allowed the fourteen separate pieces to be attached to each other, to the clothes worn under the armor, and around the body. At The Metropolitan Museum of Art, you will see a number of additional pieces displayed around the suit of armor. They could be attached as reinforcement to the basic suit, or swapped for one of the other pieces; for example, depending upon the occasion, Clifford could choose between the two helmets. There are extra vamplates, or hand guards used during jousting, as well as armor for Clifford's horse. The complete set, with all its companion pieces, is known as a garniture.

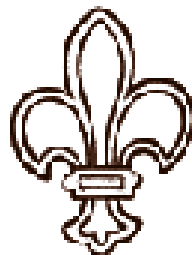
In the early days of armor, heraldic devices and emblems were applied to identify the knight on the battlefield, and this tradition persisted, with designs becoming even more decorative and symbolic. The emblems on George Clifford's armor have political significance. The five-petaled roses are an emblem of the royal Tudor family, and the fleur-de-lys shape appears on the English coat of arms as a reminder of England's claim over certain French territories. The letter E entwined with knots and rings appears down the front of the cuirass and on other parts of the armor. It is Elizabeth's initial, and it indicates homage from the knight to his queen.

After studying mathematics and geography at Cambridge and Oxford, Clifford sailed the ocean as a "gentleman pirate," robbing Spanish ships of their New World gold and transporting it back to England for the Queen. His most notable feat was the capture of El Morro fortress in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1598, which he then held for five months. Clifford participated in jousts and tilts at the court of Elizabeth, and in 1590, he was named the Queen's Champion, a post that involved presiding over the tournaments held every Queen's Day (November 17).

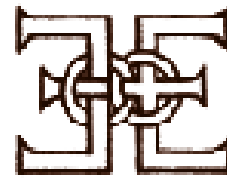
A contemporary described George Clifford in terms that an armorer would have understood when he said of the knight, "He was as merciful as valiant, the best metal bends best."



TUDOR ROSE



FLEUR-DE-LYS



DOUBLE E

#### THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

THOUGHTS: Renaissance individual; nobility; the world at large

COMPARE: SLIDES 23, 23A (costume); SLIDES 5, 9 (fame and prestige)

LESSON PLANS: Personal Armor, p. 111; Daily Life, p. 197

# HANS RUCKERS THE ELDER

SLIDE 28

Similar to the spinet in its musical aspects, the double virginal differs markedly in its visual impact. The spinet is elegant and sophisticated, intricately inlaid, with a subtle and witty inscription, while the virginal is bulky, boldly painted, and forthright in its message.

This double virginal was made in Antwerp in 1581 by Hans Ruckers the Elder, the head of a renowned family of Flemish harpsichord builders. Instrument makers were members of Saint Luke's Guild, which included painters and other artists as well.

Its boxy shape is typical of Flemish virginals. When not in use, the front panel swings up to conceal the keyboards, and the lid closes to protect the strings. The inner surfaces, revealed when the instrument is opened, are simply decorated, and the Latin inscription hangs from the instrument like a banner. The lid painting shows people in a landscape and architectural scene. The noble courtiers, both men and women, wear Spanish-style clothing and lounge in graceful poses as they arrive on a boat, sit and listen to music, eat, dance, or play a croquet-like game. In two gold-painted medallions, profile portraits of Philip II of Spain and his wife, Anne of Austria, face each other over the larger keyboard.



The images of Spanish royalty on this virginal are not surprising, since in 1581 Flanders was ruled by the Spanish. The royal family may have commissioned this instrument to send to friends in the New World, as it was found in Cuzco, Peru, in a hacienda chapel early in this century. Virginals often were associated with women musicians. Queen Elizabeth I of England and her cousin and rival Mary Stuart both played the virginal, and even the name “virginal” suggests young women.

Keyboard instruments such as spinets, harpsichords, and virginals were ideal for playing the polyphonic, or “many-voiced,” music of the Renaissance, because more than one key or melody could be played at the same time. The quill mechanism activated by the keys rises to pluck the strings that are stretched parallel to each other like the strings of a harp. This double virginal incorporates two keyboard instruments, the “child,” or smaller, higher-pitched instrument on the left, and the larger and lower-pitched “mother” on the right. The smaller keyboard could be removed from the case and placed on top of the larger keyboard, so that the player could use both at once.



The Latin inscription written in large letters along the front of the instrument, *Mvsica dvlce laborvm levamen*, means “Sweet music is a balm for toil.” It reflects a northern humanist aesthetic based on a strong work ethic, although it is echoed by Baldassare Castiglione in the *Book of the Courtier*:

No rest from toil and no medicine for ailing spirits can be found more decorous or praiseworthy in time of leisure than this [music].

SLIDE 28  
*DOUBLE VIRGINAL*, 1581  
 HANS RUCKERSTHE ELDER  
 Flemish, ca. 1545–d. 1598  
 Wood, various other materials;  
 w. 74 3/4 in.  
 Gift of B. H. Homan, 1929  
 (29.90)

### THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

THOUGHTS: Individual; women; family; home; nobility; guilds; society; the world at large; music

COMPARE SLIDE 22

LESSON PLAN: Compare and Contrast Two Musical Instruments, p. 205

# EL GRECO

SLIDE 29

Landscape as the sole or even primary subject of a painting was unusual in the sixteenth century—even more unusual is this painting, in which the dramatic sky is as important as the earth. The human figures appear as mere specks scattered throughout the painting, some walking on the road near the ancient Roman bridge, others washing strips of cloth in the river. El Greco manipulated the terrain: he intensified the steepness of the hill and contrasted the lush green, almost tropical vegetation in the foreground with the barren landscape in the background. The dark sky vibrates with the intensity of lightning and illuminates the landscape and architecture with an unnatural blue light.



The town of Toledo rises, ghostlike, on top of the hill. As he did with the landscape, El Greco reconfigured the layout of the town, moving the cathedral and the Alcázar—the royal palace—to heighten the drama. This is a uniquely personal painting, a visionary moment full of turmoil and hope, expressed through the richness and flexibility of oil paint and the movement and quality of the artist's brushstrokes.

In this painting, El Greco describes the character of the city and a glimpse into its daily life. Toledo was the seat of the Spanish Counter-Reformation and a center of higher learning, and by depicting the washing of cloth he informs the viewer about the city's successful textile production. At the time El Greco painted this unforgettable view there was a campaign in this ancient city to restore its past fame and glory; most probably this is the painter's tribute to his adopted city.

El Greco was born in 1541 on the island of Crete, where he studied the tradition of Byzantine painting. By 1568, he was studying in Italy, where he was impressed profoundly by the Venetian painters, especially Titian and Tintoretto. Eight years later he moved to Spain, hoping to gain the support of Philip II. This was Spain's Golden Age of artistic patronage and production. Philip II, the period's greatest patron, eventually transferred the court—and hence the artistic nucleus of Spain—from Toledo to Madrid. Though he employed native artists, he also imported art and artists from other countries, mostly Italy and Flanders. El Greco settled in Toledo, but Philip II never invited him to become a court painter.

Even though Spain was not in the mainstream of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European artistic achievement, El Greco thought of himself as a Renaissance man and painter. He read Vasari's *Lives* and wrote notes in the margin, where he compared himself favorably to Michelangelo and other Italian painters of the Renaissance. His copy of the book is in the library of Toledo.



THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

THOUGHTS: Society; earth and sky (nature); space; oil paint; daily life—cloth making

COMPARE SLIDES 4, 15, 18, 25 (landscape)

LESSON PLANS: Aerial or Atmospheric Perspective, p. 131; Poetic Forms, p. 159

SLIDE 29

*VIEW OF TOLEDO*, CA. 1597

DOMENICO THEOTOCOPOULOS,  
CALLED EL GRECO ("THE GREEK")  
Greek (Crete), 1541–1614

Oil on canvas; 47 3/4 x 42 3/4 in.

H. O. Havemeyer Collection,  
Bequest of Mrs. Havemeyer, 1929  
(29.100.6)