

KIMBELL ART MUSEUM PRESENTS *ART AND WAR IN THE RENAISSANCE: THE BATTLE OF PAVIA TAPESTRIES*, JUNE 16–SEPTEMBER 15, 2024

Monumental tapestries, plus arms and armor, will immerse visitors in Renaissance politics, military technology, and fashion.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FORT WORTH, TX—The Kimbell Art Museum will debut *Art and War in the Renaissance: The Battle of Pavia Tapestries* from June 16 through September 15. Seven lavish tapestries depict the battle of Pavia, commemorating Holy Roman Emperor Charles V’s decisive victory over French King Francis I, which was a pivotal point in the Italian Wars almost five hundred years ago. The tapestries are monumental in scale—each measuring about twenty-eight feet wide and fourteen feet high—drawing viewers into the world of Renaissance history, military technology, and fashion. Narrative depictions of key moments from the battle are packed with near life-size figures and horses in full battle regalia, set within the scenography of the battlefield and countryside outside the besieged northern Italian city of Pavia. Visitors will be fully immersed within these seven, splendid scenes—just as visitors to the court of Charles V would have been when the tapestries were first unveiled in 1531. After a careful restoration, which has returned them to their original splendor, the entire cycle of seven tapestries is being presented in the United States for the first time. Alongside the tapestries, impressive examples of precious arms and armor from the period evoke the human experience of war in the Renaissance. The exhibition is organized by the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte and The Museum Box in collaboration with the Kimbell Art Museum, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

“The Battle of Pavia tapestries are at once dazzlingly intricate works of fine art, powerful historical documents, and awe-inspiring visual narratives that will envelop visitors in early sixteenth-century art and history,” said Kimbell Art Museum director Eric Lee. “The Kimbell is proud to be the first-ever US venue to host the group of seven masterpieces. We are grateful to the museum in Naples and the Italian government for making the exhibition possible.”

During the Renaissance, monarchs and religious leaders glorified their power and wealth through the art of tapestry, commissioning some of Europe’s greatest artists to commemorate significant events through the lavish medium. Elaborate tapestries, much more costly than paintings, could serve as tools

for dynamic storytelling and political propaganda, depicting histories in fine wool, silk, and metal-wrapped thread at monumental scale.

The seven Battle of Pavia tapestries are some of the most awe-inspiring examples of this often-overlooked yet highly prized Renaissance artform. They required remarkable feats of collaboration between artists and weavers—a single panel could take more than a year to produce. Designed by court artist Bernard van Orley, the tapestries were woven in Brussels by Willem and Jan Dermoyen in deeply saturated hues and exquisite detail, luxuriously highlighted with gold and silver thread. Each composition is filled with richly adorned military leaders, horsemen, and mercenary foot soldiers armed with swords, pikes, and firearms, all inhabiting a stunning panoramic landscape, from the walled park of the battleground to undulating hills in the distance. These tapestries were produced as works of art with timely subject matter: they were presented by the States General to Charles V in 1531, only six years after the battle, when he addressed the assembly of delegates representing the Low Countries at the Coudenberg Palace in Brussels.

Each of the tapestries depicts an episode of the conflict, though some of the events happened simultaneously, given the short duration of the battle. One tapestry shows the imperial baggage train arriving on the field of battle and the early surrender of the Swiss pikemen serving the French army. Another shows the most important political and tactical event of the conflict—the surrender of Francis I. Two tapestries show mass confrontations of the opposing forces, demonstrating a significant advancement in military history during the battle—the first use of barrel-loaded firearms, which gave the imperial army a distinct advantage over the French troops. Another depicts the imperial army invading the French camp, forcing civilians in their retinue to flee. The remaining tapestries show the attack led by imperial loyalists from within the besieged Visconti Castle, which succeeded in routing the Swiss Guard in the service of Francis I, and, finally, the flight of Francis I's brother-in-law, the Duke of Alençon, and his troops in the face of the unstoppable Spanish army serving Charles V.

“Imagine the scene when these glorious works of art were first put on view,” said George T. M. Shackelford, Kimbell deputy director. “The lucky members of the emperor’s court were surrounded by a massive, colorful panorama of a critical battle between two rivals—Francis I and Charles V—that had changed modern history. This summer, at the Kimbell, that splendid panorama will be available once again and on view in the United States for the first—and possibly only—time in history.”

The emperor left the tapestries in the care of his sister, Mary of Hungary, governor of the Netherlands. From her they passed to Don Juan of Austria, the illegitimate son of the emperor, who in turn bequeathed them to the family of one of the military heroes of the Battle of Pavia, the Marquis

d'Avalos. In 1862, the d'Avalos family donated their noble collections to Naples's national museum; since 1957, the tapestries have been displayed at the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte in Naples.

Enhancing the visitor's understanding and enjoyment of the woven depictions of battle, the exhibition will include a selection of arms and armor from Capodimonte's renowned Farnese Armory. Among the most elegant objects on view will be a splendid helmet and rotella shield with episodes from Roman history, Pompeo della Cesa's elegant "Volat" armor garniture, an exquisite arquebus made for Ranuccio Farnese by Giovanni Battista Visconti, and a variety of exquisitely detailed swords and firearms.

SUPPORT

Promotional support for the Kimbell Art Museum and its exhibitions is provided by American Airlines, PaperCity, and NBC 5. Additional support is provided by Arts Fort Worth and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

VENUES AND CATALOGUE

After its debut at the Kimbell, *Art and War in the Renaissance: The Battle of Pavia Tapestries* will be on view at the de Young Museum in San Francisco from October 19, 2024, to January 12, 2025, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in spring 2025. The exhibition is accompanied by a 208-page, full-color illustrated catalogue edited by Dr. Carmine Romano, curator and head of digitization and digital catalogue, Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, with contributions by Romano; Dr. Sylvain Bellenger, general director, Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte; Dr. Thomas P. Campbell, director and CEO, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Emma C. De Jong, postdoctoral curatorial fellow, The American Friends of Capodimonte; Graziella Palei, tapestry conservator; Dr. Cecilia Paredes, Université Libre de Bruxelles; Gennaro Sangiuliano, Minister of Culture, Italy; Cristina Del Sesto, president, the American Friends of Capodimonte; Antonio Tosini, conservator of the Farnese and Bourbon Armories, Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte; and H.E. Mariangela Zappia, Ambassador of Italy to the United States.

RELATED PROGRAMMING

The Kimbell will celebrate the opening of *Art and War in the Renaissance: The Battle of Pavia Tapestries* with an inaugural lecture on June 15 by Thomas P. Campbell, director and CEO of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, recognized as a world authority on the art of tapestry. Visitors will have the opportunity to learn more about the works on view through a range of additional lectures, films, family programs, public tours, and more. See a full list of exhibition-related programs by visiting kimbellart.org/calendar and clicking on "Art and War in the Renaissance."

VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission to the museum's permanent collection is always free. Admission is half-price all day on Tuesdays and after 5 p.m. on Fridays.

The Kimbell Art Museum is open Tuesdays through Thursdays and Saturdays, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Fridays, noon–8 p.m.; Sundays, noon–5 p.m.; closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Juneteenth, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For general information, call 817-332-8451.

ABOUT THE KIMBELL ART MUSEUM

The Kimbell Art Museum, owned and operated by the Kimbell Art Foundation, is internationally renowned for both its collections and its architecture. The Kimbell's collections range in period from antiquity to the twentieth century and include European masterpieces by artists such as Fra Angelico, Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Bernini, Velázquez, Vigée Le Brun, Monet, Cézanne, Picasso, and Matisse; important collections of Egyptian and classical antiquities; and the art of Asia, Africa, and the Ancient Americas.

The museum's 1972 building, designed by the American architect Louis I. Kahn, is widely regarded as one of the outstanding architectural achievements of the modern era. A second building, designed by Italian architect Renzo Piano, opened in 2013 and now provides space for special exhibitions, dedicated classrooms, and a 289-seat auditorium with excellent acoustics for music. For more information, visit kimbellart.org.

ABOUT THE MUSEO E REAL BOSCO DI CAPODIMONTE

The Capodimonte collection is among the most important in the world and includes more than 49 thousand works of art representing the Italian schools of art from the 13th century to today. In 126 rooms on three main levels, in addition to the ground floor and the mezzanines, there are masterpieces by artists from every Italian school: Tuscan, Venetian, Emilian, Neapolitan, and Roman, as well as important foreign presences such as the Flemish. The collection includes 6,000 porcelain pieces representing all European schools; sculpture, from Renaissance busts to modern works; the Cabinet of Drawings and Prints; the precious objects of the Borgia and De Ciccio Collections; and those of the wunderkammer of the Farnese and Bourbons. Thanks to the vision of Raffaello Causa, in 1978 Capodimonte opened its doors to contemporary art, recognizing that artistic creativity does not end abruptly, and that human genius is expressed as an uninterrupted thread through history. With the donation of her collection in December 2021, Lia Rumma elevated "the largest art gallery in Southern Italy" to the largest museum in Italy dedicated to Italian art from the 1960s to today. The Park and Real Bosco is among the largest urban parks in Italy and welcomes approximately 2.5 million visitors per year.

It consists of 36 km of avenues and walkways, 6 km of surrounding wall, and 22 buildings which house companies, schools, residences, museums and more.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM BOX

The Museum Box is an international strategy and traveling exhibitions partner for museums. They are known for their thoughtful and personal approach to museum business that draws on decades of experience working with institutions of all scales. Their team of museum professionals offer a selection of turnkey and customized services. They position their clients to access their vast global network of 500+ museums, to expand their domestic and global footprints, and to raise vital funds in support of their missions.

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PRESS IMAGES

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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