



Raised work embroidered picture

Not on display

Title/Description: Raised work embroidered picture

Born: 1662 - 1685

Object Type: Textile

Materials: beads, Chenille, metal purl, Metal threads, Silk, Spangles

Technique: Brick stitch, Couching, Detached buttonhole stitch, Long and short stitch, Overtwisting, Raised work, Running stitch, Satin stitch

Measurements: h. 315 x w. 425 mm

Accession Number: 1245

Production Place: Britain, England, Europe

This raised work picture, wrought by a girl or young woman as part of her needlework education, likens King Charles II and Queen Catherine of Braganza to biblical figures. Though a rendition of the royal coat of arms and the king's distinctive facial hair make it clear that it is the monarchical pair that is depicted, the composition draws visual parallels to contemporary embroidered pictures of Solomon and Sheba and Esther and Ahasuerus.

Depictions of a king protected by a canopy and accompanied by a sentry in classical dress and a queen accompanied by multiple attendants are common in needleworked biblical scenes in the early modern period. The likening of Charles and Catherine to biblical figures suggests that the stitcher (or, more likely, her family or teacher) was a staunch supporter of the Stuart monarchy.

This picture involved a wide variety of stitches, surely an opportunity for the young stitcher to practice her burgeoning embroidery skills and utilise a wealth of materials. In the centre of the composition stands King Charles, wrought in raised work and stood underneath a three-dimensional canopy. Though he wears seventeenth-century dress, the sentry to his right wears anachronistic classical dress. To the king's left stands Catherine of Braganza, worked in raised work. The train of her gown, which is decorated in many spangles, is held by a raised work attendant. A second attendant is worked in flat stitches. The five figures stand in a rich landscape of trees and flowers.

At the top of the scene are polychrome clouds, a smiling sun, a rainbow with raindrops, and a castle flanked by leafy trees. To the viewer's left of the sentry is another leafy tree, as well as a small squirrel. To the viewer's right of the attendants are sprigs of flowers and a stag. At the bottom of the picture are two royal animals – a lion and spotted leopard – as well as a grotto with fish, a bird perched on a tree, a minute fruit tree, a flower, and tiny insects.

The king's canopy features the royal lion and unicorn flanking a Tudor rose instead of the typical Stuart coat of arms. This may be because it was beyond the stitcher's skill level to depict such a detailed crest in stitch. She instead chose a related symbol that was easier to render and recognise.

Isabella Rosner, March 2022

Further Reading

Melinda Watt and Andrew Morrall. *English Embroidery in the Metropolitan Museum, 1575-1700: 'Twixt Art and Nature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

Xanthe Brooke, *The Lady Lever Art Gallery: Catalogue of Embroideries* (Liverpool, England: National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside, 1992).

