

Raphael

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Raphael

Revolution
in Tapestry Design

HANNIBAL





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Foreword

The Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna was inaugurated in the presence of the Austrian emperor Franz Joseph on 17 October 1891. As he toured the museum, the emperor voiced his explicit desire to see the ten prominent tapestry cartoons by Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen featuring depictions of Charles V's campaign against Tunis. Two suitably large rooms had been designed for the monumental cartoons when the museum was built.

If the extensive tapestry collection of the Habsburgs had already been a part of the museum's holdings at the time, these textile works of art would possibly also have been given dedicated rooms. However, the highly valued tapestries were still in use – in Schönbrunn Palace and the Vienna Hofburg, and other locations. The abundant collection was not transferred to the Kunsthistorisches Museum until the 1920s, after the collapse of the monarchy. The tapestries are part of the Kunstkammer collection; their size means that it is only possible to have a few of them on permanent display. Special exhibitions, by contrast, provide the opportunity to present the full splendour of the collection. The wealth of objects hold a special fascination for visitors. I am therefore extraordinarily pleased that the 2015 exhibition *Fäden der Macht* ("Threads of Power") is now, in 2023, being succeeded by another great autumn exhibition dedicated to tapestries. The timing could not be more suitable, as the Kunstkammer is celebrating the tenth anniversary of its impressive new design this year.

We are indebted to Katja Schmitz-von Ledebur, curator of the tapestry collection and interim director of the Kunstkammer and Imperial Treasury, for the concept of the exhibition and this scholarly publication. This show would not have been possible without her skill and commitment. Michael Embacher and Constantin Schweizer provided the innovative design for a form of presentation that pays particular attention to the textile material of the objects on show. I am much obliged for their impressive work and also to Nikolaus Keusch, head of the department of exhibition management, as well as Ulrike Becker and Dominik Cobanoglu for the organization of the exhibition. The textile conservators Caroline Göllner, Karin Hammer-schmid, Michaela Kratochwil, and Sabine Svec took care of the conservational preparation of the tapestries for this project; their arduous efforts demand great respect. We must also give a special mention to Stefan Zeisler, creative director at Kunsthistorisches Museum, and his team: Christian Mendez, Alexander Rosoli and Andreas Uldrich are responsible for the new, high-quality images of the tapestries; Sanela Antic, Michael Eder, Thomas Ritter, and Daniel Sostaric for picture editing; and Michaela Noll and Rita Neulinger for the exhibition graphics. The delicate design of this publication was achieved by Tim Bisschop. Sara Goldsmith provided the editing for the English version. Together with Franz Pichorner, head of the department

of publication and image rights, Benjamin Mayr was responsible for the process of the book's production with Hannibal Books, under the direction of Gautier Platteau. Nadezda Müngersdorff translated the texts for the English version, while Dagmar Thoss transcribed and translated from French into German the manuscript on the tapestries depicting the seven deadly sins. I am very grateful to each of them.

Many of the objects on show were selected from the collections of the KHM–Museumsverband: the Kunstkammer, the Picture Gallery, the Collection of Arms and Armour, the Coin Collection, the Library, and Ambras Castle Innsbruck. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the directors of those collections as well as the other lending institutions and their staff. We are particularly proud of the tapestry from the *Acts of the Apostles* after designs by Raphael from the Musei Vaticani in Rome, which, as part of the *editio princeps*, is a highlight of our exhibition. We must also make particular mention of the generous support provided by the Albertina, Vienna, the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich, the Musée du Louvre, Paris, and the Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris.

Let yourself be captivated by the splendour of these large-format and rarely shown tapestries!

Sabine Haag
Director General







Fig. 1 Raphael, *Self-Portrait*. c.1506. Poplar panel.
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, Galleria Palatina,
inv. no. 1706.

Raphael – Innovation in Tapestry Design

Raphael – An Artist of Universal Talent

The Italian artist Raffaello Santi (also known as Raffaello Sanzio, in short Raphael; *fig. 1*) was already at the zenith of his career when Pope Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici, 1475–1521) entrusted him with designing the tapestries for the Sistine Chapel in around 1515.

Raphael was born in 1483 in Urbino, where his father, the painter Giovanni Santi (1430/40–1494) was court painter to the Duke of Urbino, the art-loving *Condottiero* Federico da Montefeltro (1422–1482). Urbino evolved into a hotspot of humanism and culture under the rule of this educated and successful mercenary captain. This is the environment in which Raphael was introduced to the art of painting by his father at an early age, before he was sent to Perugia in order to study with Pietro Vannucci, called Perugino (1445/50–1523).¹ Raphael returned to Urbino upon his father's untimely death in order to continue the paternal workshop together with Evangelista da Pian di Meleto (c.1460–1549), one of his father's students. The early works of the exceptionally talented Raphael – including the *Altarpiece of St Nicolas of Tolentino*² for the Baronci chapel in the church of St Agostino in Città di Castello – still bear hallmarks of Perugino's influence.³ Upon relocating to Florence in 1504, Raphael encountered the works of great old masters such as Giotto di Bondone (c.1267–1337) and Masaccio (1401–1428), who had left their mark on the city. He was also able to view the works of significant High Renaissance artists Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) and Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564) directly. Both were engaged with the design of frescoes for the Palazzo Vecchio when the young man arrived in the town on the River Arno. During his Florentine period, Raphael gained renown, especially for his Madonna paintings. He imbued them with local relevance by including St John the Baptist, the patron saint of Florence.⁴ Depictions of the Virgin together with the Christ Child and a young St John would remain a part of the artist's repertoire. Their hallmarks include the figures' soft expressions as well as the intimate relationship between mother and child (*fig. 2*). The young artist was also able to establish himself as a portrait painter for Florence's high society.



Fig. 2 Raphael, *The Madonna of the Meadow*. 1506. Poplar panel. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery, inv. no. 175.



Fig. 13 Raphael and workshop, *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*. 1515/16. Body-colour over charcoal drawing, paper, mounted on canvas, 319 × 399 cm. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. RCIN 912944 (permanent loan from the Royal Collection).



Fig. 14 Raphael and workshop, *Christ's Charge to Peter*. 1515/16. Body-colour over charcoal drawing, paper, mounted on canvas, 343 × 532 cm. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. RCIN 912945 (permanent loan from the Royal Collection).

Cartoons for Ten Tapestries

Once the designs had been finalized, they were each transferred on to what is known as a cartoon (*grand patron*), which was the full size of the tapestry to be produced (*figs. 13–19*).⁶³ Cartoons made of paper were already in habitual use in the Middle Ages, and this continued into the Renaissance. They served for the execution of frescoes, as well as of embroidery and mosaics.

Like the tapestry designs, the cartoons were made without the borders, which were based on separate models. It is probable that all ten cartoons of the *Acts of the Apostles* were finished towards the end of 1516, as a documented payment made to Raphael on 20 December likely concluded the process.⁶⁴ According to the Venetian art connoisseur Marcantonio Michiel, Raphael was paid 100 ducats per cartoon (the production of each individual tapestry appears to have cost 1,500 ducats).⁶⁵

Of the originally ten cartoons, seven are still extant. They are at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London on permanent loan from the Royal Collection. The models for *The Stoning of St Stephen*, *The Conversion of Saul* and *St Paul in Prison* are considered lost. The extant cartoons are between 319 and 347 centimetres high and between 399 and



Fig. 15 Raphael and workshop, *The Healing of the Lame Man*. 1515/16. Body-colour over charcoal drawing, paper, mounted on canvas, 342 × 536 cm. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. RCIN 912946 (permanent loan from the Royal Collection).



Fig. 16 Raphael and workshop, *The Death of Ananias*. 1515/16. Bodycolour over charcoal drawing, paper, mounted on canvas, 342 × 532 cm. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. RCIN 912947 (permanent loan from the Royal Collection).



Fig. 17 Raphael and workshop, *The Blinding of Elymas*. 1515/16. Bodycolour over charcoal drawing, paper, mounted on canvas, 342 × 446 cm. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. RCIN 912948 (permanent loan from the Royal Collection).



Fig. 18 Raphael and workshop, *The Sacrifice at Lystra*. 1515/16. Bodycolour over charcoal drawing, paper, mounted on canvas, 347 × 542 cm. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. RCIN 912949 (permanent loan from the Royal Collection).



Fig. 19 Raphael and workshop, *St Paul Preaching in Athens*. 1515/16. Bodycolour over charcoal drawing, paper, mounted on canvas, 343 × 442 cm. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. RCIN 912950 (permanent loan from the Royal Collection).

536 centimetres wide. Each cartoon comprises almost 200 sheets of paper (approximately 42/43 centimetres high, 28.5/29 centimetres wide).⁶⁶ The small-format designs were usually transferred into full-scale models, in order to serve the weavers as the basis for their work on the loom, by professional cartoon drawers, who might delegate the execution of smaller and even larger areas to employees, who also offered helpful assistance when the sheets were combined with each other.⁶⁷

The cartoons of the *Acts of the Apostles* were executed in Raphael's workshop. They may have been mounted on the wall⁶⁸ in order to facilitate the transfer of the designs on to them; sub-drawings would have been added first, or important points marked in charcoal⁶⁹ – the gouache colour was only applied subsequently.

Although the creation of the cartoons was labour-intensive and therefore also time-consuming, Raphael even worked on the cartoons himself,⁷⁰ albeit with the help of his assistants.⁷¹ Thus it is reported, for example, by Vasari, that Gian Francesco Penni was a great help when the cartoons were being produced, especially in the execution of those for the borders.⁷² Raphael's contribution to the individual cartoons appears to have varied widely. Once again, it appears to be the *Draught of Fishes* where he contributed most. In addition, several protagonists in *St Paul Preaching in Athens* are attributed to the master's hand.⁷³ In other compositions, he at least completed the main protagonists once they had already been started, such as the monumental figure with the ram, the executioner, and the lame man as well as the two saints in *The Sacrifice at Lystra*.⁷⁴ Moreover, the heads of the two maimed figures and the woman on the right edge of the picture in *The Healing of the Lame Man* appear to be in his hand.⁷⁵

The seven extant cartoons remain impressive for their colour scheme and careful execution, which is rather unusual for cartoons and not really required for the weaving process. It is possible that Raphael had considered the qualitative execution of the cartoons so very important because he was already aware that, in contrast to the frescoes in the Vatican Palace, he would not be able to supervise, let alone intervene in or correct the production of the final object, the tapestries. At the same time, this means that it was already established when he made the cartoons that the images would be translated into threads of wool, silk, and precious metal not in Rome, but in Brussels. The cartoons were sent to the Netherlands for this purpose and cut into vertical stripes of a little over a metre wide for the production process on the loom. It is also notable that the cartoons have small holes along the outlines, meaning that they had been pricked. This is a clear indication that they were copied.⁷⁶

Benjamin Peronnet believes he recognizes such copies in three cartoon fragments extant in Musée Condé in Chantilly (*fig. 20*), which are based on the design for *Christ's Charge to Peter*; it is possible that the Brussels weavers used these as working cartoons instead of the originals. Peronnet bases this theory, first, on the paper used in the fragments from Chantilly bearing a watermark that was in circulation in the Netherlands during the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth century.⁷⁷ Second, the cartoon

fragments deviate from the original cartoons in certain details, which they do, however, share with the tapestries of the *editio princeps*. The fragments moreover transfer the sfumato of the Raphael models into more distinct outlines as are needed by the weaver for his work.

Another indication is provided by the desire of cardinal and patron of the arts Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle to purchase a set of *Acts of the Apostles*, as known from letters to his agent from the year 1573. At the time, he was given the information that the cartoons were too damaged badly to be put to any further use.⁷⁸ This information can hardly apply to the cartoons from the Raphael workshop; it must refer to copies of those.

It has still not been established with certainty what happened to the original cartoons directly after the tapestries for Leo X were completed. In any case, the cartoon *The Conversion of Saul* was returned to Italy shortly after the tapestries were finalized, being verifiably in the collection of Cardinal Domenico Grimani in Venice as soon as 1521.⁷⁹ The reasons it was moved to Venice are unknown. In 1528, it is described as follows in an inventory of the property of his nephew Marino Grimani: 'Un quadro in carta grande conversion di san Paulo'.⁸⁰

On 28 March 1623, Charles, Prince of Wales, the future King Charles I of England, was able to purchase seven cartoons, which were in Genoa at the time.⁸¹ The prince is said to have been made aware of these treasures by no less a person than the Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640). It appears that Rubens had already encountered the cartoons on his first journey to Italy around 1600 and had copied *St Paul Preaching in Athens* from the Raphael cartoon.⁸² The purchase of the cartoons makes sense in light of the fact that in 1619, King James I (1566–1625) had instigated the establishment of a tapestry factory in Mortlake under the management of Sir Francis Crane (c.1579–c.1636). Crane made efforts to obtain copies of two of the missing cartoons, *The Stoning of St Stephen* and *The Conversion of Saul*, which were at the time in the collection of Ferdinand II de' Medici in Florence. However, he was unsuccessful.⁸³ Both cartoons are nowadays considered lost, as is the narrow cartoon *St Paul in Prison*.

After the seven cartoons had reached England, they were copied by the painter Francis Cleyn, originally from Germany, the official artist of the Mortlake factory. These copies were then used as the basis for a tapestry series produced for Charles. After the King's deposition and execution in 1649, the series was sold under Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658). It was purchased by King Louis XIV of France at a later date and remains in Paris to this day.⁸⁴

The seven Raphael cartoons remained in England and were back in royal hands from 1660, after the monarchy had been reinstated.⁸⁵ They were given their own dedicated gallery in Hampton Court Palace in 1699, which was designed by Sir Christopher Wren (1632–1723). In 1707, engravings by the Frenchman Simon Gribelin (1661–1733) that were made following the cartoons appeared in print with a frontispiece that depicts their presentation in Hampton Court (*fig. 22*). Eventually, they were adopted into the 'Raphael Collection' initiated by Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg under Queen Victoria in 1837, and upon the establishment of



Fig. 20 *Two Heads of Apostles* (after Raphael), cartoon fragments for the tapestry *Christ's Charge to Peter*. Netherlands, 16th cent. Pen, brown ink, brown drawing ink, charcoal on paper. Chantilly, Musée Condé, inv. no. PE40A.



Fig. 21 *Raphael Court* with the seven extant cartoons from the *Acts of the Apostles* by Raphael and his workshop. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, 2021.

the South Kensington Museum – today’s Victoria & Albert Museum, where they are still on show today – they were transferred there in April 1865 as a loan from Her Majesty The Queen (*fig. 21*).

Ten Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel

When the first seven tapestries were finished for the Christmas festivities of 1519 and were exhibited in their intended location, they must have made a groundbreaking impression. Paris de Grassis, master of ceremonies for Pope Julius II and subsequently Pope Leo X, documents that the audience was unanimous in their opinion that there was nothing more beautiful in the world.⁸⁷ The Venetian art connoisseur Marcantonio Michiel also sang their praises in the context of the same presentation and described the astonishment the tapestries elicited from the onlookers:

Adi 27 dicembre 1519, Roma, Queste feste di Natale il Papa messe fuori in Capella 7 pezzi di razzo perché l’ottavo non era fornito fatti in ponente, che furono giudicati la piu bella cosa, che sia stata fatta, in eo genere a nostri giorni.⁸⁸

Vasari, who saw some of the tapestries in the 1550s, also wrote an emphatic description:

This project was so miraculously executed that it makes anyone who sees it marvel to think that it was possible to have woven the hair and beards and to have given such softness to the flesh with a thread; this was certainly more the result of a miracle than of human artifice, for in these tapestries there are bodies of water, animals, and buildings that are so well made they seem to be painted with the brush rather than woven.⁸⁹

The great fascination Vasari expressed in particular for the manner of production bears eloquent witness to the technical perfection of the tapestries. The translation of the Raphael designs into the textile medium was not entrusted to any weaver in Italy, but the cartoons were instead sent to the sixteenth-century stronghold of tapestry production: Brussels. There is documentary evidence of tapestry production in Brussels as early as the fourteenth century.⁹⁰ The local expert weavers and dippers, as well as the import of high-quality English wool, contributed to the ascent of this trade as much as the patronage of various royal families, including the House of Habsburg. During the sixteenth century, Brussels rose to become a centre of creative and high-quality tapestry art. The local weaver Pieter van Aelst (Pierre d’Enghien) was responsible for the execution of the papal commission. His name is associated with the *Acts of the Apostles* in archival material from 1531.⁹¹ It is not known when the first cartoons reached Brussels. A diary entry by Antonio de Beatis, secretary to Cardinal Luigi d’Aragona, reveals that he was able to visit van Aelst’s tapestry factory in July 1517 while the Raphael tapestries were being produced:



Fig. 22 Simon Gribelin II (printmaker), *The Seven Famous Cartons of Raphael Urbino* [...]. 1720. Copper engraving. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. DYCE.2504.



SCENES FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Design: Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (Urbino 1483–1520 Rome) and workshop, c.1515/16

Woven under the direction of Jakob Geubels I (d. before 1605), Brussels, c.1600

A nine-part tapestry series featuring scenes from the Acts of the Apostles is extant in Vienna. It covers the following themes: *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, *Christ's Charge to Peter*, *The Healing of the Lame Man*, *The Death of Ananias*, *The Stoning of St Stephen*, *The Conversion of Saul*, *The Blinding of Elymas*, *The Sacrifice at Lystra*, and *St Paul Preaching in Athens*. Although these were not woven from the original cartoons made in Raphael's workshop, these tapestries are still based on the Italian artist's compositions: the series was made from a later edition of the Raphael cartoons, and was produced around 1600 in the Brussels factory of Jakob I Geubels (documented 1585, died before 1605),¹ whose factory mark they bear.

It is said that the tapestries were originally owned by Duke Ruffo in Naples.² They were acquired by Emperor Francis II (1768–1835) in 1804 from the estate of Vinzenz Maria von Rainer zu Harbach, private secretary to Queen Maria Karolina of Naples (1752–1814). The acquisition is documented in the protocol of a session of the imperial Academy of Sciences:

Eine andere Abtheilung dieses Kaufes besteht aus neun nach Raphael'schen Zeichnungen gewirkten Tapeten, die vordem der bekannten fürstlichen familie von Ruffo in Neapel gehörten, mit neutestamentlichen Vorstellungen von meisterhafter Composition und Zeichnung. [...] Alle neun Stücke, vorzüglich zum Studium angehender Künstler geeignet, haben ungefähr gleiche Höhe von 13½ Fuss, die Breiten hingegen sind verschieden. Sie dürften im k. k. Tapeten-Depot zu Schönbrunn in Verwahrung liegen.³

The borders of the Viennese tapestries differ from those of the Vatican's *editio princeps*. They are embellished with floral and figural motifs.⁴

¹ Delmarcel 1999, 365.

² Exh. cat. Halbturm 1983, 19.

³ 'Another part of this purchase comprises nine tapestries made after Raphael drawings, which had previously belonged to the renowned noble Ruffo family in Naples, with images from the New Testament of masterly composition and draughtsmanship. [...] All nine items, most perfectly suited for the education of aspiring artists, have approximately the same height of 13½ feet, while the widths differ. They ought to be kept in the royal-imperial tapestry depot in Schönbrunn.' *Sitzungsberichte der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Classe*, vol. 28, Vienna 1858, no. 556.

⁴ The top borders of the tapestries bear a coat of arms that could not be resolved. It must be a family of Spanish-Italian background, as some of the fields are known from lineages from that region, such as Guzmán, Manriquez, Ramirez, and Ruiz. I thank Michael Göbl, Vienna, for this research and advice.

1.1 *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*

Series title: *Scenes from the Acts of the Apostles*

Wool, silk; H 413 cm, W 408 cm

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstammer, inv. no. T CIII/1

1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret. 2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. 3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. 4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. 5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. 6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. 7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. 9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: 10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. 11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him. (Luke 5:1–11)

The depiction of the miraculous draught of fishes begins the series of four tapestries of the *Acts of the Apostles* that are dedicated to the Life of St Peter. It shows the moment when Christ wins his first apostles: the fishermen Peter and Andrew. Following an unsuccessful attempt to catch fish in Lake

Gennesaret, Christ bid Peter and Andrew to return to the lake on their boats and to cast out their nets, which then miraculously filled to the brim with fish. It is a symbolic reference to their future role as 'catcher of men'. Christ is seated on the boat that is placed in the foreground of this tapestry, with his right hand raised in the gesture of blessing. Peter kneels down before Christ in light of the miracle, and humbly looks up at him with his hands folded as if for prayer. Behind Peter, Andrew is shown in a dynamic mid-step pose, his arms opened wide to express his astonishment.

The bearded head of Christ is shown in profile with a straight nose; this form is already documented on fifteenth-century medals, such as those by Matteo de' Pasti.¹ In the boat at the back, the two fishermen James and John draw a net that is filled to the brim from the water. Their muscular bodies echo previous depictions in Michelangelo's works.² Astonishingly, the apex of the triangular composition is not marked out by Christ, but by Andrew, so that the image underlines the disciples' important future role in spreading Christianity.

A comparison with the tapestry from the *editio princeps* reveals that the Viennese hanging does not show the entire composition. The figure of Christ on the right edge of the picture is slightly cropped and, on the left side of the picture, the boat at the back is missing a boatman, who was shown in the original in the manner of an ancient river deity. Some of the crowd on the shore who came to hear the word of God are also no longer there in the background. A preliminary drawing for this composition kept at the Albertina in Vienna still shows this audience as protagonists in the foreground (*fig. 29*).



Fig. 29 Raphael, *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes with Crowd of People in Foreground*. c.1515. Pen and brown ink over black pencil drawing, brown wash, white heightening, Vienna, Albertina, inv. no. 192r.





There are conclusive interpretations for several details of the tapestry, as well as for the main scene. The fishermen's boats can be considered a reference to the church, the ship being its long-standing symbol. The fish, on the other hand, represent Christ and Christian piety; the fish that have already been caught in the nets can therefore be taken to represent all of those who have already joined Christendom. The monumental buildings on the shore in the background of the image might, even if they are not identifiable with absolute certainty, recall Rome. Notable are the technical perfection with which the weavers worked the waves on the water, the reflections of the individual figures on the water, and the naturalistic rendering of various species of fish (such as flounder, eel, small shark, and John Dory).

- 1 Hill 1920, 12, fig. I (Collection Henry Oppenheimer).
- 2 On this, see exh. cat. London 2010, 66. There are also verified similarities to figures from Michelangelo's lost cartoon for the fresco of the *Battle of Cascina*, which had been composed for the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, but was never executed.







1.2 *The Healing of the Lame Man*

Series title: *Scenes from the Acts of the Apostles*

Wool, silk; H 410 cm, W 401 cm

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstammer, inv. no. T CIII/3

1 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. 2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; 3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. 4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. 5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. 6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. 7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God: 10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. (Acts 3:1–10)

While it appears as if the landscape in the background of *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* continues in the following tapestry with *Christ's Charge to Peter* (fig. 30), *The Healing of the Lame Man* is dominated by monumental architecture. A temple vestibule opens up in front of a *porta speciosa* (beautiful gate), carried and structured by Solomonic columns. Peter is standing before the lame man (who is depicted with malformed legs and sitting on the ground) and holding his hand. Behind him, a youthful John is gesturing meaningfully at the frail man. A young mother with child is watching the scene, framed by columns in the

left half of the image. It is likely that she is visiting the temple for cleansing after the birth of her male offspring. Further figures are arranged among the columns and an old man is kneeling on the ground while leaning on his stick; they are all watching the Prince of the Apostles healing the lame man.

The imposing columns (decorated with plastic effect vines, putti, and acanthus) originally divided

the narrative into three vertical sections, the third of which is missing in the Viennese tapestry, as the depiction was cropped on the right edge of the picture. The Healing therefore no longer takes place at the centre of the composition, but occupies the right half of the tapestry. The Viennese hanging has also lost the view of a wide landscape provided by that right side of the picture. Raphael had not arranged the composition symmetrically, but had shifted the position of the viewer slightly to the left. This effects the dense arrangement of the four columns on the left edge of the image, while the columns on the right edge of the 'original' tapestry are somewhat staggered so that they afford a view of the landscape. Nevertheless, even the reduced Viennese version does not lose the composition's central perspective, which draws us into the depth of the temple vestibule.



Fig. 30 *Christ's Charge to Peter*. Designed by Raphael and workshop, woven under the direction of Pieter van Aelst, Brussels, before 1521. Tapestry (wool, silk, precious-metal-wrapped threads). Vatican City, Musei Vaticani, inv. no. 43868.







Fig. 31 *The Healing of the Lame Man*. Designed by Raphael and workshop, woven under the direction of Pieter van Aelst, Brussels, before 1521. Tapestry (wool, silk, precious-metal-wrapped threads). Vatican City, Musei Vaticani, inv. no. 43869.



Fig. 32 Raphael, *Head of a Muse*. Study for the fresco *The Parnassus* in the Stanza della Segnatura. 1509/10. Black chalk. Florence, Museo Horne, inv. no. 5643.

The immediacy of the situation is additionally communicated in the *editio princeps* by a figure whose head is peeking out inquisitively from behind a column in order to catch a proper view of the event (*fig. 31*). The reduced format of the Viennese hanging cut this person out, too, but yet another curious onlooker remains in place, catching a glimpse from behind a column at Peter's back. The characteristic architectural supports undoubtedly recall the twelve antique columns that had been used in the construction of the Basilica of St Peter. They were assumed to have once belonged to the Solomonic Temple on Jerusalem's Temple Mount. The composition's tripartite structure or division takes inspiration from ancient imperial sarcophagi with architectural design. The arrangement of the figures, on the other hand, recalls a relief from the ciborium that had been commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV and used to form a roof over St Peter's tomb; this, too, was dedicated to the Healing of the Lame Man. It might also be possible to relate it to a 1513 copper engraving by Albrecht Dürer on the same topic.¹

Moreover, Raphael also sometimes cites his own designs: the head of the mother holding her child in her arms in the left pictorial field of the tapestry had previously been developed in a drawing from 1509/10 for a muse in the fresco *The Parnassus* in the Stanza della Segnatura at the Palace of the Vatican (*fig. 32*).

¹ Exh. cat. London 2010, 83.





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