

## OBJECT of the **month** October 2022

### BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

Welcome back to Dayton Art Institute's 'Object of the Month'. Tapestries: in the 15–1600s, were used to decorate and insulate the stone walls of European castles. Often, they were created and purchased in sets, following a central theme like Biblical stories or Greek myths.



This one, from a set of 12, was inspired by works of Dutch artist, Lucas van Leyden, focusing on the months of the year. A Flemish tapestry, it's titled *The Months of Lucas, March* and was woven in Bruges in 1650, requiring an entire guild of artisans weaving the finest yarns and threads.

Let's examine the scene. Our central and largest figure, informally dressed in red tunic and blue stockings wears a pruning knife in his belt and is, perhaps, the head gardener. Hat in hand, he approaches a sumptuously dressed woman. From her silken brocades and pearl-studded cap, one might conclude she is the lady of the castle we see on the hill. Milady is accompanied by 3 well-dressed attendants, one of whom may be identified as a dwarf.

Dwarfs were commonly depicted in elegant portraiture from the 15- to the 1800s and indicated a European family's elevated status. They worked in wealthy households and imperial courts, often serving or entertaining the children and pets of the family.

Behind the head gardener follow two servants rather artfully carrying items for the garden. As we travel to the middle-ground of the tapestry, you may spot a fence where a pair of young folks pause to chat... or is it flirt? If you look closely, you may even find a few laborers at the grape arbor, curling twisted vines. Such an abundance of activity leads us to conclude that March is defined by spring, with its new life, gardening labors and its lovers.

A classic Renaissance tapestry, this one is about 11 feet wide and began with an enormous "cartoon" like a huge coloring book page, taken from van Leyden's painting and directly transferred to the vertical threads of the loom. Weavers could then fill in each outline with wool and silk, working their yarns side to side to achieve the color, texture and shimmer desired. Even the lush border, with its puppy and peacocks celebrates the birth and rebirth of spring!

# DAYTON ART INSTITUTE

My name is Janet and if you would like to enjoy this remarkable tapestry in-person, you'll find it in the Premier Health Gallery of Late Medieval and Renaissance Art, Gallery 220 in the Dayton Art Institute. Thank you.

**END TRANSCRIPT**

Click [here](#) to access the video presentation.

## **FEATURED ARTWORKS\***

Diego Velázquez (Spanish, 1599–1660), *The Dwarf, Sebastián de Morra, at the Court of Felipe IV*, 1644, oil on canvas. The Prado Museum, Madrid. P001202

Diego Velázquez (Spanish, 1599–1660), *Las Meninas*, 1656, oil on canvas. The Prado Museum, Madrid. P001174

Niccolò Cassana (Italian, 1659–1714), *Portrait of Angiola Biondi*, 1707, oil on canvas. Pitti Palace, Florence.

Follower of Diego Velázquez (Spanish, 1599–1660), *Dwarf with a Dog*, about 1645, oil on canvas. The Prado Museum, Madrid. P001203

## **MEDIA CREDITS\***

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