

# Furnishing the Dukes with a Royal Reputation:

## The Use of Chambers and Chapels at the Burgundian Court

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Recalling his visit to the Burgundian court of Philip the Good in 1466, the Bohemian nobleman Leo of Rozmital remarked:

when we arrived at the castle where the old duke resided, the duke Charles [the son of Philip the Good] dismounted and asked my lord to do the same. Then taking him by the hand he led my lord into the presence of the old duke. The duke was seated in a hall on a throne which was hung with cloth of gold woven with great splendour, as befitted the ducal hall [...] when they knelt a third time, at last the old duke gave his right hand to his son and afterwards to my lord. Then with one in either hand he led them into his chamber through nine other rooms.<sup>1</sup>

Leo described an elaborate residential complex of multiple connected rooms, in which function and furnishings were mutually dependent elements. Studies of the architecture of the elite residences of later medieval Europe have confirmed this picture of an elaborate complex of rooms.<sup>2</sup> Yet, in spite of the implication that function and furnishings were mutually dependent elements, there has been relatively little investigation of furnishings and still less of furnishings as an ensemble.<sup>3</sup> Given the evidential constraints, this is perhaps not as surprising as it seems. Detailed contemporary descriptions of interiors are rare. Inventories taken on a ruler's death do record furnishings, but one inventory can include close to a thousand objects. Thus, historians and art historians have tended to single out one type of object from these lists to examine in greater detail. Within specific court contexts, a range of individual objects have been subjected to detailed scrutiny, including devotional diptychs, books, textiles, and metalwork.<sup>4</sup> Marina Belozerskaya is one of the few who has examined more than one object at a time, analyzing the goldsmith and silversmith works, tapestries, armour and music that were commissioned by a number of European Renaissance courts. She has argued that secular rulers used these objects as an expression of their authority: in line with the notion that the ideal of luxury maintained social order, they displayed luxury objects to visitors to their courts. In her view, historians should consider luxury objects as functioning in 'ensembles', rather than as isolated objects.<sup>5</sup> To further our understanding of the mutual dependence of room function and furnishings in later medieval elite residences, this chapter investigates the Burgundian ducal residences and their textile chambers

and chapels. It will argue that the itinerant dukes employed textiles as a portable environment, using them to create spaces within particular Burgundian residences as the need arose, whether this need was political, dynastic or domestic. In line with their broader political programme, it will suggest that a key concern of the dukes was to furnish themselves with a royal reputation.

### **Moveable Goods and the Establishment of the Burgundian Dynasty**

Inventories of moveable goods taken at the death of the dukes as well as ducal accounts that detail the everyday expenditure of the Burgundian household will act as the main basis for this chapter. The original inventories and accounts may be found in the Paris, Lille and Dijon archives, though some have been partially published by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century antiquarians.<sup>6</sup> Several of the inventories were drawn up by individuals who were, on occasion, charged with the furnishing of courtly residences, the ducal *garde de joyaux* or *garde de la tapisserie*.<sup>7</sup> At the death of Philip the Good, his 1420 inventory was attributed to a number of ducal councillors, including Jean de la Chesnel, known as Bouloigne, '*garde de joyaulx* to My Lord'.<sup>8</sup> Jean Cambier, *valet de chambre* and *garde de la tapisserie*, was similarly responsible for presenting the gold, silver and crystal vessels, chambers and tapestry for record in the inventory taken at the death of Philip the Bold in 1404.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, the payments for textile chambers and chapels that are recorded in the ducal accounts often passed through the hands of the same individuals.<sup>10</sup> In order to get a sense of how these textiles might have been placed within ducal residences and the impressions the textiles may have made on contemporaries allowed into ducal residences, a range of contemporary miniatures of European courtly residences and contemporary accounts of European courtly settings will be invoked.

To establish whether the Burgundian dukes employed textile chambers and chapels to furnish them with a 'royal reputation' it is necessary to consider firstly the establishment of the Burgundian dynasty and, second, the creation of the Burgundian court. The Burgundian dukes – Philip the Bold (1363–1404), John the Fearless (1404–1419), Philip the Good (1419–1467) and Charles the Bold (1467–1477) – were Valois princes, who had only recently acquired the territories of Burgundy and the Low Countries. King John II of France acquired Burgundy and adopted the title of duke in 1361. He then established his son, Philip the Bold, as duke of Burgundy in 1363.<sup>11</sup> Philip made an advantageous marriage to Margaret of Male in 1369 and on the death of her father, Louis of Male, Philip took the title of Count of Flanders in 1384.<sup>12</sup> By the death of Charles the Bold in 1477, the Burgundian Netherlands had become the key player in European politics.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Charles the Bold apparently held ambitions for a royal title. He met with the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III at Trier in 1473 with the dual aim of a marriage for his daughter Mary to Maximilian I and a royal title for himself; though the marriage agreement was made, no title was conferred.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the Burgundian Netherlands remained a patchwork of territories and identities, so that the establishment of Burgundian ducal authority and a Burgundian identity was a long, fractious and bloody process. The furnishings of the ducal residences had multiple roles to fulfil. First, to reinforce ducal authority. Second, to promote the dukes as independent rulers in

their own right; without compromising their heritage as Valois princes or their French alliances, nonetheless staking the potential claim to an independent royal title in the future. Burgundian ducal residences represented theatres with temporarily furnished stages on which managed courtly meetings presented an image of the dukes.<sup>15</sup>

### The Burgundian Court as a Stage

The Burgundian court was a trendsetter within and beyond Europe. It was one of the largest courts in Western Europe: it grew exponentially from the rule of Philip the Bold, when it numbered around 100 members in 1371, to the rule of Philip the Good, when it comprised some 400 members in 1426/7, and again to the rule of Charles the Bold, when it boasted around 1600 members.<sup>16</sup> These numbers do not reflect the full number of bodies present at any one time, including extra officers, visitors and their servants and entourages, which may well have represented hundreds more people.<sup>17</sup> The numbers reinforce the claims made by contemporaries about the Burgundian court, such as Pero Tafur's statement that 'nothing could surpass in majesty the persons of the duke and the duchess and the state in which they live [...]. The multitude of people and their refinement and splendor can scarcely be described'.<sup>18</sup> As Graeme Small and Andrew Brown pointed out, housing, provisioning and furnishing this 'multitude' was a constant logistical and fiscal challenge.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the court was itinerant and its members served according to a rota, creating additional complications.<sup>20</sup> Even though the court became more sedentary in the later years of Philip the Good and Charles the Bold, remaining in one place for months or even years, travel remained a constant feature.<sup>21</sup> The Burgundian court, therefore, remained fluid and difficult to determine.<sup>22</sup> Set alongside the recent creation of the Burgundian Netherlands and the patchwork of territories it encompassed, the scale and fluidity of the Burgundian court made it even more crucial to manage the image of the dukes through their residences and the temporary furnished stages constructed within them to house the court.

Put simply, the regular presence of the dukes themselves was the linchpin holding together their newly created territories. Moveable objects transported between the ducal residences played an essential role in fixing and framing the ducal presence. Ducal accounts reveal payments made to carters assigned with the responsibility of transporting goods between residences and to individuals charged with furnishing the residences before the ducal household arrived. In 1435 it took seventy-two carts, drawn by five or six horses, to move the court from Dijon to Arras and then to Lille.<sup>23</sup> Five of these carts were exclusively for the transport of textiles while one was reserved for chapel furnishings. Trusted individuals were charged with the task of furnishing the residences as the court moved. Jean Cosset, *varlet de chambre* and *garde de la tapisserie* undertook multiple works relating to decoration. In 1390, he accompanied the transportation of *vaiselles* and *tapisserie* for the reception of Charles VI at Dijon and, in April 1402, he prepared the great hall in Arras for the wedding of Philip the Bold's son, Anthony.<sup>24</sup>

## Ducal Residences

Ducal residences were architecturally impressive and complex, as Leo of Rozmital's description suggests. Each of the four dukes rebuilt existing residential complexes and town governments partly financed work on some of their city residences, such as the work carried out at Philip the Good's residence in Brussels.<sup>25</sup> Numerous emblems of the dukes adorned the exteriors and interiors, on gates and in main halls, even in residences that were rarely used by the dukes themselves. In the residence of Germolles in Burgundy, primarily used by Philip the Bold's wife, Margaret of Flanders, the large letters PM (some ten inches tall), daisies (for Margaret) and thistles (chardons, leading to the play on words *cher don*, dear gift) are visible within the château today.<sup>26</sup> In the surviving tower constructed by John the Fearless in the *hôtel d'Artois* in Paris, symbols referring to the dukes and duchesses, oak for Philip the Bold, hawthorn for Margaret of Bavaria and hop for John the Fearless are represented in the diagonal ribs of the arch over the staircase.<sup>27</sup> Without a doubt, these imposing residences, their towers, gatehouses, ducal symbols, emblems and sculptures, were a constant reminder of ducal rule, even when no duke or household was present. However, as noted at the start of this chapter, the interiors themselves – the halls, chambers and chapels – remained relatively unfurnished until the arrival of the carts and the individuals charged with their furnishing.

Contemporary references to ducal residences make it clear that the rooms included numerous chambers and chapels, some of which were reserved for the dukes and their families. Leo of Rozmital's description of his visit to the Burgundian court, set out at the opening, mentioned Philip the Good's own personal chamber along with nine further chambers through which he was led. In his account of the wedding of Charles the Bold to Margaret of York in 1468, Olivier de la Marche records chambers set out for different individuals in the palace at Bruges, noting 'In the residence there was a little room set aside in front of the chapel, where the duke alone dined; and next to this room was a large room, where all the chamberlains ate'.<sup>28</sup> When the grand master of Santiago and Lourenço Fogaça were charged to carry letters to the duke and duchess of Lancaster from Portugal, Froissart recounts that they were received in the chamber of the duke and duchess.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, most of these references make no mention of the interior decorations.

Only a very few contemporary references do record the furnishings of royal or ducal residences. A tantalizing glimpse of the textiles used at Burgundian diplomatic occasions was given by Jean de Haynin in the meeting between Charles the Bold and the emperor in 1473. He first noted that Charles the Bold met the emperor in a small chamber decorated with embroidery of Holland. Even more striking is the complete use of textiles to cover almost every surface in the hall. Here the walls were hung with tapestries depicting Alexander, the ceiling with cloth of gold, the high chair with the Golden Fleece, footstools with cloth of gold and the floor with textiles depicting the arms of Charles the Bold.<sup>30</sup> Jean de Haynin also records the hangings in the rooms of some of the principal attendees at the wedding between Charles the Bold and Margaret of York in 1468: in the chamber of Margaret of York there were hangings of red and green; and in the chamber of Charles

the Bold there was a textile chamber of vermeil, with an embroidered gold sun on the ceiling and a crown with a garden background on the backing.<sup>31</sup>

## Chambers

Chambers in the ducal residences were often in turn supplied with textile chambers, an object sometimes grouped under headings in the inventories that included vessels of gold and silver and tapestry.<sup>32</sup> Textile chambers were textile sets to furnish a chamber, usually comprising a bedcover, backing, ceiling and curtains for the bed, bench covers and wall hangings. Occasional extras to these sets included fringes or silks to edge the hangings as well as hooks and ropes to ensure the sets remained firmly fixed in place. The accounts of the dukes of Burgundy reveal that they were a frequent acquisition for the dukes, their duchesses, offspring and close kin. In 1394, Jaquet Dourdin of Paris was paid for the deliverance of a green chamber which included *serges* of medium size, one for the ceiling, the other for the bed, one for the backing of the bed, three *serges* of large size for making the wall of the chamber, another *serge* for the couch, *toile* for lining the ceiling and backing of the bed and fringes of silk to edge all the chamber materials.<sup>33</sup> In 1413, the ducal accounts note the purchase of a chamber of tapestry for John the Fearless depicting the hunt of a stag.<sup>34</sup> Jean Wallois of Arras was paid 105 francs for a chamber of green and white tapestry with roses and several images on each piece in 1427.<sup>35</sup>

Textile chambers are frequently represented in contemporary miniatures that depict the courtly households of Burgundy, France and England. Three are selected here as representative examples. The first from c.1411 depicts Charles VI of France receiving the author Pierre Salmon, in the presence of three nobles, one identified as John the Fearless (fig. 1). The second, also from the fifteenth century, depicts the wife of Charles VI, Isabeau of Bavaria, accepting the works of Christine de Pisan (fig. 2). The third is of Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, being presented with a copy of the *Traité sur l'Oraison Dominicale* (fig. 3). Even when taking into consideration the fact that images do not always match reality, the components of the chambers that are described so frequently by the ducal accounts and inventories are easily recognizable. In the miniatures, we see textile covers for the bed, backing, ceiling, curtains, textiles hung on the walls or used to cover the seat of chairs or the floors. In the miniature depicting the chamber of Isabeau of Bavaria and Philip the Good we also see the hooks required to hang the textiles covering the walls and the ropes necessary to hold the ceiling of the bed in place, another purchase frequently found in the ducal accounts in relation to these textiles. During the rule of Philip the Bold, Estienne Trouchet, *tapissier* of Paris, was paid for eight bundles of red cords to 'hold' certain chambers.<sup>36</sup>



Fig. 1 The Boucicaut Master. Pierre Salmon's, *Réponses de Pierre Salmon*, after 1411.  
'Charles VI with the author and three nobles'.



Fig. 2 Master of the *Cité des Dames*. *La Livre de la Cité des Dames*, 1405.  
'Christine de Pisan presenting her work to Isabeau of Bavaria'.



Fig. 3 Attributed to Jean le Tavernier. *Traité sur l'Oraison Dominicale*, 1457. 'Jean Miélot presenting his translation of the *Traité sur l'Oraison Dominicale* to Philip the Good'.

## Chapels

While textile chambers are relatively well known as part of the furnishings of medieval courts, textile chapels are often overlooked. In each inventory taken on the death of a Burgundian duke, ten to fifteen such chapels are described. Again, contemporary images suggest how they may have looked. The first, from the *Traité sur l'oraison dominicale*, depicts Philip the Good taking mass, enclosed by a textile chapel (fig. 4). The second, from the *Bréviaire d'hiver de Philippe le Bon*, depicts Philip the Good kneeling before St. Andrew, again surrounded by a textile chapel (fig. 5).

Both images depict the chapels covered in Burgundian emblems and the images correspond to the references found in the ducal inventories. In a lengthy entry under the heading '*chappelles entieres*' in the inventory of Philip the Bold, a 'new' chapel of white satin with bushes and flowers embroidered in gold is recorded.<sup>37</sup> The front and back of the chapel had borders with 'very large' circles in which the arms of Philip the Bold and P and M (Philip and Margaret) were represented.<sup>38</sup> The finishing touches to this textile chapel (which also included all the altar hangings) came in the form of the vestments for the clerics – cloaks with gold-embroidered motifs which also included the arms of Philip the Bold enclosed in a small circle embroidered with pearls.<sup>39</sup> In the 1420 inventory of Philip the Good we find a chapel of white satin, painted black, which depicted the *Crucifixion* on the front, stories of the Passion on the sides and the image of Christ on the day of Judgement on the back.<sup>40</sup>



Fig. 4 Attributed to Jean le Tavernier. *Traité sur l'Oraison Dominicale*, 1457. 'Philip the Good at Mass'.





Fig. 5 Attributed to Guillaume Vrelant. *Bréviaire d'hiver de Philippe le Bon*, 1451–1455.  
'Philip the Good and St. Andrew'.

### Functions of Furnishings

So what were the potential functions of these furnishings? Textile chambers and chapels were important in creating and maintaining different levels of space around the duke and his family and in controlling access to their persons, especially when noble or diplomatic visitors were admitted to the court. Laura Weigert has emphasized that textile chambers should be read spatially, in that contemporary users and viewers understood these hangings as having an architectural function, not only able to decorate a space, but also to create new spaces.<sup>41</sup> In using furnishings for such ends, the dukes were no different from other ducal or royal families across Europe. However, it might be argued that their need to manipulate space and access was greater, given their rather unique position as almost, but not quite, sovereigns of an emerging European polity. Thinking about the experience of the Burgundian court from the perspective of a visitor, allows us to understand how these textiles may have functioned in practice.

Within ducal residences such as the *hotel d'Artois* in Paris, the *Prinsenhof* in Bruges, or the *Coudenberg* in Brussels, textiles played an important part in generating and reinforcing the idea that the Burgundian dukes were exceptional figures, set apart from their nobility. A textile chamber could function as a 'tool of thought and action', serving and advertising Burgundian authority.<sup>42</sup> The chambers of later medieval princely residences had a variety of functions, public or private, but always political. As spaces where 'the public character of the lord, the maintenance of his interests and prestige of his house were in the foreground', they were important places where diplomatic visitors were received.<sup>43</sup> A journey to the ducal court may be thought of as a political pilgrimage to access the idea of a higher authority. At the culmination of the journey, the multiple chambers of the residence and their textile chambers required the visitor to play out the pilgrim-

age in microcosm.<sup>44</sup> Passing through multiple spaces brought them ever closer to a personification of that authority, but one which they would never quite fully access and which would never completely live up to that idea. Entry into more claustrophobic environments effected an appealing inversion of the extent of ducal authority, a territorial reach difficult to imagine, but more tangible in constricted spaces.

Leo of Rozmital's account of his visit to the Burgundian court in 1466 reinforces that visitors were 'gradually and increasingly confronted with the status and identity of the owner' as they progressed through the different spaces of the ducal residence and that textiles played an important role in drawing visitors through the space.<sup>45</sup> Even though Rozmital, as a minor Bohemian nobleman at the Burgundian court, may have been exaggerating when he wrote that he was 'led into [...] his chamber through nine other rooms', it is clear that the nexus of the Burgundian court revolved around the prince himself. The miniature from the *Dialogues* depicting the author Pierre Salmon presenting his manuscript to Charles VI of France reinforces the exclusiveness of the chamber space and the different levels one had to pass through in a ducal residence (fig. 6). Spaces around the duke were carefully constructed and regulated. Thus, textile chambers were perfect for constructing a space, where a visitor to the court might be granted an audience with the duke in his chamber.



Fig. 6 *Dialogues*, 1409. 'Pierre Salmon presenting the manuscript of *Dialogues* to King Charles VI of France'.

At times, textile chambers were specifically requested by the Burgundian dukes in anticipation of such diplomatic visits, as in 1395 when a ducal account records that Philip the Bold requested two textile chambers to be brought to his Paris residence for the arrival of 'the English'.<sup>46</sup> Froissart gives a glimpse into how such a diplomatic meeting might have looked in the eyes of contempo-

aries. Recounting a meeting between the king of Portugal and the duke of Lancaster, Froissart notes that 'the king and duke had each their chambers hung with cloth and covered with *tapis*, as convenient as if the king had been at Lisbon or the duke in London'.<sup>47</sup>

The visual programmes or emblems that so often adorned these textile chambers was one means by which the duke could hope to reinforce Burgundian authority and identity. With the presence of the duke, a chamber displaying armorial emblems of the Burgundian dynasty or their personal motif became invested with meaning and could, when necessary, produce space that was both dominating and controlling – where Burgundian ducal authority and power were foregrounded. Our contemporary images reinforce how the space of the textile chamber might be a rather oppressive one for those granted access, surrounded by multiple Burgundian motifs, the air constricted and sound muffled by hangings over the door. This is especially apparent in the miniature from the fifteenth century, which depicts the homage of Edward I to Philip the Good of France in 1286 from *Les Grandes Chroniques de France* (fig. 7). Twelve individuals, including the two kings, are packed into a fairly small chamber, which is completely covered in textiles, to witness the meeting. It does not look comfortable, and, given the nature of the ceremony, it is unlikely that it was. An account from Froissart gives another insight into the impression personal motifs on interior furnishings could make on a diplomatic occasion; here a meeting between the king of Portugal and the duke of Lancaster for the purpose of marriage negotiations between the two houses. He records:

The duke this day entertained at dinner the king and his attendants. His apartments were decorated with the richest tapestry, with his arms emblazoned on it, and as splendidly ornamented as if he had been at Hertford, Leicester, or at any of his mansions in England, which very much astonished the Portuguese.<sup>48</sup>



Fig. 7 *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*. Bibliothèque National, France, fifteenth century. 'Homage of Edward I to Philippe le Bel.'

Consideration of the political context to the request made by Philip the Bold in 1395 suggests that textile chambers *were* valued for this ability to produce spaces specific to particular encounters. In 1395, Philip the Bold was in the final phase of preparations for the ill-fated crusade of Nicopolis which was to be led by his son John of Nevers, later John the Fearless. The moment the English were received into the hotel d'Artois, it was Philip the Bold's intention that the crusade would be led by Burgundy along with the dukes of Lancaster and Orleans.<sup>49</sup> The type of materials and the visual programmes of the chambers he requested certainly alluded to noble status. The first chamber made from mallard pelts had cost no less than 300 francs.<sup>50</sup> Embroidered on the second were hops, the device of John of Nevers.<sup>51</sup> Receiving the English visitors, the presence of the duke and his son would no doubt further invest the materials and emblems with a signal of Burgundian authority.

Did textile chapels then fulfil functions similar to textile chambers? Textiles were an appropriate adornment for chapels and churches from the early Christian period into the later Middle Ages, reflecting their prominent role in Scripture.<sup>52</sup> As for all other medieval rulers, the chapel of the dukes of Burgundy was an integral part of the itinerant lifestyle of the dukes and their court, travelling with them as they moved from one place to another.<sup>53</sup> Important dates within the liturgical calendar were celebrated with especial solemnity and, given the public nature of such occasions, textile chapels created another level of space, in which Burgundian identity and authority could be emphasized. Our contemporary images of textile chapels and the references from ducal inventories suggest their potential functions. Examining the image of Philip the Good at mass, it is clear that textile chapels were used by the dukes to control the space around them during special liturgical moments.<sup>54</sup> They could choose at which point in the service they were revealed or concealed from those attending, including the priest. Lisa Monnas captures this capability of the textile chapels, noting that their 'purpose was to allow the royal worshipper to participate in the main service at the high altar, separate and yet included'.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, they functioned as yet another visual emphasis of Burgundian authority. Textile chapels, as well as textile chambers, could be covered with armorial emblems. Discussing the meaning of textiles in this manuscript illumination, Margaret Goethring concludes that the use of such textiles was [of course], 'as much a political statement as it is an image about the personal piety of Philip the Good [...]', his arms appearing on the priestly vestments, the altar cloths and the floor coverings.<sup>56</sup>

The multiple purposes of such chapels are reinforced by the ducal inventories. In the inventory taken on the death Philip the Bold in 1404, several chapels depicted the arms and initials of Philip the Bold and his wife Margaret of Flanders, as well as the arms of France, Flanders and Brabant. On a velvet chapel of Charles the Bold the *fleur de lis* appears alongside pearls and pinecones.<sup>57</sup> Sacral representations also appear. In the 1420 inventory of Philip the Good a 'daily chapel' of white satin, painted black depicted the story of the Passion on the sides, with a scene of the Judgement on the back.<sup>58</sup> The priests' chasubles further depicted 'several stories of our Lord'.<sup>59</sup> Other chapels represented sacral visual programmes alongside ducal emblems.<sup>60</sup> In the 1404 inventory, a textile chapel is described as bearing the arms of Brabant and Flanders, as well as sto-

ries of apostles on canopies.<sup>61</sup> Such a visual programme on a textile chapel may well have been appropriate for Philip the Bold, given that he had only acquired the territory of Flanders in 1384 through his marriage to Margaret of Flanders. Thus, a portable textile chapel that could accompany him on his itineration of this territory might serve as a reminder of his legitimacy to rule in front of his household. In the inventory of Charles the Bold examples of his device alongside that of the Burgundian chivalric order, The Golden Fleece, or the French royal emblem, the *fleur de lis*, are prevalent. Here we find a chapel of white cloth of gold, which included the vestments for the priests as well as textiles for covering the footstools and lectern.<sup>62</sup> The outside of the chapel and the vestments of the cleric were further embroidered with the emblem of the Burgundian order of the Golden Fleece and with the initials of Charles the Bold.<sup>63</sup> Richard Vaughan suggested that the establishment of the Order of the Golden Fleece by Philip the Good in 1430 was yet another means to unify the nobility of the diverse territories making up the Burgundian Netherlands.<sup>64</sup> Beguiling though this theory might be, it has failed to stand the test of time.<sup>65</sup> However, one clear function of the order was to mark 'the Burgundian dukes as princes of the first order in the eyes of their noble contemporaries'.<sup>66</sup> The foundation of the Order was another signal to European polities of Burgundian dynastic ambition, given that it was modelled on the English Order of the Garter and incorporated similar elements of Orders founded by royal dynasties.<sup>67</sup> Thus, we should not necessarily underplay the impact of the emblems used to adorn Charles the Bold's chapel, priest vestments, footstools and lectern. The textile chapel with emblems of the Burgundian Fleece, used to enclose and reveal the head of the Order at particular liturgical moments, was yet another visual reminder of Burgundian leadership, albeit of an elite European club. If we remain unconvinced about the power of textiles in creating spaces that framed and enhanced political moments, or indeed about the importance of the Order of the Golden Fleece to the Burgundian dynasty, it might be wise to remember that, when Charles V abdicated in Brussels in 1555, the palace interior was covered with hangings and the key hanging was the tapestry of the History of Gideon and the Golden Fleece, originally ordered by Philip the Good in 1453 (fig. 8).<sup>68</sup>

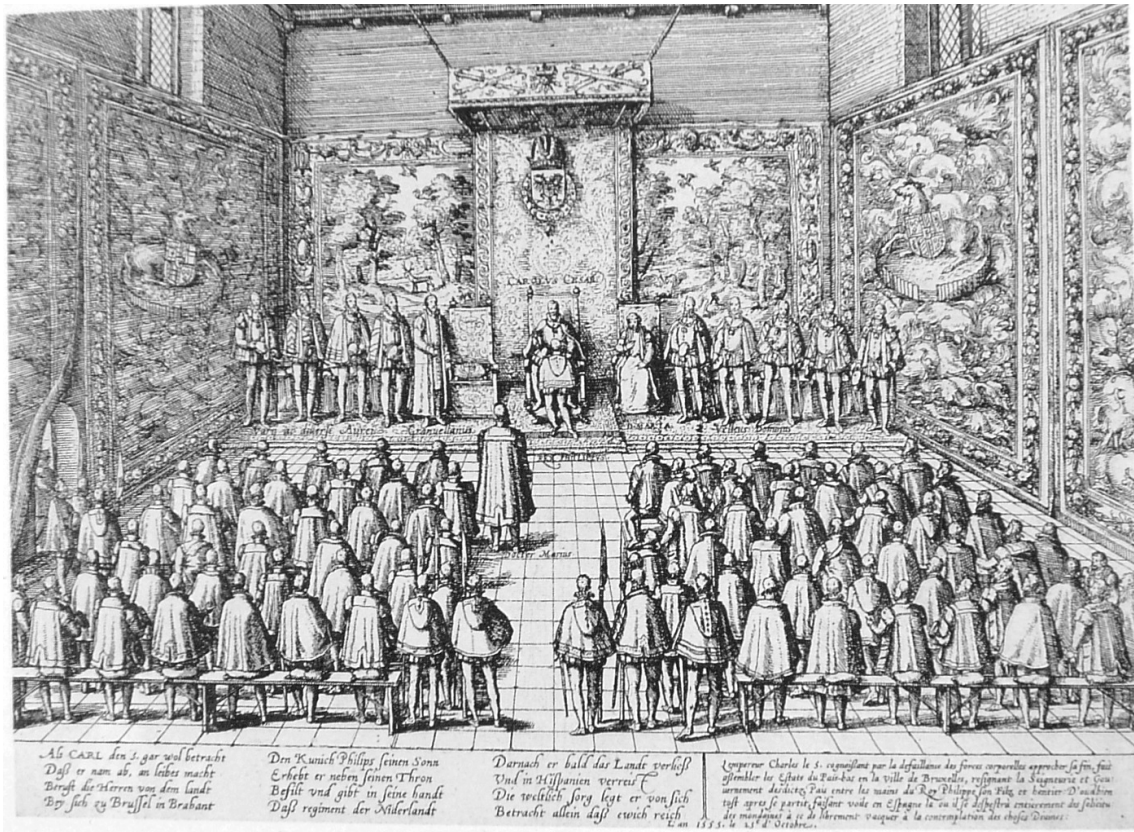


Fig. 8 Franz Hogenberg, *Abdication of Charles V*, sixteenth century.

### Ambiguities of Furnishings

Yet, although it may have been the intention that these forms, emblems and visual programmes of textile chambers and chapels served and reinforced Burgundian authority and identity and helped in building a royal reputation, it is by no means a given that a central message – the legitimation or imposition of Burgundian authority – was successfully transmitted. Historians of the Burgundian Netherlands are well versed in considering the ‘multiple meanings’ and the ambiguities of the ‘messages’ communicated through Burgundian entry ceremonies.<sup>69</sup> They have been clear that Burgundian urban subjects were not simply passive receptors for ‘messages’ of ducal ceremony. However, the full implications of this work have been less frequently adopted by historians and art historians when they considered Burgundian court festivities, the material culture associated with them and its potential audiences.<sup>70</sup> In particular, the idea that the meanings of objects as envisaged by their creators may not have been fully comprehended by audiences present, or that, even if they were understood, these meanings were wilfully ignored, or possibly mocked, by intended audiences, is important to our assessment of the ability of textile chambers and chapels to furnish the dukes with a royal reputation.<sup>71</sup>

Two concluding examples to this chapter serve to illustrate this possibility. The first example returns us to Philip the Bold's aspirations to lead a crusade to Nicopolis. Although 'the English' were received by Philip the Bold in his Artois residence in 1395, filled with chambers demonstrating authority and Burgundian identity, this did not stop the duke of Lancaster and the duke of Orléans withdrawing from the crusade later that year. Textile chambers and chapels did their job in that their visual symbols and programmes did continue to reinforce the notion of Burgundian authority and identity and even possibly Burgundian ambition to a royal title. However, the key phrase here is that they reinforced 'the notion of Burgundian authority'. Contemporary visitors to Burgundian residences could ultimately reject that authority or even misinterpret the visual programmes so carefully chosen by the ducal family and their *garde de joyaux* or *garde de la tapisserie*. This is evident in the second example, which illuminates a rejection of Burgundian authority and ambition to a royal title. When Charles the Bold met the emperor at Trier in 1473 in order to negotiate a potential royal crown, he used almost every luxury object he had at his disposal to reinforce his reputation and claim. Richard Vaughan stresses that 'Charles the Bold evidently regarded the conference in part as a kind of gigantic public exhibition of Burgundian wealth and splendour' and that 'The duke of Burgundy's sartorial extravagances and the lavish display of jewellery aroused astonishment'.<sup>72</sup> When they dined at a banquet hosted by Charles the Bold at St Maximin's, further textiles adorned the church where they heard mass and the hall where they were going to eat. Recorded by the *Libellus*, the event is worth recounting:

On 7 October the duke of Burgundy invited his imperial majesty and all his great lords and princes to come and dine with him. The abbey church of St. Maxim and the great hall, where they were going to eat, were made ready and decorated with cloths and tapestries at indescribable cost [...]. The Emperor was dressed in an extremely costly cloth of gold robe, with a very fine and precious cross on his breast. The duke went out to the abbey gates to meet him wearing an exceptionally fine tabard of cloth of gold and silver. He also wore many fine precious stones that stood out and twinkled like stars, valued at 100,000 ducats. His tabard was open on either side to show off the beauty and richness of his hose, on which he was wearing the [Garter of the] Order of King Edward of England [...]. After this they went into the church to hear mass [...]. One side of the church was hung with rich gold and silver tapestries embroidered with the Passion of our Lord Christ Jesus; the other with the story of how Jason got the Golden Fleece in the land of Colchis [...]. When mass was over the duke led his imperial majesty by the hand into the hall where they were going to eat, which had been so superbly and expensively adorned and prepared that it seemed like King Ahasuerus's splendid feast. This room was hung with rich cloth of gold tapestries with the history of Gideon the regent of Israel and many precious and costly stones were sewn into them, which stood out and twinkled like stars.<sup>73</sup>

But we are minded to remember that this splendour, no doubt intended to enhance Burgundian authority, came to naught in that it did not achieve Charles the Bold's purpose. Charles was not crowned. In fact, Frederick made a rather hasty departure, leaving at dawn on 25 November even

though Charles the Bold entreated him to stay longer so that 'they could talk further about all sorts of things'.<sup>74</sup> The 'notion' of a Burgundian royal reputation had been made clear through the furnishings, clothing and other objects at Trier, but nonetheless the emperor had chosen to reject them.

When exploring the functions of moveable objects in later medieval European courts, we need not only to focus on their ability to project and reflect magnificence, luxury and authority, but also on the ability of audiences to misread or reject these projections and reflections. The Burgundian dukes may not have set out on the path to creating a new European polity, but by the rule of Charles the Bold the Burgundian Netherlands had become *the* power player in European politics. Thus, intentionally or unintentionally, their furnishings, their motifs, emblems and visual programmes reflected that journey and the difficult tightrope that their dynasty walked in maintaining cordial relations with the French royal dynasty that had spawned them and in seeking expansion of territories to the East and with it the possible acquisition of a royal title. The furnishings of their residences in the form of textile chambers and chapels that allowed visitors to see them in a more intimate setting could be 'read' by those visitors or members of the Burgundian household in a number of ways. Acknowledging the ambiguities and rejections of material culture creates fresh ways of thinking about objects acquired by the Burgundian court and of those that furnished courts across Europe and beyond.



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<sup>1</sup> Letts 1957, pp. 35–36.

<sup>2</sup> De Jonge and Chatenet 2014. Woolgar 1991. Beaumont 1990. Wijsman 2010. Kent 1987, pp. 41–70.

- <sup>3</sup> However, some exceptions include Whitely 1994, pp. 47–63.
- <sup>4</sup> Monnas 2004, pp. 185–206. Van der Velden 2002. Antenhofer 2016, pp. 35–68. Wilson 2018.
- <sup>5</sup> Belozerskaya 2005, p. 2.
- <sup>6</sup> Laborde 1849. Prost 1908–1913.
- <sup>7</sup> For more information on individuals who held these titles, see Wilson 2011, pp. 11–31.
- <sup>8</sup> Laborde 1849, p. 4063.
- <sup>9</sup> *ADCO*, B301 and see also Dehaisnes 1886, p. 840.
- <sup>10</sup> The collection of accounts from Philip the Bold to Mary of Burgundy are preserved in the B series *Archives Départementales Côte d'or* Dijon and the *Archives Départementales du Nord*.
- <sup>11</sup> Vaughan 2002, pp. 2–3.
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- <sup>13</sup> For debate on the Burgundian state see: Vaughan 2002; Blockmans and Prevenier 1999 and Pirenne 1908–1909, pp. 477–502.
- <sup>14</sup> Vaughan 2002, pp. 147–48.
- <sup>15</sup> Wilson 2015, pp. 335–59.
- <sup>16</sup> Brown and Small 2007, p. 86.
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- <sup>23</sup> Vaughan 2002, p. 142.
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- <sup>25</sup> Brown and Small 2007, pp. 86–88.
- <sup>26</sup> De Winter 1983, p. 147.
- <sup>27</sup> De Winter 1983, p. 159.
- <sup>28</sup> Brown and Small 2007, p. 64.
- <sup>29</sup> Ainsworth and Croenen, Translation of Book III, f. 261.
- <sup>30</sup> Haynin 1842, I, pp. 223–24.
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- <sup>36</sup> *ADCO*, B1501, f. 61.
- <sup>37</sup> Dehaisnes 1886, p. 836.
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- <sup>39</sup> Dehaisnes 1886, p. 836.
- <sup>40</sup> Laborde 1849, p. 246.

- <sup>41</sup> Weigert 2008, pp. 325–26.
- <sup>42</sup> Lefebvre 1991, pp. 208–09.
- <sup>43</sup> Elias 1983, p. 53.
- <sup>44</sup> Brown 1980, pp. 86–88.
- <sup>45</sup> De Clerq, Dumolyn, Haemers 2007, p. 17.
- <sup>46</sup> *ADCO*, B1508, f. 44.
- <sup>47</sup> See Ainsworth and Croenen online edition of the Translation of Besançon 865, f. 294 v.
- <sup>48</sup> Johnes 1806, p. 219.
- <sup>49</sup> Vaughan 2002, pp. 62–63.
- <sup>50</sup> *ADCO*, B1508, ff. 135–36.
- <sup>51</sup> *ADCO*, B1508, ff. 135–36.
- <sup>52</sup> Weigert 2004, pp. 2–3.
- <sup>53</sup> Schnerb 2005, p. 71.
- <sup>54</sup> Monnas 2006, p. 191.
- <sup>55</sup> Monnas 2006, p. 138.
- <sup>56</sup> Goethring 2007, p. 138.
- <sup>57</sup> Laborde 1849, p. 21.
- <sup>58</sup> Laborde 1849, p. 246.
- <sup>59</sup> Laborde 1849, p. 246.
- <sup>60</sup> *ADCO*, B301, ff. 4–5.
- <sup>61</sup> *ADCO*, B301, ff. 4–5 and Dehaisnes 1886, pp. 836–37.
- <sup>62</sup> Laborde 1849, p. 20.
- <sup>63</sup> Laborde 1849, p. 20.
- <sup>64</sup> Vaughan 2002, p. 161.
- <sup>65</sup> Brown and Small 2007, pp. 132–33.
- <sup>66</sup> D’Arcy 2006, p. 29.
- <sup>67</sup> Brown and Small 2007, p. 130 and Boulton 2006, pp. 22–23.
- <sup>68</sup> Arnade 2008, pp. 48–49 and Vaughan 2002, p. 152.
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- <sup>70</sup> A start has been made by Blockmans, Borchert, Gabriëls, Oosterman, Van Oosterwijk 2013.
- <sup>71</sup> Brown and Small 2007, pp. 26, 28, 32, 34.
- <sup>72</sup> Vaughan 2002, pp. 140, 145.
- <sup>73</sup> Vaughan 2002, pp. 145–46.
- <sup>74</sup> Vaughan 2002, p. 151.