THE ARMOR OF HENRY II OF FRANCE
FROM THE LOUVRE MUSEUM

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An interchange of loans last spring between the Louvre Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art has taken to Paris the armor of Galiot de Genouilhac, the finest extant example of etched and gilded armor of the Renaissance, and brought to New York the embossed armor of Henry II of France. This royal armor, which is one of the greatest achievements of the art of the armorer goldsmith, will continue to be exhibited in the main hall of the Museum until the end of October. It is of especial interest to the Museum because of its relation to a helmet in the permanent collection which is thought to have been made by the same armorer and may even belong to the Louvre suit. This helmet appears in two Medici portraits, that of Ferdinand I de' Medici (reigned 1587 to 1609), in the Pitti Palace, Florence, and that of his son Cosimo II de' Medici (reigned 1609 to 1620), which is now in the Metropolitan. That this extraordinary piece, which was apparently made for a king of France, should have later come into the possession of the Medici is not surprising when one recalls that two ladies of this family were queens of France and that one of them, Catherine de' Medici, was the wife of Henry II.

Like so many other works of art, most of the extant embossed armor is anonymous; signed works are exceedingly rare. It is often difficult to identify the author of a work of art made centuries ago, sometimes difficult even to determine its place of origin, and many of the attributions that have recently been made are of doubtful validity. The Museum is particularly fortunate in having in its permanent collection three embossed pieces which are signed. One is the helmet of Francis I by Philip de' Negroli of Milan, the second is a breastplate made by his brother Paulus, and the third is a cuirass by D. G. V. Lochorst, a Flemish armorer goldsmith about whom little is known. These signed pieces are of value in the present study because they show that the French armor of Henry II is quite different in style and workmanship from the Milanese and the Flemish. Its motives and type of ornament obviously belong to the Fontainebleau school of decoration, and the low relief and fine goldsmith's detail of execution are in clear contrast to the deep embossing and sculptural technique of the Negroli pieces. The Henry II armor has, in fact, a style peculiarly its own.

Before discussing this armor, in conjunction with other embossed harnesses and elements made for the court of France, a general account of the arts in France in the sixteenth century should be given. The fine metalwork of this period reflects the change brought about by the new Italian influence on French art.
Armor of Henry II of France. About 1560. Lent by the Louvre
which took place in the reign of Francis I, from 1515 to 1547. This change is best shown in the palace of Fontainebleau, one of the largest, and in the interior one of the most sumptuous, of the royal residences of France. The Primaticcio. This international group produced a new style that was a commingling of Italian and native French influences. Rosso, who in 1530 was appointed superintendent of all the buildings, executed many works both

The “Medici” helmet. French, middle of the xvi century. It is considered to have been made by the same armorer goldsmith who made the Henry II suit in the Louvre. Rogers Fund, 1904

rebuilding and redecoration of the old palace was undertaken in 1528. For this task Francis gathered together a group of Italian, Flemish, and French artists and workmen who were presided over by the Italians Rosso and in stucco and in painting and among other things made designs for horse trappings and triumphal masquerades. Francis had also requested Giulio Romano to come to Fontainebleau, but in 1532 Giulio sent, in his stead, his
The close connection between the styles of the Louvre-school armorer and the Italian artists at Fontainebleau is shown by the similar treatment of hair and facial expressions in the heads on this page. Left to right: Details from the Henry II armor, a painting by Rosso of Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro, in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, and the Medici helm.

assistant Primaticcio, who had worked with him at Mantua for six years at the palace of Duke Federigo Gonzaga. Primaticcio succeeded Rosso in 1540, and his career lasted forty years. Under the direction of these two men great works of architecture, sculpture, and painting were created, and ornament developed without precedent.

That Francis had a particular interest in armor is shown by the fact that he included an armor gallery in the palace of Fontainebleau. During the reign of his son, Henry II, it was restored under the supervision of Philibert Delorme but was not yet completed in 1559 when Henry was accidentally killed in a joust. The accounts for the three subsequent years show that the work was continued after the king's death, for they contain numerous entries concerning the decoration and a mention of the salary paid to Jean Cotillon and Nicolas Hachette, peintres doreurs, who were employed in the restoration.

An armory, or armorer's workshop, was maintained in the Louvre palace, still at that time a royal residence, in which the king often lodged the artists in his service, and it was here that the group of embossed armor associated with the court of France was made. A complete embossed armor of this group is worn by Francis in one of the Clouets' equestrian portraits of him in the Uffizi Gallery. Shields belonging to Henry II and Charles IX, the earlier of iron, the later of solid gold and enamel, both with the royal ciphers, are in the Louvre today. We do not know definitely what artists and armurers, working there from 1540 on, produced these remarkable pieces; they have simply been designated as belonging to the "Louvre school." Comparisons of motives used on them, however, with the work of several artists of the time in France, to be noted later on, throw some light on the origin of their designs. Their workmanship, though differing from the current style in Italy, shows obvious influences of the Italian tradition.

For decades before Henry's time foreign master armurers had been imported by French kings (as also by the English for the royal
was the Negroli brothers who first made popular the practice of elaborately embossing parade armors with scrolls of foliage, masks, and monstrous figures. About this time also Guidobaldo II, Duke of Urbino, recommended his armorer Bartolomeo Campi to Henry II. The brothers César and Baptiste de Gambres, armorers of Milan, were in the service of Henry II in Paris from 1548 to 1557. In 1551 they engaged as an apprentice Jérôme Corolle of Milan, artist in damascening. Foreign armorers such as these in time became naturalized and in turn trained their assistants and successors. By the middle of the sixteenth century there were competent French armorer goldsmiths in the royal workshops. Whether these fine pieces of the Louvre school were executed by native craftsmen or by foreigners, perhaps in collaboration with French designers and goldsmiths, cannot be determined. What is undoubtedly true is that they were made in France.

The most spectacular of all these harnesses of the Louvre school is the one belonging to Henry II, which is the subject of this article. It has been traced to the French royal collections in the time of Louis XIV, and in the inventory made at Paris on February 20, 1673, by Gédon du Metz, Contrôleur Général des meubles de la Couronne, this laconic descrip-

armory at Greenwich). Already in the fifteenth century Thomas of Milan, probably Tommaso Missaglia, was in the service of Louis XI. After 1500 Milan, the greatest armor-making center of Europe, was claimed by France as her possession, and this would certainly have influenced the choice of craftsmen from that city rather than elsewhere. About 1550 Pietro Strozzi, a marshal of France, established Giovanni Pietro Negroli in Paris, where he remained some fifteen years, doing considerable work for the Duke of Guise and other members of the French court and contributing to the artistic development of the Paris armorers. Brantôme wrote that in the course of fifteen years Negroli made fifty thousand crowns selling armor and also that Strozzi caused morions for his soldiers to be sent from Milan, the gilding only having been done in France. It
tion is given: "No. 323. Les armes de François Ier en cap, cisélee de batailles et ornemens, dessein de Julles Romain." In the Inventory of the Royal Household made by the Contrôleur Général Fontanerie, at Paris, August 31, 1717, and verified December 31, 1729, appears a more detailed description of the same armor. "No. 323. Une très belle armure de cinq pieds huit pouces de haut, qui a servy a François premier, composée du casque, col et hausse-col, corselet, épaules et épaulettes, bracelets et gands, sacrifícés, rainceaux et animaux, dessein de Julles Romain." The armor is again referred to in 1779 by Pierre Thomas Nicolas Hurtaut and Magny in their Dictionnaire historique de la ville de Paris. The following quotation, from the third volume, pages 114-115, refers to the crown treasures. "On distingue particulièrement l'armure que le Roi François I portoit à la fameuse journée de Pavie. Elle est de fer poli, ciséelee en relief de demi-ronde-bosse, de divers sujets de l'histoire de Pompée, rainceaux & animaux, sur les desins de Jules Romain."

In these documents the armor is described sufficiently in detail to identify it definitely with the embossed armor of Henry II in the Louvre. In fact, the Henry II armor is the only existing embossed harness that includes scenes from the life of Pompey in its ornamentation. It also has a bright surface (embossed armor is normally colored) and lacks gilding or damascening, which are both indications that it was never entirely completed. The fact that this armor has a clear pedigree that springs from the crown treasures and the fact that it is unfinished indicate that it was made by command of the French king and in France; for it is not at all likely that an unfinished harness would have been delivered from abroad to the French royal household. When the first inventory was made in the seventeenth century, a hundred years after the armor was made, it was known that the Fontainebleau artists designed armor for Francis I; this naturally suggested that the armor belonged to Francis I and was designed by Giulio Romano, and the error became a traditional one. Today
a study of the armor indicates that it was made for Henry II and that the designs are by followers of Giulio and not by the master himself. In addition there is the fact that Henry was suddenly killed, which is a convincing explanation of the unfinished condition of his armor.

One of the most important characteristics of armor of the Louvre school is its connection with the decoration of the Fontainebleau school. A link between the two schools is established by a series of sketches for the carved wood wall panels in the Gallery of Francis I at Fontainebleau, found among the drawings for armor ornamentation in the Graphische Sammlung in Munich that were prepared for Francis I and Henry II. These projects, drawn to allow a choice of details for use in the decoration, are illustrated here with the wood panels actually executed by Francisque Scibec de Carpi, the celebrated Italian menuisier du roy who worked on the Gallery of Francis I from 1535 to 1539. It is possible that the drawings were made by Primaticcio.

Facsimiles of a selection of the Munich drawings were first published in 1865 and a revised second edition in 1889 with text by J. H. von Hefner-Altenack. But their connection with Fontainebleau has never been made clear, although the late Baron Rudolf Cederström, director of the royal armory in Stockholm, pointed out that the paper shows a mid-sixteenth-century French watermark. That they go back to Francis I is proved by the appearance of his crowned initial and salamander emblem on a sketch for horse armor; therefore they could have been made by one of the artists who worked at Fontainebleau. Some of the drawings were made for armor for Henry II; the crowned H, together with the bows and arrows and crescent, emblems of Diane de Poitiers, appears on the designs for a number of armor elements for man and horse. One of the drawings for a shield shows the arms of France encircled by the collar of the Order of Saint Michael (the actual shield is in the Wallace Collection in London, No. 661). Other extant objects enriched from the designs in Munich are a chamfron in the Mu-

sée de l’Armée in Paris (G. 597), the complete embossed armor of Eric XIV of Sweden in the royal armory in Stockholm, and the complete embossed armor lately attributed to the Emperor Maximilian II in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. This last suit was one of the harnesses among the Vienna Treasures exhibited in some of the principal American museums during the past years. The Munich series also includes designs for four embossed objects of the Louvre school in the Metropolitan Museum. One of these is a complete embossed armor of Henry II, presented by Louis XIII to Bernhard von Weimar, a celebrated general who served France in the Thirty Years’ War. As the style of this armor is of the time of Henry II and not later, it may be assumed that Louis XIII did not have a suit of armor specially made for the occasion but instead gave one of the outstanding harnesses already in the royal collection. The other pieces in the Metropolitan for which Munich designs exist are a shield of Henry II, a half-armor from the Rutherfurd Stuyvesant collection, and the Medici helmet.

The Medici helmet is one of the few elements of embossed and richly gilded armor that have come down to the present time. It is a masterpiece, subtle in modeling, with delicate surface chiseling. It is embossed in low relief with the battle of the centaurs and Lapiths and with gorgons, foliation, and a Greek wave pattern developed conspicuously on the crest. In execution it is an example of the finest workmanship of the time. The metalworker of the Renaissance was truly a universal artist. He was taught drawing from the figure and the principles of architecture, as well as the arts more immediately connected with his profession, such as modeling and casting metals, enameling, damascening, gilding, and relief work. He could make objects as diversified as a minutely detailed chalice and an embossed harness. The magnificent tradition that lay behind this training proceeded unbroken from generation to generation of metalworkers, whose ranks naturally included the armorers of the day. The greatest of these were Filippo Negroli and Lucio Picinino of Milan,
Details from the breastplate of the Henry II suit showing the use of classical themes in the decoration of armor. **LEFT:** Julius Caesar is offered Pompey's head and signet ring by Ptolemy's emissaries. **RIGHT:** The throne of Egypt is restored to Cleopatra by Caesar.
Carved wood panels in the Gallery of Francis I at Fontainebleau. The winged thunderbolt on the shield in the right panel is a motive which is frequently used on Louvre-school armor.

Projects for the panels in the Gallery of Francis I at Fontainebleau. The fact that these drawings were found in the series of Louvre-school armor designs in the Graphische Sammlung in Munich suggests that the same artists may have drawn both the Fontainebleau and the armor projects and is a definite link between the two schools of decoration.
Figures of Fame from the Fountain of the Innocents, by Jean Goujon, xvi century, in the Louvre, above, and from the Henry II armor, below. The similarity of details, especially those of the robes, show that other influences on Louvre armor, besides that of Fontainebleau, must be considered. Goujon was the chief sculptor at the Louvre palace, where this armor was made.
Giorgio Ghizi of Mantua, and Desiderius Colman of Augsburg. The French royal patronage of Italian armorers enabled this tradition to continue and made it possible for such masterpieces as the Medici helmet and the Henry II armor to be made.

The specific decorative motives on the Medici helmet and on the armor of Henry II can be found throughout Fontainebleau. The carved wood panels in the Gallery of Francis I include the winged thunderbolt, a motive that is repeated prominently on the Henry II armor as well as on other Louvre-school armor, for example on the harnesses of Eric XIV of Sweden and the Elector Christian I of Saxony in Dresden; it is also on a chamfron among the Munich drawings. It could have been brought to Fontainebleau by Primaticcio, for it appears on the ceiling in the palace at Sabioneta, outside Mantua, with the arms of Duke Vespasiano Gonzaga. It may be of interest to note that Primaticcio painted a portrait, now in the Musée Condé at Chantilly, of Henry II wearing an embossed armor of the Louvre school. The winged thunderbolt, together with the Medusa head and the head of Hercules, which also figure prominently on Louvre-school armor, can be seen in the decoration of the Grand Vestibule door at Fontainebleau. Another motive repeatedly found on the armor is that of bound captives, which are derived indirectly from Michelangelo’s fettered slaves in the Accademia in Florence and in the Louvre and from his figures in the Sistine Chapel in Rome and on the Medici tombs in Florence. Rosso, one of the artists in charge of redecorating Fontainebleau, had taught himself by the persistent study of Michelangelo’s cartoons, and through him the motive came into use by the Louvre armorers. He was also decisively influenced by Baccio Bandinelli, the self-styled rival of Michelangelo. There is an engraving printed in Rome and dated 1544 (after a portrait painted by Bandinelli) of Cosimo de’ Medici the Great. The portrait shows a wonderful parade armor of a type, date, and style corresponding closely with our Medici helmet. In both the portrait and our helmet may be seen the Medusa head, the Greek scroll, and the combat with centaurs. The battle of centaurs and Lapiths was painted in fresco by Rosso in the Gallery of Francis I; in another of his paintings, Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro, in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, there are figures with flowing hair and open-mouthed expressions similar to those on both the Henry II armor and the Medici helmet.

Some authorities not only consider that the Medici helmet was made in the Louvre armory but also that it formed part of the embossed harness of Henry II. The helmet and the armor are similar in quality of workmanship, and both include among their ornamentation the combined Greek scroll and honeysuckle motive which appear on the mantel over the fireplace in the Gallery of Henry II at Fontainebleau. This motive has never been found on any other piece of armor (although the Munich designs have the scroll alone on a helmet crest), and it is not to be found on the helmet now seen with the Henry II armor.

The fact that this armor has its own helmet does not preclude an association with the Medici helmet; a suit of armor could have several helmets, which would be used as exchange pieces.

It was Émile Molinier, a distinguished French student of metalwork, who first associated the Medici helmet with the armor of Henry II in the Louvre. This was concurred in by the Baron de Cosson, who was universally recognized as one of the leading European scholars in the field of arms and armor, and also by Sir Guy Francis Laking, Keeper of the Armoury of King Edward VII. Laking’s conclusions are of significance since in the Royal Armoury at Windsor Castle is a round shield which is assigned to the Louvre school and which, like the Louvre armor of Henry II, is embossed with scenes from the lives of Julius Caesar and Pompey. Another feature of the Windsor shield, as well as of a number of other embossed shields attributed to the Louvre school, is a double row of ovals, one following the outer border, the other following the center boss. The design for this double row of ovals is among the Munich drawings.
A Louvre-school shield in the royal armory in Turin, which, according to Bernhard Berenson, was designed by Rosso, has on it bound captives, the crescent-crowned head of Diana, and subjects that refer to Jugurtha and the wars waged against this African king by the Romans. As in the case of the Windsor shield a lengthy inscription in Latin surrounds each subject, explaining the incidents represented. Three other related embossed and damascened shields are in the Nationalmuseum in Copenhagen, the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, and Skokloster Castle in Sweden. Nothing definite is known of the early provenance of any of these shields but, because of their design and workmanship, they have long been associated with the Louvre school.

It must be remembered that the credit for the excellence of this group of armor is not only due to foreign sources, although because this article deals principally with the influence of the Fontainebleau school of decoration the importance of Italian workmanship and design may seem to be stressed at the expense of native craftsmen. (Actually the Fontainebleau school itself could not have become what it was if it had not been situated in France. The style of the Italian artists at work there was in many ways different from what it had been in their own country.) The same is true of contemporary art in a broader sense; French painters, sculptors, and goldsmiths had their own reputation, and they developed alongside of as well as under the shadow of Rosso, Primaticcio, and Cellini, who came to France in 1540. The Louvre armor was made in France and was therefore subject to native influences. Two artists whose names should be mentioned in this connection are Étienne Delaune and Jean Goujon, examples of whose work are shown here alongside of decorative motives on armor.

Étienne Delaune was a medalist and engraver of coins. His name has been associated with the Munich drawings, for his engravings include numerous details that also occur in the drawings. One of the motives on the ventail of the Henry II armor is so like the scene of the death of Julia in Delaune’s engraving of a mirror that there is apparently a connection between the two designs. It is believed that the motive on the armor antedates the death of Henry II in 1559; therefore it was executed before the engraving was made in 1561. Not only does Delaune’s Julia scene appear on the armor but the armor also has
representations of Diana, Minerva, and chimerical figures which are very closely akin to his style. It is therefore possible that Delaune may have made all the designs for the Henry II armor. A number of his engravings are from drawings by Jean Cousin. Both Jean Cousins, father and son, were closely connected with armormen by marriage, and so it is not at all unlikely that they also may have furnished designs for the decoration of armor. A painting of a lady symbolizing Peace, of the school of Jean Cousin, in the museum of Aix-en-Provence, shows part of a shield and its border of Greek scrolls and honeysuckle, a motive like that which appears on the Henry II armor.

Embossed armor is, of course, sculpture in steel, so that, as might be expected, many ornamental motives were directly derived from sculpture. For example, the influence of the figures of Fame by Jean Goujon from the Fountain of the Innocents in Paris may be seen in the figures of Fame on the armor of Henry II. Jean Goujon was responsible for the sculptural decoration of the Louvre; therefore it would be perfectly normal for his designs to be used by the French royal armorers.

We have been studying armor at a brief period in its history when it ceased to be a defense and became rather a work of art. The armor of Henry II was specifically designed to delight the eye; for that purpose it is enriched with surface decoration that compels attention. The school of Fontainebleau used scenes from classical mythology and episodes from Greek and Roman history; in the case of the armor of Henry II the scenes are from the lives of Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great. The inspiration for the Louvre-school armor designs has been traced to the top men, Rosso and Primaticcio, and native French artists followed successfully in their masters’ footsteps. The armor of Henry II has three distinctions: it is brilliant in design, superbly executed, and magnificent in effect. Because of its remarkably fine workmanship it is one of the most valuable examples of artistic metalwork in existence. The exhibition of this armor today in museums such as the Louvre and the Metropolitan restores the craft of the armorer goldsmith to the important position it previously held in art.

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