

Large print  
exhibition text



# the Tudors

Art and Majesty  
in Renaissance  
England

THE  
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# **The Tudors**

## **Art and Majesty in Renaissance England**

Though the Tudor dynasty ruled for only three generations, it oversaw the transformation of England from an impoverished backwater to a major European power operating on a global stage. The dynasty emerged from the devastation of the Wars of the Roses, which ended in 1485 when Henry Tudor seized the throne, becoming Henry VII. The second Tudor monarch, Henry VIII, brought about England's break with the Roman Catholic Church, while his daughters, Mary I and Elizabeth I, were the first two women to rule the country in their own right.

Painfully aware that their claim to the throne was tenuous and that the prospect of a return to civil war loomed around every corner, the Tudor monarchs devoted vast resources to crafting their public images as divinely ordained rulers. Guilty of religious intolerance and violence themselves, the Tudors benefited in their pursuit of the finest tapestries, books, paintings, and armor from religious wars on the

European continent that periodically drove waves of talented artists to seek safety in England.

This exhibition evokes the richly layered interior of a Tudor palace in order to explore the remarkable art of the English Renaissance. At the same time, it reveals the high political stakes of Tudor patronage and the cosmopolitan world of artists and merchants who served the court.

### **[Audio Guide 580](#)**

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#MetTudors

Scan the QR code to go behind the scenes of the Tudor court and hear how these exceptional works of art were tools for power and legitimacy.



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## ***Angels Bearing Candlesticks***

**Benedetto da Rovezzano (1474–1554)**

London, 1524–29

Bronze

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

## ***Candelabrum***

**Benedetto da Rovezzano (1474–1554)**

London, 1529–40

Bronze

Sint-Baafskathedraal, Ghent, Belgium

Working in London, Benedetto da Rovezzano pushed monumental bronze casting to its limits, achieving lifelike fluidity of movement rarely before attempted in metalwork and rivaling in virtuosity and innovation anything produced in his native Florence. These works were part of a magnificent tomb originally commissioned from Benedetto by Henry VIII's newly rich chancellor, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Reflecting Wolsey's characteristic disregard for traditional conventions of humility or propriety, it was to include multiple figures and a colonnade. After the cardinal's

fall from grace, Henry appropriated the project for himself. Neither the king nor his children, however, ever completed the tomb, and the disparate elements were scattered; these three are reunited here for the first time in four hundred years.

## ***Furnishing Textile***

Florence, late 15th–mid-16th century

Velvet cloth of gold

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Susan Dwight Bliss, 1966 (67.55.101)

Henry VII and his Tudor successors loved enormous velvet wall hangings. Portable and pliable, they brought splendor to any space, which Henry VIII used to full advantage at a 1520 meeting with his French counterpart, François I, evocatively titled the Field of the Cloth of Gold by contemporaries. Italian weavers were admired the world over for their virtuosity.

Ambassadors visiting England from foreign courts marveled at expanses of such costly textiles, woven in Tuscany and exported—at great expense—for royal use in London. In this rare surviving example, tiny loops of golden thread project from the crimson velvet surface, the result of a technique called the “firefly effect.” Henry VII adopted the pattern’s double-rose motif as his dynasty’s badge: the Tudor rose.

## ***Elizabeth I (The Hampden Portrait)***

Attributed to **George Gower** (ca. 1540–1596)

ca. 1567

Oil on canvas, transferred from panel

Private collection

In her earliest surviving life-size portrait, Elizabeth I stands on a Turkish carpet in front of a hanging made from cloth of gold. With arms held out stiffly, she rests her right hand on her throne, pinching a carnation between her fingers. At the far right, the background opens up to a wall of greenery, with pears, honeysuckle, pomegranates, and grapes entangled in a vision of abundance. Both the amorous emblem of the carnation and the backdrop of fruit and flowers present the young queen as a marriageable beauty. Early portraits such as this one reflect an experimental phase in the depiction of the second woman ever to sit upon the English throne, before the iconography of virginity came to dominate her portraiture.



## **INVENTING A DYNASTY**

Henry VII spent prodigiously to impress his subjects and assert his right to the throne he had seized by force. With an eye to solidifying international relations, he negotiated royal marriages for his children abroad, hosted foreign diplomats, and did business with Flemish art dealers and Italian bankers.

Surpassing his father's ambitions, Henry VIII claimed supreme authority over both church and state. The decision of the king, who was infamously married six times, to divorce Katherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn led directly to England's departure from the Roman Catholic Church. In the wake of this breach, he continued to use artistic patronage to promote his status as a peer of Europe's other monarchs, even as some scorned him as a heretic.

The brief reigns of Henry VIII's son, Edward VI, and of his eldest daughter, Mary I, epitomized the religious strife of the sixteenth century, with Edward a devout Protestant and Mary ardently committed to the Catholic faith. Their Protestant half sister, Elizabeth I, by contrast, achieved a long reign of peace and

prosperity, while still facing constant threats of foreign invasion and depending on a vast surveillance state. Maintaining strict control over her public image, she oversaw the emergence of a distinct Elizabethan style centered on the glorification of the queen herself.

## The Tudor Rose

The most famous symbol of the Tudor dynasty is the red and white Tudor rose. This emblem evoked Henry VII's role in ending the devastating civil war between the house of Lancaster (symbolized by a red rose) and the house of York (symbolized by a white rose). When Henry, a descendant of the house of Lancaster, seized the English throne and married Princess Elizabeth of York, he devised the new badge to represent the union of these two rival factions. Throughout this exhibition, the Tudor rose appears in paintings, manuscripts, textiles, metalwork, and armor as a pervasive symbol of the dynasty's power and legacy.

*Image caption:*

Detail of *Letters Patent Granting Arms to William Paget*, March 25, 1553, on view in the fourth gallery, "Languages of Ornament." © National Trust / Simon Harris

## ***Henry VII***

Unknown Netherlandish artist

1505

Oil on panel

National Portrait Gallery, London

In his most important surviving portrait, the founder of the Tudor dynasty appears at the age of forty-eight, shortly after the death of his wife, Elizabeth of York. The painting's inscription reveals that it was commissioned by an agent for Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I as part of an exchange of portraits during (ultimately unsuccessful) marriage negotiations between Henry VII and the Habsburg emperor's daughter. The English king wears a chain signaling his membership in the Order of the Golden Fleece, a highly exclusive group of thirty allies of the Habsburg dynasty. The bust-length composition, with the king's hands resting on a ledge, reflects the close artistic ties between England and the Netherlands in this period.

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## ***Henry VIII***

**Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

ca. 1537

Oil on panel

Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

In this celebrated portrait, Henry VIII appears splendidly attired in cloth of silver and gold, his broad chest patterned with rubies and blackwork embroidery. A chain of linked gold *H*'s hangs around his neck, while the linen pulled through the slashing of his doublet rhythmically punctuates the painting's surface with flashes of white. Hans Holbein, the most famous portraitist of Tudor England, used lavish materials, including gold leaf, to evoke the king's sumptuous appearance. The background's expanse of ultramarine pigment, imported from present-day Afghanistan, is particularly ostentatious. As a young man, Henry impressed foreign ambassadors with his finery and athleticism, and it is likely that this portrait was intended as a diplomatic gift for his perennial rival, the French king François I.

[\*\*Audio Guide 582\*\*](#)

## ***Creation and Fall of Man, from a ten-piece set of the Story of the Redemption of Man***

Probably Brussels, before 1502

Wool (warp), wool, silk, silver, and gilded-silver metal-wrapped threads (wefts)

Cathédrale Saint-Just-et-Saint-Pasteur, Narbonne, France

This tapestry—superlative in scale, design, and material—matched the ambition of Henry VII when he bought it and the other nine in the series from Flemish textile supplier to kings and popes Pieter van Aelst. Edge to edge, the set would have stretched more than three hundred feet. Though other European royals bought tapestries after these same designs, Henry's is the only edition known to have been woven in gold and silver. The subject, dear to the king's generation though already somewhat old-fashioned to the next, was the vacillations of humanity between sinful and virtuous behavior through the Christian history of the world, from the Creation—seen here—to the Last Judgment.

## ***Acts of the Apostles and the Apocalypse***

Translated by **Desiderius Erasmus** (1466–1536); transcribed by **Pieter Meghen** (1466/67–1540); miniature (fol. 4r) attributed to **Lucas Horenbout** (ca. 1490/95–1544) or **Susanna Horenbout** (active ca. 1520–50)

London, ca. 1519–27

Tempera on vellum

Lent by the Marquess of Salisbury, Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom

In a collaboration among visiting European talent in London, Flemish scribe Pieter Meghen paired Dutch philosopher Erasmus's new Latin translation of the Bible with illuminations by the Horenbout siblings from Ghent, Lucas and Susanna. The sun-filled study is bordered by the arms of England, supported by the Tudor dragon and greyhound, Tudor roses, and the Beaufort portcullis of Henry VIII's grandmother. The fleur-de-lis recalls Henry's Valois great-grandmother and England's continued claim to French sovereignty. The *H+K* monogram, conspicuous against Tudor green and white, dates this flattering gift to Henry's union with his first wife, Spanish princess Katherine of Aragon.

***Mary Tudor, Later Queen of France and  
Duchess of Suffolk***

**Michel Sittow (1468–1525/26)**

ca. 1514

Oil on panel

Gemäldegalerie, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

As a young woman of high rank, wearing a chain that alternates roses and the letter *K*, the sitter of this portrait was long identified as Katherine of Aragon, the Spanish princess widowed by Arthur, Prince of Wales, and then married to his brother, Henry VIII. More recently, however, the subject has been identified as Henry's sister, Princess Mary, depicted at the time of her betrothal to future Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Mary is known to have received jewelry with the letter *K* (for "Karolus," the Latin for Charles), but eventually married the French king instead of the Habsburg emperor.



## ***Book of Hours of Mary of England, Queen of France***

Miniature attributed to **Master of Claude de France** (active ca. 1514–26)

Tours, France, ca. 1495–1500, with additions ca. 1514  
Tempera on vellum

Bibliothèque Municipale (Part-Dieu), Lyon, France

The aging French king Louis XII gifted this manuscript to his bride, the teenage Mary, sister to Henry VIII. Though this opening was probably created and inserted to honor the Tudor princess, with the border's conspicuous Lancastrian red rose, the book itself was a regift, previously belonging to Louis's deceased second wife, Anne of Brittany. Angering her brother with her elopement with English courtier Charles Brandon after Louis's death, Mary endeavored to make amends, presenting this book to Henry and tactfully inscribing the Adoration of the Kings' page, "Your loving friend and ever will be during my life Mary, the French queen."

## ***Field Armor for King Henry VIII***

Milan or Brescia, Italy, ca. 1544

Steel, partly etched and gilded, leather

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1932 (32.130.7a–l)

Henry VIII took great pride in his physical stature and reputation for military prowess, albeit mainly conveyed through the courtly pageantry of jousting and tournaments. This impressive Italian-made armor, however, probably saw actual military action: the 1544 siege of Boulogne against Henry's longtime rival, French king François I. Designed without protective plates below the knees, the armor was suitable for use on both foot and horseback. After delivery to London, the suit was extended at the waist, thighs, and shoulders to more comfortably accommodate the king's girth. Even now, its hefty physicality evokes the presence of the late middle-aged Henry VIII with startling immediacy.

## ***Saint John the Evangelist and an Unidentified Saint***

London, ca. 1505

Terracotta

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Like many of his contemporaries, rich and poor alike, Henry VII was preoccupied with safeguarding his eternal soul after death. These statuettes replicate two of the thirty-two miniature saintly figures intended to protect his grave. Commissioned by the king from a Netherlandish artist, called “Thomas” in documents, their somber ranks and the splendid two-story, gilded bronze gated structure that they decorate enclose the area around his tomb. Henry envisioned this structure as the culmination of the glorious chantry chapel, and shrine to Tudor legitimacy, he was creating at Westminster Abbey.

## ***Edward VI***

Attributed to **Guillim Scrots** (active 1537–53)

ca. 1547–50

Oil on panel

Compton Verney Art Gallery and Park, Warwickshire, United Kingdom

Edward VI was the much longed-for son and heir of Henry VIII, born of his third wife, Jane Seymour. Sickly from childhood, he reigned for only six years before dying at the age of fifteen. Many portraits of the boy king used the profile format of ancient coins and medals to invest his image with royal dignity. In this example, elaborate symbols and a lengthy inscription in Latin and Italian promote the idea of the king as a divinely ordained figure whose power over his subjects resembles that of the sun over flowers.

## ***Mary I***

**Hans Eworth** (ca. 1525–after 1578)

1554

Oil on panel

Society of Antiquaries, London

The daughter of Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon, Mary I was the first woman to rule England in her own right. Ascending to the throne at the age of thirty-seven, she sought to assert her legitimacy through the restoration of the Catholic Church and a matrimonial alliance with her mother's relatives in the Habsburg dynasty. This portrait visualizes both goals through the queen's jewelry: the reliquary containing fragments of the cross suspended from the jeweled chain around her waist had been recently repaired at her command, while one of her rings was a gift from her future father-in-law, Emperor Charles V. Meanwhile, the cross at her neck had belonged to her mother, whose Spanish heritage and devotion to the Catholic faith had shaped Mary's worldview.

[\*\*Audio Guide 583\*\*](#)

## ***Coverdale Bible***

Title page designed by **Hans Holbein the Younger** (1497/98–1543); printed by **James Nicolson** (active ca. 1518–57)

Probably Antwerp or Cologne, with title page printed in London, 1535

Ink on paper

British Library, London

## ***Great Bible***

Title page attributed to **Lucas Horenbout** (ca. 1490/95–1544); printed by **Richard Grafton** (1506/7–1573) and **Edward Whitchurch** (died 1562)

London, 1540

Ink on vellum, with additional illuminations

British Library, London

The Coverdale Bible visualized Henry VIII's new role immediately after he declared himself Supreme Head of the Church in England: at the title page's foot, the king dispenses copies of the Bible to his clergy and knights. An illegal English translation, this edition was

not authorized by the Crown despite the representation of the English arms.

Using the same text, the Great Bible was the first legal translation, obligatory in every church in England. At the top of its title page, Henry communicates directly with God—blasphemous and unthinkable only years before. This hand-tinted and parchment-printed edition was the ruler's own copy.

***Andromache and Priam Urging Hector Not to Go to War, from an eleven-piece set of the Story of Troy***

Designed by **the Coëtivy Master** (active ca. 1455–75)

Probably Brussels, before 1488

Wool (warp), wool and silk (wefts)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund, 1939 (39.74)

Though fiscally frugal, Henry VII appreciated the impact of magisterial splendor and therefore spent large sums on precious imported textiles. Less than three years after claiming the English throne, the king bought the massive *Story of Troy*, joining an elite group of European royalty who owned editions of the series. Complete, it was more than fifty times the width of this fragment. The subject matter held special resonance for the Tudors, who claimed ancient royal lineage via King Arthur, back to Brutus, veteran of the Trojan War and legendary first “King of Britons.” Henry may have customized the design to include miniature red and white roses—for Lancaster and York, respectively—adorning the armor of the classical



hero Hector, an embodiment of valor much emulated by medieval menfolk.

## ***Elizabeth I (The Sieve Portrait)***

**Quentin Metsys the Younger (1543–1589)**

1583

Oil on canvas

Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, Italy

In a room at the end of an arcaded gallery, the queen stands in isolation from the courtiers who gather behind her. Dressed in black, she carries a sieve in place of a more typical accessory, such as a fan or book. According to Roman legend, a woman once carried water in a sieve to prove her virginity.

Elizabeth made use of this provocative iconography in many portraits to assert her status as a woman ruler outside of the usual confines of marriage and motherhood. The man with a white deer on his sleeve in the background may be the courtier Sir Christopher Hatton, who vehemently opposed the possibility of the queen marrying a foreign prince.

## ***Instruction of a Christen Woman***

Written by **Juan Luis Vives** (1492/93–1540);

translated by **Richard Hyrde** (died 1528);

printed by **Thomas Powell**

London, 1557

Ink on paper

British Library, London

Originally written in Latin for the young princess Mary, this treatise offered a curriculum for the education of young women. This English translation—one of nine sixteenth-century editions—appeared during Mary’s reign. Although Juan Luis Vives advocated for the education of women, he reasserted traditional views about women’s “frailty.” His text represents the difficult gender politics that England’s first reigning queens had to navigate as they both wielded immense power and conformed to aspects of traditional femininity, a duality often expressed in their portraits.

## ***Cartoons for the Donor Panels of Philip and Mary, for the Last Supper “King’s Window”***

**Dirck Crabeth** (active 1539–74)

Gouda, The Netherlands, 1557

Lead white and black chalk

Sint-Janskerk, Gouda, The Netherlands

With her marriage to Philip of Spain, Mary Tudor became a Habsburg, joining the most powerful—and feared—dynasty in Europe and the Americas. These to-scale designs are for a window made in the northern Netherlands as part of an ambitious scheme honoring European royalty. In acknowledgment of their principal status in the royal ranks, the couple dominated the series. Mary was hobbled by her subservient role as Philip’s spouse, however, and is pictured here in her customary position behind him, giving rise to legitimate fears in England that the Habsburgs might try to usurp Tudor rule.

*Image caption:*

The completed window, Sint-Janskerk, Gouda

***The Union of the Roses of the Famelies of  
Lancastre and Yorke, With the Armes of Those  
Which Have Been Chosen Knights of the Most  
H[o]norable Order of the Garter from that  
Tyme unto This Day 1589***

**Jodocus Hondius (1563–1612), after Thomas  
Talbot (1535–1595/99)**

London, 1589

Engraving

The British Museum, London

Created during the reign of the last Tudor monarch, Elizabeth I, this engraving uses complex iconography to justify the family's claim to the throne. The dynasty's founding figures, Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, appear at the top of the print above a rose symbolizing the union of the houses of Lancaster and York, which had waged civil war in the infamous Wars of the Roses. Nestled within the rose's petals are the arms of every knight admitted to the Order of the Garter (England's most prestigious chivalric order) under the Tudors. Marks of royal favor like the garter built up

loyalty, which was further promoted through the dissemination of images like this print.

## ***Allegory of the Tudor Dynasty***

**William Rogers** (active 1584–1604), after

**Lucas de Heere** (ca. 1534–ca. 1584)

London, ca. 1595–1600

Engraving

The British Museum, London

Made late in her reign, this print presents the monarchy of Elizabeth I as the natural and glorious conclusion of the contentious Tudor succession.

Henry VIII, the queen's father, occupies the throne at center stage, passing a sword to his short-lived son, Edward VI. His eldest daughter, Mary, appears at the left with her much-reviled husband, Philip II of Spain, as well as Mars, the god of war. Dwarfing the other members of her family, Elizabeth enters from the right, accompanied by the figures of Peace and Plenty, as though ushering in a golden age. William Rogers based his print on an earlier painting, but updated Elizabeth's attire to reflect contemporary fashion.

***A Collection of Armes in Blazon; Taken from an Antient Booke of Ordinaries, Tricked and Extracted, from Visitations & Pedigrees in the Heralds Office***

ca. 1585–90

Ink and watercolor on paper

Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.

The elite of Tudor England were obsessed with genealogy. This Tudor family tree originally formed part of a handbook used by heralds as they created new coats of arms for the upwardly mobile. Elizabeth I sprouts from the top of the tree, which has grown from the stomach of the fourteenth-century monarch Edward III. The drawing visualizes lines of descent that many opponents of the Tudor dynasty scorned as illegitimate.



## **SPLENDOR**

Tudor palaces and grand houses featured a range of specially demarcated spaces, from great halls for feasting and long galleries for strolling and discreet conversation to intimately scaled cabinets or “closets” for prayer, privacy, or the close viewing of works of art. Contemporary inventories, paintings, and descriptions can aid in the re-creation of these splendid interiors, most of which have long vanished.

Figurative plasterwork, decorative textiles, gleaming metalwork, and the richly dressed bodies of the courtiers themselves created a dazzling effect of overlapping surfaces. As monarchs traveled between residences, they transported their splendor with them through portable furnishings. Goldsmiths’ work filled credenza displays, while tapestries woven in richly dyed wools, silks, and metal-wrapped threads enveloped rooms, blurring the boundaries between actual and imagined space. In private chapels, privileged users engaged in the contemplation of devotional manuscripts and images, a practice eventually rejected by Protestant reformers.

The objects in this section speak to the Tudor monarchs' support of both local artists and newly arrived Flemish and French immigrants as well as their taste for luxurious imports. The latter included Chinese porcelain and Indian mother-of-pearl acquired from Asian artists and merchants via increasingly globalized networks.

## ***The “Sea-Dog” Table***

Probably Paris, ca. 1575

Walnut wood, gilded silver, marbled inlay

National Trust, Hardwick Hall, The Devonshire Collection,  
United Kingdom

Politics aside, the Tudors and their courtiers coveted French artistry. This extraordinary inlaid table features fantastical beasts based on celebrated French designer Jacques Androuet du Cerceau’s drawings, and was almost certainly acquired in France for George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury. When the earl’s estranged wife, the magnificent Bess of Hardwick, Countess of Shrewsbury, took it with her to her new residence at Chatsworth and later Hardwick Hall, he complained to Queen Elizabeth I that he had paid “£100 and above for it”—tens of thousands in contemporary equivalence. Originally brightly gilded, the banqueting table can be extended using leaves as well as disassembled into seventeen pieces for easy transportation.

[\*\*Audio Guide 584\*\*](#)

## ***Design for a Cup for Jane Seymour***

**Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

ca. 1536–37

Pen and brown ink, with gray and pink wash,  
heightened in gold, on laid paper

Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, United Kingdom

One of Hans Holbein's primary tasks at the Tudor court was creating designs for elaborate metalwork objects, such as the cup shown in this drawing, most likely a gift from Henry VIII to his third wife, Jane Seymour. The elaborate ornamentation ranges from mermaids and putti to bust-length figures, probably carved in shell, who emerge from roundels on the central band. A particularly striking feature is the prominent repetition of the queen's self-effacing motto: "Bound to obey and serve." Royal inventories show that the cup survived until 1629, when it was pawned and melted down, meeting a fate similar to that of most work by the goldsmiths of the Tudor courts.

## ***Design for a Chimneypiece***

Attributed to **Hans Holbein the Younger**

(1497/98–1543)

London, ca. 1537–43

Pen and black ink, with gray, blue, and red wash

The British Museum, London

Famous for his portrait paintings, Hans Holbein was equally active as a designer of works in other media. Here, he envisions an elaborate two-tiered chimneypiece, encrusted with imagery framed by Tuscan and Ionic engaged columns. Henry VIII's royal arms, *H* and *HR* badges, Tudor roses, fleurs-de-lis, and a Beaufort portcullis flank roundels with classical-style idealized portrait heads and figurative scenes of Charity, Justice, and—doubtless appealing to Henry—a female supplicant before a king, possibly the Old Testament Esther before Ahasuerus, or Abigail pleading with David to abandon his plans to kill her husband. The chimneypiece was probably intended for Henry's palace at Whitehall; whether it was ever constructed is not known.

## ***Cup and Cover***

London, 1511–12

Rock crystal, gilded silver, colored enamel

Museo delle Cappelle Medicee, on permanent loan to the Tesoro di San Lorenzo, Basilica di San Lorenzo, Florence

With its sparkling clarity, rock crystal was worth its weight in gold. The silver mounts of this sumptuous object, stamped with a maker's "hallmark" specific to London, showcase colored-enamel pomegranates—the device of Henry VIII's first wife, Katherine of Aragon—Lancastrian red roses, and Yorkist white roses. Though Henry amassed the most splendid Jewel House of any English monarch, very little survives, with most pieces melted down, sold, or given away. This magnificent vessel, for example, was gifted by the king to Medici pope Clement VII or his precursor Leo X, and within twenty years of its creation was converted to use as a reliquary in a Florentine church.

## ***Nonsuch Palace from the South***

**Joris Hoefnagel** (1542–1600)

1568

Black chalk, pen and ink, with watercolor, heightened with white and gold

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

In April 1538, to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of his accession to the throne, Henry VIII directed work to begin on a new palace near the village of Cuddington, in Surrey. Called “Nonsuch” to imply that it had no equal, the palace boasted an exterior that revealed a new awareness of Italian Renaissance architecture in England, with bands of elaborate stucco decoration depicting themes from ancient myth. Joris Hoefnagel’s view is not only the earliest surviving visual record of Nonsuch, which was demolished at the end of the seventeenth century, but also one of the first examples of a landscape watercolor executed in England.

*Lift the curtain to view the work.*

## ***Two Designs for an Interior at Whitehall***

**Nicholas Bellin da Modena** (ca. 1490–1569)

London, ca. 1545

Pen and brown ink, with gray wash and stylus, on beige paper

Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre, Paris

Perpetually competing with his French counterpart, François I, Henry VIII lured Nicholas Bellin away from France to work for him in England, requesting unique “all antique” designs marrying French and English taste through an Italian lens. These plans for elaborate plasterwork, probably for a gallery in Whitehall Palace, date to late in Henry’s reign, with the maiden’s-head device of his last wife, Katherine Parr, springing from an enormous Tudor rose between the doorway and bench. Elongated nudes and fruity swags, straight from the palace of Fontainebleau near Paris, present the English royal arms and Beaufort portcullis, while the two quizzical herms—with cushions for hats and bare feet projecting on little ledges—provide a comedic note.



## ***The Division of the Booty, from a ten-piece set of the Story of David and Bathsheba***

Probably Brussels, ca. 1526–28

Wool (warp), wool, silk, silver, and gilded-silver metal-wrapped threads (wefts)

Musée National de la Renaissance, Écouen, France

Like that of his father, Henry VIII's textile collection was notable among his European peers for its size, encompassing more than two and a half thousand tapestries by his death. Part of a ten-piece set—probably one that cost the same as a fully equipped warship—this tapestry concludes the story of King David's illicit passion for married Bathsheba, his ensuing penitence, and God's ultimate forgiveness and rewarding of David with the defeat of his enemies. The story appealed to Henry, who often identified with the Old Testament patriarch. The hanging hints at how gloriously bedecked Henry's palaces were, with interior walls enveloped by monumental tapestry series peopled with life-size protagonists in a rainbow of silken threads, glittering and heavy with gold and silver.

# ***New Year's Gift Roll of Elizabeth I, Queen of England***

England, 1585

Ink on vellum

Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.

Gift rolls recorded the ritual exchange of gifts between the Tudor monarchs and their subjects at the New Year. This example features Elizabeth I's sign manual, or official signature, as a show of her approval. Many feet in length, the roll lists gift givers according to their social rank, proceeding from duchesses to artisans. The reverse documents how the queen reciprocated with her own gifts of gilded plate according to the same hierarchical scale.

***Three Designs for Stained-Glass Windows in King's College Chapel, Cambridge***

**Dirck Vellert** (ca. 1480/85–ca. 1547)

Antwerp, ca. 1536–38

Pen and brown ink, gray wash, over black chalk

Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine

With its projection of dappled, colorful sunshine onto stonework, stained glass took its place alongside precious textiles and metalwork in embellishing Tudor interiors. Monumental figurative narratives glow with light in the ambitious windows at King's College Chapel at Cambridge University, a multigenerational Tudor project started by Henry VII to woo the increasingly powerful institution. Inheriting the partially completed scheme, Henry VIII updated the iconography to reflect his break with the Roman Catholic Church, supplementing Saint Peter with Saint Paul. The two righthand sections here, for example, show Paul resurrecting Ananias. An undisputed master of his medium, Dirck Vellert lived in Antwerp, sending drawings like this for fellow Flemings based in London to translate into glass.

## ***Martyrdom of the Seven Maccabee Brothers and Their Mother***

**Dirck Vellert** (ca. 1480/85–ca. 1547)

Antwerp, ca. 1530–35

Stained glass

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Mr. and Mrs. Isaac D. Fletcher Collection, Bequest of Isaac D. Fletcher, 1917 (17.120.12)

The Old Testament tells the horrific story of King Antiochus IV Epiphanes murdering a Jewish family for their refusal to eat pork, a narrative of religious persecution that would have resonated with many populations in sixteenth-century Europe. Antwerp artist Dirck Vellert, widely celebrated as the leader of his profession, largely relegated the gruesome subject matter to the background, while showcasing his mastery of figural narrative and technical dexterity in the stained-glass medium. In choosing to commission the designs for the King's College windows, three of which are shown nearby, from Vellert, Henry VIII was ensuring he had the very best that money could buy.

## ***Basin***

Design attributed to **Hans Holbein the Younger**  
(1497/98–1543)

London, 1535–36

Silver, gilded silver, colored enamel

Focke Museum–Bremer Landesmuseum für Kunst und  
Kulturgeschichte, Bremen, Germany

## **Ewer**

Attributed to **Affabel Partridge** (active  
ca. 1551–80)

London, 1562–63

Silver, gilded silver

Focke Museum–Bremer Landesmuseum für Kunst und  
Kulturgeschichte, Bremen, Germany

This basin and ewer were made for the Hanseatic League, the union of German, Flemish, and Dutch merchants whose headquarters in London, the Stalhof, was a major hub of Tudor international trade. The basin was probably designed by Hans Holbein and perhaps created by his friend the Flemish goldsmith known as “Hans of Antwerp.” Made in London but stamped with the imperial double-headed

eagle quality mark instead of the English sterling's lion passant, it embodies the complicated relationship between local guilds and visiting craftspeople.

Decades later, Londoner Affabel Partridge made the ewer as a companion piece or perhaps to replace a lost original.

## ***Cup and Cover***

Attributed to **Affabel Partridge** (active ca. 1551–80)

Cup: China, Ming dynasty (Jia Jing period), ca. 1507–66

Mounts: London, ca. 1570

Porcelain, gilded silver

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Irwin Untermyer, 1968 (68.141.125a, b)

## ***Tankard***

Attributed to **Affabel Partridge** (active ca. 1551–80)

London, ca. 1575

Fossiliferous limestone, gilded silver

Private collection

Natural substances—mother-of-pearl, coconuts, ostrich eggs—were so prized for their beauty that they merited expensive, finely worked gilded silver mounts such as these by Affabel Partridge, court goldsmith to both Mary and Elizabeth. Most of these materials were imports from Africa or Asia, though some were local, including the nonfunctioning tankard’s “marble”—actually a fossiliferous limestone—from the Isle of

Purbeck in Dorset, England. Smooth, glossy, and delicate, Chinese porcelain was widely believed by Europeans to be a natural wonder, achieved by burying shells. This fine covered cup may be the example documented as a New Year's gift to Queen Elizabeth I in 1588.



## ***Cup with Cover***

London, 1590–91

Mother-of-pearl, gilded silver

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Irwin Untermyer, 1968 (68.141.120a, b)

## ***Wine Cup on a High Foot***

London, 1599–1600

Gilded silver

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Irwin Untermyer, 1968 (68.141.104)

Tudor London was famous for its silversmiths. A visiting Venetian, marveling at the array of silverwork available in the city, estimated there was more there than in “all the shops in Milan, Rome, Venice and Florence put together.” These cups were made in response to demand from wealthy professionals seeking to emulate court circles. The covered cup glories in its mother-of-pearl staves, sourced from vessels by Gujarati craftspeople that were imported to England from western India, while the wine cup, or tazza, playfully evokes Venetian glassware.

## ***Ewer and Two-Handled Bowl***

Ewer and bowl: China, Ming dynasty (Wan Li period),  
ca. 1573–85

Mounts: London, ca. 1585

Porcelain, gilded silver

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1944  
(44.14.2, .3)

From about 1560 to 1600, Chinese porcelain was so desirable yet so rare in England that it was considered the most precious of objects. These examples were possibly part of the “suite of Porcellane sett in silver and gilt” bequeathed to statesman Robert Cecil by Sir Walter Raleigh, explorer, adventurer and one of Queen Elizabeth’s favorites. Both are presented within London-made mounts, but the bowl is an extraordinary import, the phoenix in its design implying it was intended for imperial use in Beijing’s Forbidden City. Conversely, the ewer is in a standard Persian form, meaning it was doubtless made for the export market.

## ***Field Armor, Probably Made for King Henry VIII***

Greenwich, England, 1527

Etched and gilded steel, copper alloys, leather

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, William H. Riggs Gift and Rogers Fund, 1919 (19.131.1a–r); mail brayette: Gift of Prince Albrecht Radziwill, 1927 (27.183.16)

Glamorous and fashionable, armor conveyed the aristocratic male elite's ostensible readiness for battle. Soon after becoming king, Henry VIII installed Milanese, Flemish, and German armorers in a specialized workshop on the grounds of Greenwich Palace, protected from the regulations of London's Armourers' Guild. This suit—one of the earliest associated with Greenwich—was expensive and labor intensive to make. It was probably meant for the king, part of a larger set of interchangeable pieces to be worn in battle or at tournaments. The entire surface is gilded and embellished with etched decoration—elephants, naked boys, tendrils—sometimes attributed to Hans Holbein or to Italian sculptor Giovanni di Benedetto da Maiano, both working in London at the time.

## ***Bearing Cloth***

England, ca. 1600

Silk satin embroidered with silver and gilded-silver metal-wrapped threads

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Friends of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts Gifts, 2016 (2016.526)

Needlework from England was prized throughout Europe, and was one medium for which the Tudors felt no need to import talent. This magnificent satin embellished with a broad border of elaborate, ornamental embroidery was almost certainly a bearing cloth—used to wrap and carry an infant during baptisms and other ceremonial occasions—from a particularly wealthy, possibly noble or even royal, household. Pomegranates were symbols of fecundity popular in English design since Henry VIII's first wife, Katherine of Aragon, introduced them as her personal badge. Here, they are interspersed with irises, lilies, and pansies topped by peacocks and caterpillars, all shimmering with spangles.

## ***Henry VIII***

### **Workshop of Hans Holbein the Younger**

(1497/98–1543)

ca. 1540

Oil on panel

Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool, United Kingdom

The full-length likenesses that Hans Holbein and his assistants and emulators produced of Henry VIII marked a major turning point in English royal portraiture, endowing it with an unprecedented aggression and scale. In this example, Henry plants his feet on an Islamic carpet, standing in front of walls paneled in precious stones. Displayed by high-ranking courtiers in their own residences, portraits of the king were a powerful statement of dynastic loyalty. The fact that none of the surviving full-length versions of this portrait can be attributed to Holbein himself reveals that subject matter likely outweighed authorship for these Tudor collectors.

## ***The Lewknor Table Carpet***

Probably woven in Enghien, 1564

Wool (warp), wool and silk (wefts)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund, 1958  
(59.33)

This ornamental table covering celebrates the aristocratic lineage of an English family, the Lewknors. It was made for an heiress, Constance Lewknor, who—like her queen, Elizabeth—remained single and independent throughout her life. Constance spared no expense for the carpet and the six matching cushions that originally accompanied it, apparently commissioning them from Flemish weavers working in Enghien (thirty miles southwest of Brussels), the recognized European center for such foliage-focused, or verdure, tapestries. The fruit in the border is a typical Enghien design, but the artfully naked boys and flower-strewn ground of red (Lancastrian) roses, white (Yorkist) roses, honeysuckle, and lilies suggest that an English cartoon, or preparatory drawing, for the central section was sent to Flanders.

***Saint Paul Directing the Burning of the Heathen Books, from a nine-piece set of the Life of Saint Paul***

Designed by **Pieter Coecke van Aelst** (1502–1550); possibly woven under the direction of **Paulus van Oppenem** (active ca. 1510–45)

Brussels, before 1539

Wool (warp), wool, silk, silver, and gilded-silver metal-wrapped threads (wefts)

Private collection

Breaking from the Roman Catholic Church, Henry VIII presented himself as a new Saint Paul—an alternative to Saint Peter’s papal authority, yet still a champion of Catholic orthodoxy. He apparently commissioned Pieter Coecke van Aelst to design this episode of Paul zealously directing the burning of pagan books as a supplement to Coecke’s preexisting series centered on the saint. Henry himself had regularly ordered public burnings of books he deemed heretical, including William Tyndale’s unauthorized English translation of the Bible. The king acquired two editions of the full tapestry set: one brightly woven in wool and silk, the

other—including this piece (now missing its border)—a spectacle with silver and gold threads.

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## ***The Psalter of Henry VIII***

Transcription and miniatures attributed to

**Jean Mallard** (active 1534–53)

London, 1540

Tempera on parchment

British Library, London

This was Henry VIII's personal book of psalms, with text and miniatures by Jean Mallard. The visiting French artist and scribe even adapted the biblical king David's facial features to resemble the Tudor king, flattering Henry's self-identification with the Old Testament patriarch, God's agent on earth and progenitor of the royal house of David. The king evidently used and handled the manuscript; here, "Note who is blessed" ("N[ota] quis sit beat[us]") has been jotted in the margin in his handwriting—a reminder of Henry's self-confidence in carrying out contentious policies, or a glimpse into his private insecurities?

## ***Infant Christ Pressing the Wine of the Eucharist***

Probably Brussels, before 1509

Linen (warp), wool, silk, silver, and gilded-silver metal-wrapped threads (wefts)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913 (14.40.709a)

Henry VIII owned many relatively tiny tapestries similar to this one, even commissioning London-made copies after originals from Europe owned by Katherine of Aragon. With its small scale and extraordinary detail and richness, this piece was intended to be appreciated close up, as an aid to private devotions. Locking eyes with the Infant Christ, the fruit of the Virgin's womb (represented by the pomegranate in the glass), the user followed visual prompts to contemplate Christ's preordained fate to die as savior of the world, including the reflection of his hand in the rock crystal orb that seems to point to the cross in a gesture of blessing. Squeezing grapes above a chalice-like cup, he predicts the Eucharistic wine transubstantiated into his shed blood.

## ***Sandglass***

Design attributed to **Hans Holbein the Younger**  
(1497/98–1543)

England or Germany, ca. 1540

Gilded silver, blown glass, sand, and gold thread

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

With its scrolling acanthus leaves, the design of this finely worked gadget is often attributed to Hans Holbein. Simple to use, but a feat of technical precision to craft, the sandglass is flipped by switching its hinged bracket between the left- and right-hand sockets of the wall mount. Considerably easier to operate and maintain than an early modern clock or watch, this device was intended for an oratory, chapel, or study—both as a symbolic reminder of the passing of time and the transience of life and, more practically, to mark half-hour periods for prayer, meditation, or study.

## ***Tabula Cebetis, and De Mortis Effectibus***

Transcription by **Filippo Alberici** (1470–1531);  
miniature attributed to an unknown Parisian artist  
Paris, 1507

Tempera on parchment

British Library, London

Henry VII encouraged the perception that he was both a scholar and a military victor. Though this was an optimistic interpretation of the truth, he did welcome international intellectuals to his court, and his building alterations suggest he enjoyed using small rooms for private study. Filippo Alberici, a scholar and friar from Mantua, Italy, created this handsome volume as a gift for the king. In neat text, Alberici has transcribed his translation of a Greek ekphrasis—a detailed description of a visual work as literary device—then attributed to Socrates. Never having the opportunity to present it to Henry, Alberici eventually instead dedicated the book to an academic at Cambridge University.

## ***Chess and Tric-Trac Game Board***

Germany, ca. 1550

Wood, ivory, bone, mother-of-pearl

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Pfeiffer Fund, 1964  
(64.51)

Henry VIII owned at least thirty game boards dispersed throughout his palaces, some kept in chests, others on shelves in private storerooms and bedchambers. With its white and green colors, two-layered rose on the cover, and fleur-de-lis decorating the interior, this hinged board was possibly made for the Tudors. Patterned for tric-trac (a precursor of backgammon) in the interior and chess on the reverse, the surface is highly decorated, its borders ornamented with hunters, mythological figures, and fantastical beasts in an inlay technique as familiar on gun stocks and other weaponry as on recreational objects such as this.

## **PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FACES**

Portraiture dominates the surviving record of Tudor painting. Most people in sixteenth-century England would have found the idea that a portrait should offer insight into the sitter's personality or character surprising. Such paintings were instead commissioned as records of status, lineage, piety, and political affiliation as well as of physical appearance. At a time when travel was difficult, they allowed far-flung relatives to keep in touch across long distances or prospective royal spouses to gauge the attractiveness and health of a future bride or groom. The emergence of the portrait miniature, intended to be held in the hand or worn on the body, heightened the association between portraiture and intimacy as well as the bridging of geographic separation.

German-born painter Hans Holbein the Younger was a key figure in the transformation of this genre during the reign of Henry VIII. Initially working for a clientele of German merchants and humanist scholars, he soon attracted the attention of the English court with his unparalleled technical mastery and ability to capture a

likeness, for which he used preparatory drawings made from life. He also served the court by producing designs for metalwork and other works of decorative art.

***Robert Cheseman***

**Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

1533

Oil on panel

Mauritshuis, The Hague

Robert Cheseman served as Falconer to the King, accompanying Henry VIII on the hunts that played a central role in court life. Here, he displays a hooded gyrfalcon as the mark of his office, while his gesture draws attention to Hans Holbein's painterly skill, especially in the convincing rendering of such diverse textures as feathers, fur, satin, chamois leather, and polished brass. Falconers had deeply intimate relationships with their charges; the contemporary poet Sir Thomas Wyatt addressed a famous verse to his own hunting birds, declaring, "Ye be my friends and so be but few else."



## ***Sir Thomas More***

**Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

1527

Oil on panel

Frick Collection, New York

One of the most original of Renaissance thinkers, a major politician at the court of Henry VIII, and, since 1935, a saint in the Roman Catholic Church, Sir Thomas More also played an important role in the development of English portraiture through his patronage of Hans Holbein the Younger. Holbein arrived in England bearing a letter of recommendation to More from his patron Erasmus, and many of his early portraits of English sitters were destined to be exchanged by these cosmopolitan humanists and their network of friends. In this portrait, More's dominant attribute is a so-called livery chain, a mark of his service to Henry VIII. He would eventually be beheaded in 1535, when he refused to support the king's divorce and breach with the Roman Catholic Church.

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## ***Portrait Bust of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester***

Attributed to **Pietro Torrigiano** (1472–1528)

London, ca. 1510–15

Polychromed terracotta

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1936 (36.69)

Pietro Torrigiano astonished courtiers with his talent when he arrived in England from Florence. This bust was probably made without a commission as a bid by Torrigiano's Florentine hosts to impress John Fisher, who as executor of Henry VIII's grandmother's estate was responsible for her tomb monument. The austere ecclesiastic, who reputedly wore a penitent's hair shirt under his clothes, later fell from favor and was imprisoned for criticizing Henry VIII's divorce and behavior. Pope Paul III made him cardinal; the king's purported response, when ordering Fisher's public beheading, was that he would send the new cardinal's head to Rome to receive his hat.

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## ***Edward VI as a Child***

**Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

1538

Oil on panel

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Unlike his half sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, whose official images had to be improvised upon their accessions to the throne, Edward was incorporated into Tudor artistic propaganda from the earliest years of his short life. Hans Holbein presented Henry VIII with this portrait of his long-awaited male heir as a New Year's present. It is both a powerful statement of dynastic ambition and a testament to the importance of gift giving for self-advancement at the Tudor court. Rich clothes painted with real gold and a rattle that resembles a scepter make Edward into a miniature version of his father. The long Latin inscription occupying the foreground drives this theme home by encouraging the prince to “emulate your father and be the heir of his virtue; the world contains nothing greater.”

## ***Hermann von Wedigh III***

### **Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

1532

Oil on panel

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Edward S. Harkness, 1940 (50.135.4)

A young man rests his arm on a table. A book lies before him, a piece of paper tucked into its pages. From these simple ingredients, Hans Holbein composed one of his most celebrated—and best preserved—portraits. The sitter came from a prominent family in Cologne, Germany, and served as a judge and alderman of the city's assembly. The paper in his book quotes the Roman playwright Terence's assertion that "flattery produces friends, truth hatred." Juxtaposing various kinds of text—the handwritten fragment, a gold-lettered inscription in the background, and the sitter's name in an illusionistic inscription on the book—Holbein combines word and image to convey his subject's identity in a way that would greatly affect later Tudor painting.

***Mary Neville, Lady Dacre***

**Hans Eworth** (ca. 1525–after 1578)

ca. 1555–58

Oil on panel

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

The husband of Mary Neville, Lady Dacre, was executed in 1541 for taking part in a poaching raid during which a gamekeeper was killed. This portrait commemorates her successful campaign to have the family's lands and titles restored following this traumatic event. Although Lady Dacre had remarried by the time she was painted, Hans Eworth depicts her as a widow through the inclusion of a portrait of her late husband and the symbolic corsage of pinks, rosemary, pansies, and forget-me-nots that she wears on her breast. The device of the portrait-within-a-portrait may also refer to an original by Hans Holbein, allowing Eworth to pay tribute to the artist, whose style he emulated here.

## ***Anne Boleyn***

**Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

ca. 1533–36

Black and colored chalk on pale pink prepared paper

Lent by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Despite her legendary status in English history, there are no surviving uncontested portraits of Anne Boleyn, second wife of Henry VIII and mother of Elizabeth I. Identified as a portrait of the queen by a later inscription, this drawing shows a woman in a close-fitting cap and fur-lined nightgown. A strikingly intimate portrayal, it may record the black satin nightgown Henry gave to Anne before their marriage. The blonde hair undermines the identification, however, as contemporary sources indicate Anne was a brunette. Nevertheless, the relatively crude application of yellow chalk to this part of the drawing may well be by a later hand.

## ***Jane Seymour***

**Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

1536–37

Black and colored chalk, reinforced with pen and ink, and metalpoint, on pale pink prepared paper

Lent by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Jane Seymour, third wife of Henry VIII and mother of Edward VI, served as lady-in-waiting to both Katherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn. She and the king married within days of Anne's execution. Hans Holbein drew the new queen in preparation for a painted portrait. Whereas the finished painting carefully reproduces every detail of the queen's lavish attire, the preparatory drawing is almost exclusively focused on the details of her face and the demure positioning of her hands. It captures the intimacy of a sitting from life, while the specifics of costume could have been studied in the subject's absence.

*Image caption:*

*Jane Seymour*, 1536–37. Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543). Oil on panel, 25¾ × 18½ in. (65.5 × 47 cm).

Gemäldegalerie, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. KHM-Museumsverband

## ***Elizabeth Dauncey***

**Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

ca. 1526–27

Black and colored chalk

Lent by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Hans Holbein drew this likeness of Elizabeth Dauncey, daughter of Sir Thomas More, as part of his work on a monumental portrait of the More family. In the final painting, which was destroyed by fire in the eighteenth century, Dauncey appeared on the far left of the scene, pulling off a glove from her right hand as she joined the family group. Working quickly from life, Holbein used colored chinks to convey the trimming of the sitter's costume, the pink of her lips, and the flush of her cheeks. He also wrote the German word *rot* (red) on the bodice of her dress, indicating its color in the final painting. The inscription "The Lady Barkley" is a later and erroneous identification.



***'Abd al-Wahid bin Mas'ood bin Mohammad  
'Annouri***

Unknown English artist

1600

Oil on panel

Research and Cultural Collections, University of Birmingham,  
United Kingdom

In 1600, Ahmad al-Mansur, sultan of Morocco, sent a delegation to England with clandestine orders to propose an Anglo-Moroccan alliance against Spain. This portrait, the first ever painted of a Muslim in England, depicts the sultan's ambassador, whose six-month stay at the English court was the subject of intense fascination. The ambassador wears a turban and robe of white linen, a black cloak, and a *nimcha*, or scimitar. He rests one hand upon his chest and extends the index finger of the other toward the ground in a gesture that draws attention to his prominent weapon. Scholars have speculated that the embassy may have prompted a fashion for plays with North African themes, including Shakespeare's *Othello*.

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***Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester***

**Federico Zuccaro (1540/41–1609)**

1575

Black and red chalk

The British Museum, London

Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester, was the first and most enduring of Elizabeth's favorites, men whom she showered with affection, favor, and lucrative court offices. This drawing and another depicting the queen were part of Dudley's unsuccessful campaign to convince her that he would be a worthy royal consort. Made in preparation for painted portraits to be presented to Elizabeth when she visited Dudley at Kenilworth Castle in 1575, they are a rare instance of an Elizabethan aristocrat patronizing an Italian portraitist. In the drawing, the earl appears in tournament armor, the dashing embodiment of a royal champion.

## ***Hercule-François, Duc d'Alençon***

Unknown French artist (circle of François Clouet, ca. 1516–1572)

1572

Oil on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Depicted at life size and full length, the dashing figure of Hercule-François, duc d'Alençon, youngest son of Henri II of France, dominates this formal portrait, dated the day after the sitter's eighteenth birthday. The easy elegance of this likeness presents a deceptive image of the duke: a severe case of smallpox contracted in his childhood had stunted his growth and left him permanently scarred. This flattering depiction was most likely intended to play a role in fruitless marriage negotiations with Elizabeth I that extended over the course of a decade. As recorded by an ambassador, when presented with this portrait, the queen noted from its inscription that her suitor "was not yet half her age—eighteen as against thirty-eight."

## ***Fencing Doublet***

Western Europe, ca. 1580

Leather, silk, linen, cotton

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bashford Dean Memorial Collection, Funds from various donors, 1929  
(29.158.175)

This rare surviving fencing doublet captures the silhouette that defined idealized male beauty in the Elizabethan age. The “peascod” belly—padded to protrude forward, elongating the torso and widening the waistline—became fashionable in the 1570s. Probably used for fencing practice, the padded garment would have both protected the wearer and assimilated him to a fashionable ideal.

***Ellen Maurice***

**Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger (1561–  
1635/36)**

1597

Oil on panel

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Theodocia and Joseph Arkus and University Place Foundation Gifts; Gift of Victor G. Fischer, by exchange; Marquand Fund; Elizabeth and Thomas Easton Gift, in memory of their mother, Joan K. Easton; Gift of Mary Phelps Smith, in memory of her husband, Howard Caswell Smith, by exchange; and The Alfred N. Punnett Endowment Fund, 2017 (2017.249)

Women at the court of Elizabeth I used portraiture and fashion to emulate the distinctive appearance of the queen. In this example, the Welsh heiress Ellen Maurice adopts a long, stiff bodice, bulbous sleeves, and wheel farthingale to mimic the silhouette visible in Elizabeth's portraits in this gallery. Typical of Marcus Gheeraerts's depictions of women are the prominent eye sockets and vein visible in the sitter's right temple, calling attention to her extreme pallor. One poet declared of her, "Whenever there came to the same place . . . the daughters of great dukes of the fairest

pedigrees / and the best, most attractive, ladies / in  
elegant London . . . / she was judged fairest.”

## ***Pair of Gloves***

London, ca. 1600

Leather; satin worked with silk and metal threads; seed pearls; satin, couching, and darning stitches; metal bobbin lace; paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1928 (28.220.7, .8)

The weeping eye, green parrot, and shimmering pansies adorning this pair of gloves indicate they were originally intended as a love token. In the Tudor period, the exchange of gifts was an essential rite of courtship. Gloves appear as fashionable accessories in the portraits of both men and women from the period, as in Marcus Gheeraerts's nearby portrait of Ellen Maurice.

# ***Octonaries upon the Vanitie and Inconstancie of the World***

Written by **Antoine de la Roche Chandieu** (1534–1591); transcribed and with miniatures by **Esther Inglis** (1570/71–1624)

Edinburgh, ca. 1600

Ink and watercolor

Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.

Operating at the margins of courtly society, Esther Inglis, the daughter of French Protestant refugees, created roughly sixty gift manuscripts—composite works of calligraphy, drawing, and embroidery—with which she cultivated royal favor. This manuscript was likely her own master copy of a popular devotional text. Demonstrating her command of roman and italic hands, Inglis copied out the French originals and their English translations on facing pages, ornamenting them with floral specimens that recall contemporary embroidery.



## ***The Unfortunate Painter and His Family***

**Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder** (ca. 1520–  
ca. 1590)

1577

Pen and wash, heightened with white, on  
prepared paper

Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris

Like many other artists in Tudor England, Marcus Gheeraerts was a refugee from religious persecution in the Low Countries. This drawing is a fanciful self-portrait that reflects the uncertain experiences of artists seeking patronage in foreign lands. The painter, who is studying a live model, is distracted by his wife, an older woman (perhaps his mother or mother-in-law), and a swarm of playing children. Meanwhile, Mercury, a god associated with both the arts and commerce, taps the painter on the head, and a putto reaches up from under the easel to prod him with a maulstick. The background landscape contains two figures, one with wings and an hourglass. While the painter is torn between the demands of his family and his muse, time is swiftly passing.

## ***Design for Queen Mary I's Great Seal***

Attributed to **Jacques Jonghelinck** (1530–1606)

Probably Antwerp, ca. 1553

Pen and brown ink, with pink-red wash and gold,  
on prepared paper

The British Museum, London

## ***Design for Queen Elizabeth I's Great Seal of Ireland***

**Nicholas Hilliard** (ca. 1547–1619)

London, ca. 1584

Pen and black ink, with gray wash, over graphite,  
on vellum

The British Museum, London

The English monarch's Great Seal embodied her or his authority, bestowing royal approval on any document bearing the wax disc. Mary's was the first ever to convey the command of an uncontested sovereign queen. This detailed design—never executed—may have been a gift from her future husband, Philip of Spain, celebrating her accession.

Over the course of her long reign, Nicholas Hilliard designed at least three seals for Elizabeth. This example crisply asserts her God-given right to rule—a claim bloodily contested in Ireland, the intended recipient of this particular design.

## ***Elizabeth I***

Unknown artist, perhaps English

ca. 1575–80

Engraved sardonyx, set in gold

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Some thirty cameo portraits of Elizabeth I survive. The cutter of this gem skillfully carved the banded dark and light layers of a sardonyx to sculpt the queen's image, even conveying the effect of rouge on her cheek. Made with a technique dating back to ancient Greece, cameos conferred the legitimacy of these venerable origins on contemporary rulers. At the same time, they lent themselves to the development of a racialized aesthetic of extreme fairness, a significant feature of the cult of Elizabeth's beauty.

## ***Portrait Medal of Queen Mary I with Allegory of Peace***

**Jacopo da Trezzo (1515/19–1589)**

London or Antwerp, 1554

Cast and chased gold

The British Museum, London

## ***Portrait Medal of Queen Mary I of England and Philip, Prince of Spain***

**Jacques Jonghelinck (1530–1606)**

Probably Antwerp, 1555

Cast and chased gold

The British Museum, London

A fortuitous consequence of Mary Tudor's largely unpopular marriage to the future Philip II of Spain was access to her husband's court artists. On one side of Jacopo da Trezzo's portrait medal, Mary is represented as a Habsburg bride with a proud, strong profile, emulating Roman coins. On the reverse, an allegorical figure embodying peace alludes to her restoration of Roman Catholicism as the official English religion: scales symbolize justice; clasped hands, unity; a

cube, stability. Mary's portrait was adapted and paired with Philip's for a medal by Fleming Jacques Jonghelinck. In this version, Trezzo's psychological heft is eclipsed by gorgeous surface detailing.

***Portrait Medal of Queen Elizabeth I with  
Allegory of Dangers Averted***

Attributed to **Nicholas Hilliard** (ca. 1547–1619)

London, ca. 1588

Cast and chased gold

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge,  
United Kingdom

Rejecting the conventional profile, Queen Elizabeth is positioned centrally, fully frontal, staring out at the viewer. Nicholas Hilliard's subversion of the aesthetic ideal championed in mainland Europe with something completely other, and fiercely English, was doubtless intentional given the medal's function as a celebration of the defeat of the Spanish Armada and Catholic Spain's attempted invasion. The allegory on the reverse—inscribed "There is no richer circle in the world"—celebrates Elizabeth's England as a fertile island, impenetrable like its chaste queen, contained and safely isolated against European annexation.

***Portrait Medal of Richard Martin and  
Dorcas Eglestone***

**Steven Cornelisz. van Herwijck** (ca. 1530–  
ca. 1565)

London, 1562

Cast and chased silver

The British Museum, London

***Portrait Medal of William Herbert, 1st Earl of  
Pembroke, with Allegory of Virtue***

**Steven Cornelisz. van Herwijck** (ca. 1530–  
ca. 1565)

London, 1562

Cast and chased silver

The British Museum, London

Dutch portrait medalist and sculptor Steven Cornelisz. van Herwijck, born in Utrecht, citizen of Antwerp, could have made a glorious career for himself in Flanders or at the Polish court. He chose instead to settle in London, developing a clientele of both court functionaries and courtiers. Richard Martin—master at the Royal Mint and future Lord Mayor of London—and his wife, Dorcas Eglestone—respected intellectual



and published translator—embody the prosperous middle class of Elizabethan London, decorous but not ostentatious. On the other hand, William Herbert—1st Earl of Pembroke and veteran of four Tudor reigns—epitomizes armor-clad aristocratic grandeur.

***Henry VIII***

**Lucas Horenbout** (ca. 1490/95–1544)

ca. 1525–27

Watercolor on vellum, laid on playing card

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge,  
United Kingdom

***Henry VIII***

**Lucas Horenbout** (ca. 1490/95–1544)

ca. 1526–27

Watercolor on vellum, laid on playing card (ace of diamonds)

Lent by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

***Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond and Somerset***

**Lucas Horenbout** (ca. 1490/95–1544)

ca. 1533–34

Watercolor on vellum, laid on playing card (ace of hearts)

Lent by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Although they have ancient roots, European portrait miniatures first developed in response to diplomatic

exchanges between the French and English courts in the 1520s. From the start, the miniatures served as highly mobile stand-ins for royal bodies, intended to inspire an emotional response that would build ties between dynasties. The intimacy of the genre is particularly clear in Lucas Horenbout's portrait of Henry VIII's illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, depicted as a handsome young bridegroom in his nightcap and undershirt.

## ***The Heneage Jewel***

**Nicholas Hilliard** (ca. 1547–1619) and workshop  
ca. 1595–1600

Enameled gold, table-cut diamonds, Burmese rubies,  
rock crystal, miniature

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Intended to be worn on the body or examined in the hand, this jeweled portrait locket was both a private artwork, destined for a limited and elite audience, and a public declaration of loyalty and favor. It combines sculpted and painted images of Elizabeth I with allegories of her reign. The locket was most likely commissioned by a courtier to house a miniature portrait that he had been given by the queen. The Burmese rubies attest to the extensive trade networks behind the making of Tudor luxury goods.

*Image caption:*

The interior of the locket. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

## ***Man in Royal Livery***

**Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

1532–35

Oil and gold on vellum, laid on linden panel

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Mary Stillman Harkness, 1950 (50.145.24)

The man in this portrait wears royal livery, a uniform consisting of a red cap and coat embroidered with Henry VIII's initials (*HR*) that identifies him as an artisan or attendant in the royal household. By having himself depicted in livery, Hans Holbein's sitter emphasized his loyalty and service at court. Unlike the other miniatures on display, which are painted in watercolor, this portrait is a small-scale demonstration of Holbein's celebrated oil-painting technique.

***William Roper***

**Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

ca. 1535

Watercolor and gold on vellum, laid on card

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1950  
(50.69.1)

***Margaret Roper***

**Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

ca. 1535

Watercolor and gold on vellum, laid on card

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1950  
(50.69.2)

Margaret Roper, daughter of Sir Thomas More, was celebrated for her learning. Here, she appears as though interrupted in her reading or prayers, her thumb marking her place in a book. She and her husband sat for these portraits by Hans Holbein in the same year that her father was beheaded. Her devotion to him in his captivity, recorded by William Roper in a biography of More, only added to Margaret's fame.

***Portrait of a Young Man, Probably Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex***

**Nicholas Hilliard** (ca. 1547–1619)

1588

Watercolor on vellum, laid on card

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund, 1935  
(35.89.4)

With his dark curls, smoldering eyes, and jawline haloed with stubble, the young sitter of this miniature embodies the ideal of male beauty at the Elizabethan court. Most scholars have identified him as Elizabeth I's favorite Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, and this portrait may have served as a love token. Essex eventually grew frustrated at a decline in his political power; his rebellion against the queen led to his beheading in 1601.

***Sir Anthony Mildmay, Knight of Apethorpe,  
Northamptonshire***

**Nicholas Hilliard** (ca. 1547–1619)

ca. 1590–93

Watercolor on vellum, laid on card, mounted on wood

Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund

Framed by the folds of a circular tent, Sir Anthony Mildmay strikes a relaxed and confident pose, with his right hand resting on a cloth-covered table and his left grasping the hilt of his rapier. Helmet, gauntlet, and leg coverings are scattered about, as if Mildmay has been interrupted in the act of putting on or taking off his armor. Despite its small scale, this portrait reveals Nicholas Hilliard's emulation of (and rivalry with) life-size court portraiture.



## ***A Party in the Open Air***

**Isaac Oliver** (ca. 1565–1617)

ca. 1590–95

Watercolor and bodycolor, with gold and silver, on vellum, laid on card

Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

On this small piece of vellum, Isaac Oliver created one of the most ambitious Elizabethan paintings. In a woodland landscape that opens onto a view of distant buildings, a crowded company of elegant figures stroll, hunt, and make music or love. With its contrast between forest and architecture, uninhibited revelers and well-behaved town-dwellers, the miniature recalls Shakespearean comedies in which the protagonists pass through woodland spaces as they work through conflicts and achieve transformation or resolution.

***Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland***

**Nicholas Hilliard** (ca. 1547–1619)

ca. 1590–95

Watercolor and bodycolor on vellum, laid on card

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Between about 1585 and 1595, Nicholas Hilliard experimented with painting larger miniatures that depicted the subject at full length within a carefully described setting. This example features Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland, in a landscape full of symbols whose meaning scholars have yet to unravel fully. The earl's black clothing and pensive pose reflect the fashion for elegant melancholy at the late Elizabethan court.

## LANGUAGES OF ORNAMENT

Similar to other elites of Renaissance Europe, the Tudors had an interest in the artistic legacy of ancient Greece and Rome. The artists of sixteenth-century England, however, often blended this classical tradition with motifs from the natural world. They drew upon both the long-standing conventions of floral symbolism and the untamed wilderness beyond the confines of towns and palaces, experienced through the ritual of the hunt and frequently evoked in contemporary poetry and drama.

The mazes, topiary, and terracing of Tudor gardens provided a controlled experience of nature, while elaborate court masques and choreographed tournaments offered make-believe settings in which courtiers could evoke chivalric romance and pay tribute to the monarch, particularly Elizabeth I, who encouraged displays of public devotion by her courtiers. Such events reveal a nostalgia for the early Middle Ages, rooted in the (originally Welsh) Tudor family's appropriation of King Arthur as a legendary ancestor. Interlacing geometric straps evoking Celtic knotwork

and Anglo-Saxon manuscripts appear in decorative patterning on everything from armor to table carpets. Combining the classical, the natural, and medieval revivalism, Tudor arts attest to the emergence of a uniquely English Renaissance aesthetic.

***Letters Patent Granting Arms to William Paget,  
1st Baron Paget de Beaudesert by King  
Edward VI***

March 25, 1553

Ink and bodycolor on vellum, with wax seal

Lent by the Marquess of Anglesey, Plas Newydd House,  
Anglesey, United Kingdom

A Tudor rose and ermine-lined imperial crown fill a golden *E* to proclaim the authority of Edward VI, Henry VIII's son and short-lived successor. The rose's appearance in place of a more conventional portrait of the seated monarch indicates the royal authority the symbol had garnered within three generations. Decorated with strawberries, red roses, lilies, carnations, and pansies, this document regranted William Paget the right to a coat of arms. A favorite of Henry VIII, the newly ennobled Paget fared less well under Edward, even being arrested and stripped of his arms at one point. The disgrace was forgiven with this declaration, a reminder of the fickleness of Tudor favor.

***George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland***  
**Nicholas Hilliard (ca. 1547–1619)**

ca. 1590

Watercolor and bodycolor, with gold and silver leaf, on vellum, laid on panel

National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich, London

George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland, was a soldier and privateer who in 1590 became the Queen's Champion, responsible for organizing tournaments and defending Elizabeth's honor by jousting. Nicholas Hilliard's miniature most likely commemorates this occasion, depicting the earl in a splendid suit of armor decorated with stars beneath a bejeweled surcoat whose rolled-back sleeves display the queen's emblem, an armillary sphere. Cumberland prominently displays Elizabeth's favor, a glove, attached to his hat.

## ***Field Armor for George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland***

Greenwich, England, 1586

Steel, partly etched and gilded, leather

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Munsey Fund, 1932  
(32.130.6a–y)

This suit was made at the armory at Greenwich Palace for Queen Elizabeth's future champion to wear at her annual Accession Day tournament. It adopts the ideal Elizabethan male silhouette, with cinched waist, full hips, peascod belly, and slim, shapely legs, elongated by short trunk-hose breeches. Thanks to brilliant mercury gilding over heat-darkened, "blued" steel, George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland was encased from head to toe in the bicolored Tudor rose, fleur-de-lis, Elizabeth's cipher of back-to-back *E*'s, and his own badge of small rings—all bordered with Celtic-style knotwork, evoking the knights-errant of King Arthur's age often emulated at the Tudor court.

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## ***Henry VII Cope***

Cope: Florence or Lucca, Italy, 1499–1505

Velvet cloth of gold brocaded with loops of gilded silver and silver metal-wrapped threads

Orphrey and hood: England, ca. 1500

Linen embroidered with silk and gilded-silver metal-wrapped threads

Trustees of the British Jesuit Province—Jesuits in Britain

The portcullis emblem of Henry VII's maternal family, the Beauforts, is crowned and seemingly suspended from graceful vines of Lancastrian red roses, bracketed by two Tudor roses—white petals rendered in silver thread—and bordered by Lancastrian S's and more Tudor roses. Henry commissioned this and more than thirty other vestments for Westminster Abbey. Sparing no expense, the velvets were made to size by master weavers working simultaneously in Florence and Lucca to hasten delivery. Though the technical virtuosity was typical for Italian velvets, the bold design was unlike anything previously woven in the material. In one fell swoop, Henry VII outdid his predecessors, matched his European counterparts,



and emblazoned the English seat of power with the recognizable emblems of his family's new royal dynasty.

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## ***Chasuble***

Probably London, ca. 1550–1600

Satin embroidered with gilded-silver metal-wrapped threads, with applied embroidered velvet

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

After Henry VII's inspired adoption of the bicolor Tudor rose to represent the union of the previously warring Lancaster and York royal families, the symbol became ubiquitous throughout sixteenth-century England. Here, it is rendered in precious thread and brilliant silks against a rich crimson satin ground and among a garden of oak and laurel leaves, pimpernels, and carnations. Probably originally intended as a hanging or furnishing, this sumptuous imported satin embellished with English embroidery and applied "cut work" was carefully adapted as a set of vestments for clergy conducting the Church of England's Communion service.

***The First and Chief Groundes of Architecture  
Used in All the Auncient and Famous  
Monymentes . . .***

Written by **John Shute** (died 1563); printed by  
**Thomas Marshe** (active 1554–87)

London, 1563

Avery Library, Columbia University, New York

This is the first architectural treatise printed in English. John Shute wrote it at the request of King Edward VI, but the book was only published, with a new dedication, during Queen Elizabeth's reign. Shute traveled throughout Italy, making drawings of the buildings, ruins, paintings, and sculptures he saw there. The volume is less a working manual than an intellectual album for a dilettante, moneyed audience. Shute emulated existing written treatises—from the Roman Vitruvius's recently republished *De Architectura* to contemporary texts by the Italian Sebastiano Serlio and his multilingual translator, the Fleming Pieter Coecke van Aelst.

## ***The Apotheosis of Henry VIII***

**Robert Pyte** (active 1546–52)

1546

Pen and ink, with wash, on vellum

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

In this fanciful and mildly preposterous composition, Henry VIII kneels in prayer, facing the viewer, flanked by Faith and Hope. Angels pull back curtains, offering the king a crown, a book, an orb, and a scepter. A kneeling cleric and patrician, like donors in an altarpiece, seem to pray to the ruler, made even more godlike by the dove in a nimbus just above his head. The designer, Robert Pyte, an engraver at the Royal Mint, combined ephemeral pageant architecture with a classicized fireplace design published by Sebastiano Serlio and elements of ornate Venetian and Roman tomb monuments by Jacopo Sansovino. Though the final work was never realized, Henry perhaps intended this drawing to be preparatory for a massive, multisheet engraved *Arch of Honor* similar to Albrecht Dürer's for Emperor Maximilian.

***The Triumph of Hercules, from a seven-piece set of the Antiques***

Designed by **Raphael** (1483–1520), with **Giovanni da Udine** (1487–1564), **Perino del Vaga** (1501–1547), and **Gianfrancesco Penni** (ca. 1496–ca. 1528), ca. 1516–20; probably woven under the direction of **Jan and Willem Dermoyen** (active ca. 1528–49)

Brussels, before 1542

Wool (warp), wool, silk, silver, and gilded-silver metal-wrapped threads (wefts)

Lent by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Raphael's bold, three-tiered composition emulated the recently rediscovered wall paintings in the subterranean, grotto-like ruins of Nero's palace in Rome—called *grotteschi*, or grotesques. Featuring a nearly nude Hercules, whom Henry VIII liked to consider his classical alter ego, the tapestry represents eight of the hero's labors, alongside scrolling foliage, putti, centaurs, and other mythical hybrid creatures. Part of a set of seven, it attests to the sophisticated, antique-style decoration presented in monumental scale in Henry's London. With this acquisition's combination

of contemporary Italian design and Brussels tapestry weaving, the king proved that he belonged to the first rank of Europe's patrons, on par with Medici pope Leo X, for whom the series was originally designed.

## ***Cup and Cover (The “English Monument”)***

Antwerp, 1558–59

Gilded silver

Historisches Museum Frankfurt

To avoid persecution, many English Protestants spent the duration of “Bloody” Mary’s five-year reign in Frankfurt. A free imperial city, Frankfurt answered only to the Holy Roman Emperor, and because of this relative autonomy enjoyed a reputation for tolerance. Following Elizabeth’s coronation, most returned to England, and they commissioned this gift for the city. Together forming a composite column, the hollow shaft is a cup; the shallow dome, its cover; the heroic figure atop, the handle. On the base are Elizabeth’s royal arms of England and a Latin inscription from the English to their Frankfurter hosts, thanking the city council for the shelter they offered and recognizing their “humanitas.”

## ***Astronomicum Caesareum (Astronomy of the Caesars)***

Written by **Petrus Apianus** (1495–1552);  
illustrated by **Michael Ostendorfer** (ca. 1490–  
1549)

Ingolstadt, Germany, 1540

Printed text on paper with hand-colored woodcut  
illustrations

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Herbert N.  
Straus, 1925 (25.17)

National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich, London

Petrus Apianus was astronomer to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and a mathematics professor at Ingolstadt University. These two copies of his book belonged to a print run he gifted to an elite group of rulers. The unusually thick paper and lavish hand-colored illustrations, including the cavorting naked putti and scrolling arabesques on the title page, have more to do with the recipients than with the volume's ostensible use as an instruction manual for reading astrological charts and navigating using the stars. Henry VIII, who owned the finest contemporary books on the market, likely kept his copy alongside other



astronomical books in the Secret Jewel House at the Tower of London.

## ***The Luttrell Table Carpet***

England or the Southern Netherlands, 1514–80

Wool (warp), wool, silk, silver, and gilded-silver metal-wrapped threads (wefts)

Burrell Collection, Glasgow

Like the example in the preceding gallery, this tapestry was a high-priced ceremonial table covering that proclaimed the affluence, influence, and noble lineage of its patron family, in this case the Luttrells. It's possible that it was likewise commissioned by an independent and wealthy woman, the widowed Dame Margaret Luttrell. Dame Margaret also paid for the best, with the tapestry either sent from Flanders or made in London by Flemish weavers fleeing religious persecution. The design surrounding the family armorials, though, is unlike anything woven in Europe: bold and powerful, playing on self-consciously traditional British Celtic knotwork—comparable to contemporary plasterwork and garden mazes—with the ground pairing honeysuckle and marguerite daisies with Tudor roses.

***Verdure with the Arms of Robert Dudley,  
1st Earl of Leicester***

England or the Southern Netherlands, ca. 1585

Wool (warp), wool and silk (wefts)

Burrell Collection, Glasgow

Peacocks and turkeys strut beneath a thicket of bicolor Tudor roses and indigenous English flowers. Emblazoned in the center is the coat of arms of Queen Elizabeth's first and most enduring favorite, Robert Dudley, by this time Earl of Leicester and knight of the exclusive Order of the Garter. Leicester ordered this and two other tapestries to ornament his banqueting house, an entertainment pavilion that he built at the foot of his garden beside the river Thames. Supplied by the queen's Flemish arrasman (tapestry overseer), they were either local or imported Flemish productions; either way, the design was particularly English—the floral profusion, however appealing, outdated in relation to mainland European taste.

## ***Blackwork Embroidery***

Probably London, ca. 1590

Linen embroidered with silk and gilded-silver precious-metal-wrapped threads

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, The James Parker Charitable Foundation Gift, 2013 (2013.598)

With deceptive simplicity, skilled English embroiderers worked the finest Flemish linen, called “lawne,” with black silk. Here, the Tudor roses, pomegranates, and rose hips are filled in with at least ten different minute patterns, highlighted with stitched chains of gilded silver-wrapped silk floss, called “Gold of Venice.”

Blackwork decorated royal household linens as well as items of clothing like neckerchiefs sported by Henry VIII; a pair of sleeves owned by his third wife, Jane Seymour; and panels for Queen Elizabeth’s kirtles, the bodices and skirts worn under her gowns.

## ***Box with the Device of Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester***

Probably London, 1579

Iron damascened with gold and silver

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Tiny Tudor roses, pimpernels, and carnations in gold and silver are pressed into heat-blackened iron through a technique called “damascening,” derived from Syrian and Egyptian imports. King David espies the unattainable object of his desire, Bathsheba, on the lid; inside is Robert Dudley’s heraldic device. Made to fit nestled in the hand, this box—doubtless a gift—contained sweetmeats of candied fruits and nuts. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Shakespeare called these tasty breath-fresheners “kissing comfits.”

## ***Elizabeth I in a Garden***

England, ca. 1590

Satin worked with silk, precious-metal-wrapped threads, seed pearls, spangles, and glass beads, with watercolor on vellum, human hair

Private collection

Made for private contemplation, this intimately scaled, jewel-like embroidered and painted miniature presents a version of Queen Elizabeth quite at odds with her formal, large-scale portraits. In a fashionable short cloak and informal headgear, the queen appears to be strolling in some magical garden, where formal terraces and a fountain confront rolling hills, abundant flora, and unfettered birdlife. Expertly worked with pearls, precious threads, and even human hair, this expensive work was likely a special gift to or from the monarch.

## **ALLEGORIES AND ICONS**

The Protestant Reformation brought about the wholesale removal and destruction of religious images in English churches. While some artists experimented with new kinds of religious painting that would inspire intellectual contemplation, most instead focused their attention on investing the monarch, as newly proclaimed head of the church, with sacred authority. During Elizabeth I's reign, printmakers, many based on the continent, created mass-produced images that celebrated the queen as protector of the Protestant cause.

Painting in the Elizabethan period reveals a stylistic shift away from the naturalistic portraits made under Henry VIII, particularly as embodied in the work of Hans Holbein. Facing enormous pressure as an unmarried woman ruler, Elizabeth exerted tight control over her image. Well into her sixties, she was depicted as an ageless and semidivine beauty. Her carefully vetted portraitists drew upon the elaborate allegories devised by court poets to pay tribute to the queen and her immense powers. Courtiers followed the

monarch's lead, commissioning portraits that reveal less about the sitters' appearances than about their literary tastes and idiosyncratic personal symbolism. Such paintings delight the eye with their flattened decorative surfaces and close attention to the rendering of textiles and jewels.



## ***Elizabeth I (The Ditchley Portrait)***

**Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger (1561–1635/36)**

ca. 1592

Oil on canvas

National Portrait Gallery, London

The largest surviving full-length portrait of Elizabeth, this painting depicts the queen standing on a map of southern England, before a background evenly divided between sun and storm. The various inscriptions reflect the monarch's power, declaring, "She gives and does not expect," and, "She can but does not take revenge." The courtier Sir Henry Lee almost certainly presented the painting to the queen as a testament to his devotion when she visited his country house at Ditchley in September 1592. In this context, the portrait would have been one component in a spectacle combining painting, poetry, and dramatic performances that celebrated Elizabeth as a figure of nearly supernatural power. At the same time, it features a relatively naturalistic depiction of her aged appearance toward the end of her reign.

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## ***Queen Elizabeth I (The Darnley Portrait)***

Unknown Netherlandish artist

ca. 1575

Oil on panel

National Portrait Gallery, London

With its deep-set eyes, hollow cheeks, and aquiline nose, this depiction of Elizabeth became the prototype for numerous images and has one of the strongest claims to recording her appearance with accuracy. The black veil and fan of dyed feathers are accessories associated with masques, theatrical performances staged in the queen's honor. The artist remains unknown, but the technique suggests the portrait was the work of an émigré painter from the Netherlands.

## ***Portrait of an Unknown Woman***

**Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger (1561–1635/36)**

ca. 1590–1600

Oil on canvas

Lent by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Combining painting and poetry, this is one of the most celebrated—and mysterious—of all Elizabethan portraits. An unknown woman in theatrical costume crowns a weeping stag with a garland of flowers. The inscribed sonnet adds to the painting’s melancholy atmosphere, with the speaker describing her “restless mind” and “pensive thoughts” as she contemplates “cruelty unkind.” Scholars have proposed many possible identifications for this grief-stricken woman. One of the most persuasive is Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, a poet whose life was marked by personal tragedy in the years to which the painting can be dated on stylistic grounds. The portrait demonstrates how Elizabethan courtiers used portraiture and poetry to stylize even the most personal emotions.

***An Allegory of the Old and New Testaments***  
**Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543)**

early 1530s

Oil on panel

Scottish National Gallery, National Galleries of Scotland,  
Edinburgh

The naked man at the center of Hans Holbein's painting represents all of humanity, faced with a choice between sin and redemption, death and eternal life. The composition features contrasting pairings, such as a skeleton and the risen Christ, and the withered and leafy halves of the central tree. These pairings, known as typologies, implied that Christ had ushered in a new dispensation, replacing the laws of the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament.

Holbein most likely made this painting for a Protestant patron in England, at a time when religious reformers were highly critical of the role of paintings in Catholic devotion. In response, some artists developed new kinds of intellectual and didactic imagery, such as this work, intended for contemplation and teaching rather than worship.

***An Allegory of the Wise and the Foolish Virgins***  
**Hans Eworth** (ca. 1525–after 1578)

1570

Oil on panel

Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

In the Book of Matthew, Jesus tells a parable that compares true believers to wise maidens who greet their bridegroom with oil-filled lamps, while their “foolish” companions leave their lamps empty and are locked out of the kingdom of heaven. In this painting, Hans Eworth depicts the virgins as an allegory for the individual believer’s relationship to God. Protestant religious images juxtaposed the reformers’ ideals with what they saw as the falsehood of the Catholic church. The slumped woman in the foreground on the right, for example, holds a Catholic rosary. In the remarkable nocturnal landscape in the background, a shepherd uses his staff to separate goats from sheep, reinforcing the distinction between those chosen and those excluded.

## ***Elizabeth I (The Rainbow Portrait)***

Attributed to **Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger**  
(1561–1635/36)

ca. 1602

Oil on canvas

Lent by the Marquess of Salisbury, Hatfield House, Hertfordshire,  
United Kingdom

Painted at the end of Elizabeth's reign, this portrait presents her as an ageless and unreal beauty, swathed in symbolic attire. Like the nearby Ditchley portrait, this image depicts the queen as a supernatural ruler with the sun's ability to shine light on her subjects (and to bring about rainbows after the turbulence of a storm). The large embroidered serpent on her sleeve is a symbol of wisdom, while the motif of eyes and ears on her cloak suggests she is all-seeing and all-hearing. Although these garments may appear fantastical, scholars have linked them to documented items of apparel that Elizabeth received during visits to courtiers' country homes.

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## ***Elizabeth I (Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses)***

Attributed to **Isaac Oliver** (ca. 1565–1617)

London, ca. 1588

Watercolor and bodycolor, with gold and silver, on vellum, laid on card

National Portrait Gallery, London

At the left of this diminutive work stands Elizabeth. She confronts three goddesses from classical mythology: Juno (with her peacock), Minerva (clad in armor and holding a battlefield standard), and Venus (with her son Cupid by her side). The goddesses react to the queen with gestures of surprise or deference, appearing to concede her superiority. The Three Goddesses theme provided an elegant vehicle for praising the queen's supposed embodiment of every conceivable art, beauty, and skill. At the same time, the multifigured composition reveals Isaac Oliver's ambition to take miniature painting beyond the confines of portraiture and into the realm of allegorical narrative.

## ***Het Spaens Europa (Spanish Europe)***

Frankfurt, ca. 1598

Engraving

McCord Stewart Museum, Montreal

During Elizabeth's reign, she became a heroine for the embattled Protestants of continental Europe, particularly following her 1588 defeat of the Spanish Armada that had attempted to force her from the throne. This allegorical map celebrates Spanish military losses and replaces the continent of Europe (oriented with the west at the top of the page) with the body of the queen herself. With one breast bare and a sword in hand, she embodies the feminine martial spirit of the ancient Amazons. This engraving had an international circulation, and therefore would have contributed to the shaping of the queen's image beyond courtly circles.



## ***Elizabeth I***

### **Crispijn de Passe the Elder (1564–1637)**

London, 1592

Engraving

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1928 (28.97.101)

Produced by a Dutch printmaker and bearing a Latin inscription, this engraving was intended for international consumption. It provides a relatively realistic and straightforward depiction of Elizabeth, stripped of the complex symbolism of painted court portraits. Holding the trappings of her office, the queen appears with an authority comparable to that of her male peers, but without the divine powers attributed to her by Tudor court portraitists.

## ***Elizabeth I***

Attributed to **the workshop of Nicholas Hilliard**  
(ca. 1547–1619)

ca. 1599

Oil on canvas

National Trust, Hardwick Hall, The Devonshire Collection, United Kingdom

One of the most powerful of Elizabeth's courtiers, Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (known as Bess of Hardwick), commissioned this portrait for display at her newly built country house, Hardwick Hall. Elizabeth appears beside a throne and in front of a red velvet cloth of state. Her costume is ornate and richly bejeweled, with striking imagery of flora and fauna embroidered on the petticoat. Bess of Hardwick was herself a gifted embroiderer who frequently gave items of apparel to the queen as New Year's presents, some of which may be commemorated in this portrait. Attributed to the workshop of Nicholas Hilliard, the portrait transposes the flat and decorative surfaces of miniature painting to the scale of a life-size portrait on canvas.

***Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales, with  
Sir John Harington in the Hunting Field***  
**Robert Peake the Elder (ca. 1551–1619)**

1603

Oil on canvas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1944 (44.27)

Following the death of Elizabeth I in 1603, the arrival of a new royal family in England, complete with an athletic and charismatic male heir, had a dramatic effect on royal portraiture. Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales, became the focal point of dynastic aspirations. This portrait, among the first painted of Henry following his arrival in England, depicts the prince sheathing his sword after delivering a ceremonial blow to the carcass of a deer. It replaces the static allegories of late Elizabethan portraiture with an image of dynamism that appears to usher in a new age. Nonetheless, the prince's death of typhoid at the age of eighteen disappointed the great hopes invested in him; his portraitist, Robert Peake, is recorded as having taken part in his elaborate funeral.

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