

Verdure with Château and Garden

The Widow Guillaume Werniers
French, 1738–1778
Wool and silk; modern linen lining
and polyester dust band,
8 ft. 10 3/4 in. x W: 8 ft. 9 7/8 in.
2005.17

Background Information

In medieval times, tapestries were created to decorate the interiors of castles. In these settings, tapestries provided comfort and insulation, and the narrative depicted on a tapestry offered entertainment for the viewers. By the 18th century, when this tapestry was made, their function largely remained the same—they hung on walls in mansions—but

the subject matter changed according to aristocratic tastes. The subject of this tapestry—a *verdure*, or a genre scene that depicts leafy plants and/or wooded landscapes—remained popular from the middle ages to the 18th century. Additionally, verdures brought the outdoors inside dark interiors, creating the illusion of spring or summer throughout the year. In this tapestry, the built environment and its formal, symmetrical gardens contrast with the natural landscape depicted in the foreground.



Tapestries remained very expensive throughout this time due to the expense of the materials and the labor involved. Working simultaneously on such tapestries, a number of weavers would take a year to complete three square yards (two and a half square meters) a year. A tapestry of this size would take several years to complete.

About the Artist

Widow of Guillaume Werniers (French, active 1738–1778)

Guillaume Werniers was originally from Brussels, but is known to have lived in the city of Lille in northern France from 1700, when he married the daughter of Jan de Melter. Jan de Melter owned a workshop that was moderately successful, but it wasn't until Werniers took over the workshop that it enjoyed considerable success. In the 1730s, the workshop used over 21 looms. The majority of his tapestries were commissioned by the wealthiest people in France. Werniers specialized in Teniers scenes (named after 17th century Flemish artist, David Teniers the Younger), which depicted genre scenes of people outdoors, but he occasionally made tapestries depicting mythological scenes. After his death in 1738, his wife carried on the workshop until her death in 1778, often continuing with the same designs.

Verdure with Château and Garden, the Widow Guillaume Werniers**Questions for Teaching**

Take the time to look closely at the image. What do you notice about the tapestry?

Tapestries are rugs that hang on walls. They were meant to keep people warm and provide entertainment through the stories depicted. Do you find this tapestry interesting and/or entertaining? Why or why not?

The foreground is the part of the scene that is nearest to and in front of the viewer. What are some things you see in the foreground of this tapestry?

The background is the part of a scene that lies behind the foreground and middle ground, and that appears most distant from the viewer. What are some things you see in the background of this tapestry?

The middle ground is the middle of the scene. What is between the foreground and the background? Look closely at the garden in the middle ground of the tapestry. What are some words you would use to describe it?

Compare the plants and flowers in the garden in the middle ground with the plants and flowers in the foreground. How are they different?

If you could step inside this tapestry, what would you hear? Smell? Feel?