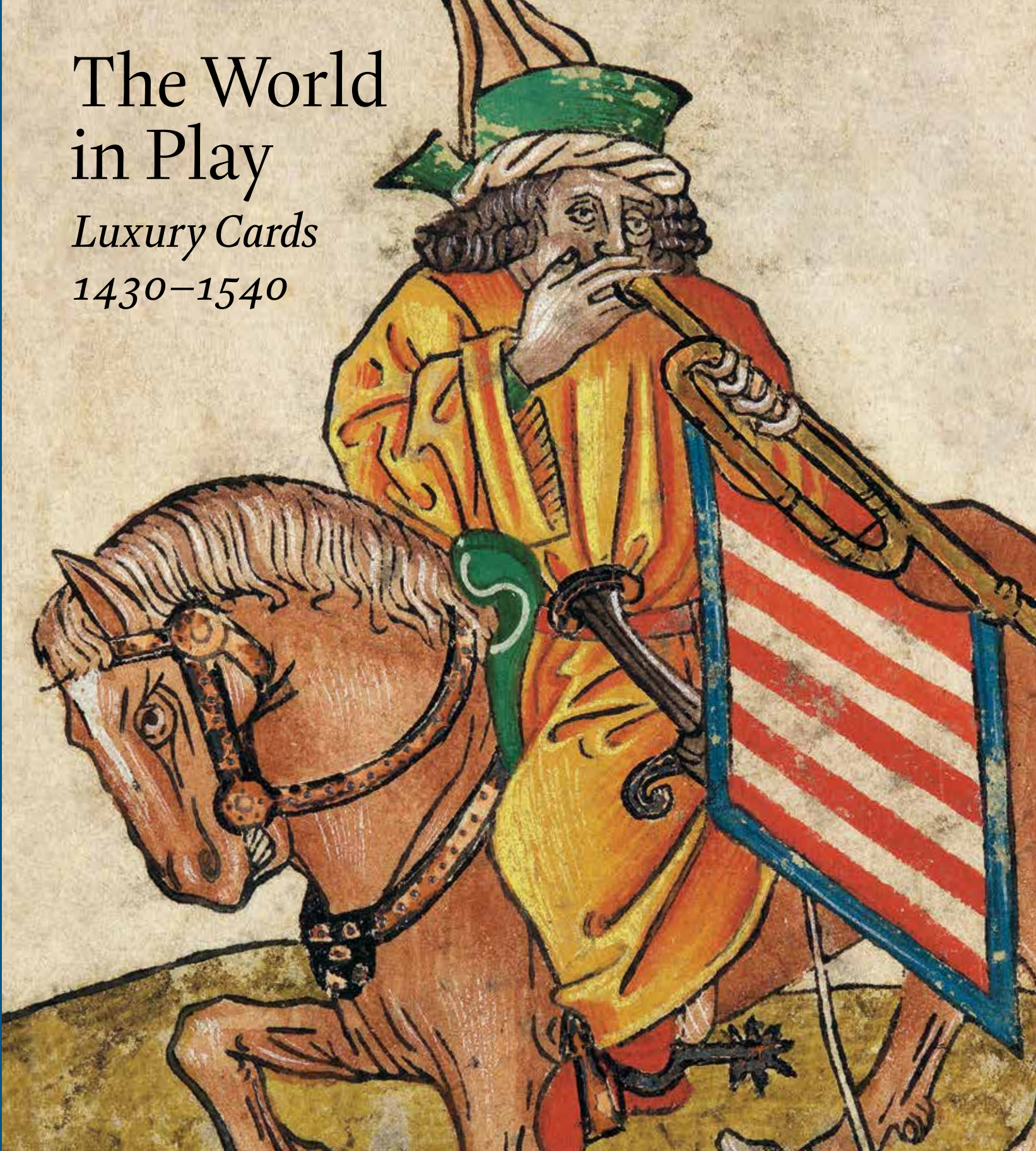
The World in Play

Luxury Cards 1430–1540



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Luxury Cards 1430–1540

TIMOTHY B. HUSBAND




THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

DISTRIBUTED BY YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, NEW HAVEN AND LONDON

This catalogue is published in conjunction with
"The World in Play: Luxury Cards, 1430–1540,"
on view at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
from January 20, 2015, through April 17, 2016.

The catalogue is made possible by the Michel David-Weill Fund.

Published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Mark Polizzotti, Publisher and Editor in Chief
Gwen Roginsky, Associate Publisher and
General Manager of Publications
Peter Antony, Chief Production Manager
Michael Sittenfeld, Senior Managing Editor
Robert Weisberg, Senior Project Manager

Edited by Nancy Grubb and Barbara Cavaliere
Designed by Carl W. Scarbrough
Production by Paul Booth
Notes edited by Ellen Hurst
Image acquisitions and permissions by Jane S. Tai

Photographs of works in the Metropolitan Museum's collection are by Karin L. Willis, The Photograph Studio, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, unless otherwise noted.

Typeset in Kingfisher
Printed on 100 lb Endurance Silk
Separations by Professional Graphics, Inc., Rockford, Illinois
Printed by Puritan Capital, Hollis, New Hampshire

FRONTISPIECES: p. 1: Knave of Nooses, Cloisters; p. 2: King, Queen, and Knave of Horns, and King of Tethers, Cloisters; p. 3: Queen and Knave of Tethers, and King and Queen of Collars, Cloisters; p. 5: 7 of Horns and 7 of Nooses, Cloisters; p. 6: detail of fig. 107; p. 8: detail of fig. 108; p. 11: Knave of Collars, Cloisters; p. 12: detail of fig. 11; p. 126: detail of fig. 60

First printing

The Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10028
metmuseum.org

Distributed by
Yale University Press, New Haven and London
yalebooks.com/art
yalebooks.co.uk

Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the Library of Congress.
ISBN 978-1-58839-608-2

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Director's Foreword

Playing cards are familiar to everyone, but we usually do not think of them as fine art. The hand-painted luxury playing cards under discussion here were not meant to be used in play. Created for princely patrons by gifted artists and workshops, they are tiny panel paintings that illustrate princely hunts, courtly figures, a diversity of fauna and flora, glorious landscapes, and casts of characters that range from high-ranking royals to the lowliest workers. Made over a period of a little more than a century, these decks reflect a worldview at the twilight of the Middle Ages and the dawn of the modern era, an epoch fraught with tumultuous social, economic, and religious change. These cards tell of a world in play.

This publication accompanies an exhibition at The Cloisters, the branch of the Metropolitan Museum devoted to the art and architecture of the Middle Ages, and it also stands as a considerable contribution to scholarship on the subject of medieval playing cards. Not only is it the only study of its kind in English, it is also the only one that has appeared in more than two decades.

Timothy B. Husband, Curator in the Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters, has organized the exhibition and has written an insightful text that conveys the importance of these playing cards as unique works of art and illuminates the milieu in which they were made. We gratefully acknowledge the Michel David-Weill Fund for its generous support of this catalogue.

Thomas P. Campbell
Director
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Preface

Readers unfamiliar with early European playing cards will be surprised by their total lack of uniformity. In the Anglophone world, all decks of ordinary playing cards comprise fifty-two cards, in four suits—Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, and Clubs, ranked in that order—with kings, queens, and jacks as face cards, and number (or "pip") cards from 10 through 2. Instead of a 1, there is an ace, which has the highest value. Additionally, there are two jokers, which are used in some games and not in others. The suits familiar to us were adopted from French playing cards, whose suits were standardized by the mid-fifteenth century. Suits in Italy—Cups (*coppa*), Swords *(spade*), Batons (*bastoni*), and Coins (*denari*)—were likewise in place during the same period.

Decks of playing cards in late medieval Germany, the primary focus of this book, did not have standard suit symbols or hierarchies. None survive from earlier than about 1430, but contemporary texts suggest that the earliest cards, from the fourteenth century, had figures borrowed from the social structure at court: kings and queens (not always paired); knaves (meaning not rogues but attendants or persons of low rank—as opposed to knights), usually with both an upper (*Ober*) and an under (*Unter*) knave; various officials and functionaries (marshals, chamberlains, heralds, cupbearers) and members of diverse occupations (clerics, cooks, footmen, fishmongers). All were ranked in a distinct order that was usually, but not always, indicated by numbers. The earliest surviving cards have suits with creatures associated with the hunt (Falcons, Hounds, Stags, Bears) along with various types of flowers and birds, as well as Helmets, Shields, Swords, and Coins. The latter two may have been borrowed from Italian cards. The number of suits in a deck also varied at that early stage, numbering four, five, six, or more. The pip cards generally ran from 10 through 2, the former expressed, not with the appropriate repetition of the suit symbol but with a Banner emblazoned with it. As the number of face cards varied and a 1 might be included or not, the number of cards in a deck ranged from forty-eight to fifty-two, fifty-six, or many more. Only in the late fifteenth century did the Germans settle on four suits: Acorns (*Eichel*), Leafs (*Laub*), Hearts (*Herz*), and Bells (*Schelle*). But even then, the number of cards in a deck could still vary. To avoid confusion with modern deck structure, the terms "jack" (roughly the equivalent of the under knave), "deuce" (2), and "ace" (1) are avoided here.

We know very little concerning the games played. Treatises and sermons inveighing against card playing make it clear that gambling was all too frequently involved. *Karnöffel* in Germany and tarot in Italy involved trick taking, as their many trump cards

indicate. Decks with social ranks were also designed for trick-taking games, but in some, the lower ranks could trump the upper. We are probably safe to surmise that a variety of other games, in addition to those involving trick taking with or without trumps, were in play: some merely cutting for a high or low card, others drawing, passing, or retaining cards to hold the highest or to avoid holding the lowest, and yet others to capture cards in a particular sequence or arrangement. In the late Middle Ages and early modern times, card playing was widely enjoyed at all levels of society, perhaps because it was more challenging than dice and other games of pure chance yet less cerebral than chess. The cards themselves are not a game but the means for one, and the games played are as varied as those who play them. Cards are mere ciphers, and the manner in which they are randomly dealt out is the mix with which each player must contend. Within the framework of rules and through imaginative thought and strategy, the cards in hand can be parleyed into success—or not. The random conditions presented by a hand of cards are a metaphor for the circumstances one is born into, though a game of cards has a distinct advantage: if you don't like the hand you were dealt, you can draw another. The playing out of a hand of cards can be seen as a microcosmic reflection of the ever-changing world around us—a world in play—a view that the creators of the cards under discussion here would seem to have shared.

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The World in Play

The World in Play

Luxury Cards 1430–1540

TIMOTHY B. HUSBAND

Playing cards are not an obvious platform for creating works of art—indeed, quite the opposite. Bits of stiffened paper marked with simple symbols, images, and numerals to indicate rank and value, cards are shuffled, dealt, rearranged in the hands, slapped down, and then shuffled again as the process is repeated over and over (fig. 1). Inevitably, cards are lost, torn, worn out, and the entire deck thrown out. Cards are fundamentally fugitive. But they are also ubiquitous. Since the introduction of card games to Europe in the fourteenth century, players of all social and economic strata have indulged in card games. This was by no means always viewed as a positive. From the beginning, church and civic authorities inveighed against card games (fig. 2). At the very least, playing cards was condemned as an idle pastime, and at worst, when associated with gambling, it was perceived as an animator of avarice and a portal to poverty. These "picture books of the devil" were the instigators of moral corruption. Thus, cards were not only ephemeral but also morally suspect, not the stuff of great art.

The five decks of cards at the center of this discussion are not ordinary playing cards; in fact, it is highly unlikely that any of them were intended for play. They all were commissioned—some by nobility, others by patricians or wealthy merchants—and all were created by gifted artists or workshops. Most originated in the German-speaking lands, particularly in southern and southwestern Germany—Franconia and Swabia—or in the Upper Rhineland and Switzerland. Inventive and evocative, their imagery ranges from the romanticized to the coarse and even repugnant. They were created during the period from about 1430 to about 1540, and each deck reflects a differing worldview, slowly but inexorably shifting from nostalgic and idealized visions of a chivalric past to an unvarnished and biting assessment of early Renaissance society. Collectively, they chart the transition from late medieval to early modern Europe. During a tumultuous period of social, economic, and religious changes, the exceptional artists responsible for these decks transfigured cards perceived as morally pernicious ephemera into enduring works of art that reflect diverse but compelling views of a world in play.

Card games were introduced to Europe about the middle of the fourteenth century, probably from the Near East via Venice or from the Mamluk sultanate in Egypt, through southern Italy, Sicily, or even Spain.[1] Their arrival was greeted with a spate of civic and ecclesiastical documents that banned the playing of cards. The earliest of these was issued in Bern in 1367.[2] More followed the next year in Basel, Florence, Paris, Siena, and Vienna, and yet many more from

FIG. 1. Master Ingold, *Das Buch, das man nennt das Guldin Spil*, printed in Augsburg by Günther Zeiner, 1472, Von dem kartenspil. Woodcut and watercolor. Deutsches Spielkartenmuseum, Landesmuseum Württemberg, Leinfelden-Echterdingen. Inv. no. X 1992-70 II A

1377 to 1400.[3] Some scholars assert that card games were met with bans almost immediately upon their introduction, while others, more logically, argue that the bans were a delayed reaction to the pervasive entrenchment of card playing.[4]

A treatise written in 1377 by Johannes von Rheinfelden, a Dominican friar in Basel, used an allegorical reading of card playing to aid in the moral education of his audience, which suggests that cards were already so pervasive they had become part of the social fabric.[5] He also described the structures of different decks: one comprised fifty-two cards and four suits with a king, upper knave, under knave, and pip cards 10 to 1; another had five suits; and yet another six.[6] This seems to support an earlier introduction, as the development and dissemination of variant decks would have taken some time. The craftsmen who made the cards, however, went unrecorded until the very end of the century and the beginning of the next: 1392 in Frankfurt, 1402 in Ulm, 1414 in Nuremberg, and 1418 in Augsburg.[7] The method of manufacture remained unspecified until a mention in 1422 of a card maker in Nuremberg, who apparently made woodblock cards and was patronized by the patrician Tucher family.[8] This document corroborated the recurrent observation that in German-speaking lands, the development of playing cards was inextricably linked with that of copperplate engravings and, in particular, of woodblock prints. It is said that the printed image in Europe sprang out of the three Ps: paper, piety (in the form of printed religious images), and playing cards.[9] All three appeared more or less simultaneously toward the end of the fourteenth century, but precisely how they were interrelated is far from clear. The picture is obscured by the fact that no woodblock prints of any type survive from the 1370s up to about 1420 or 1430.

To judge from their apparent ubiquity, ordinary playing cards were designed for a mass market and printed on paper, making them much less expensive. Given that decks of cards had to be produced in very large numbers for very little money, some means of

FIG. 2. Anonymous Master, *Saint John of Capistrano Exhorts his Adherents to Burn Cards and Gaming Boards in the Cathedral Square of Bamberg*. German, Bamberg, ca. 1470–74. Oil on panel. Historisches Museum

FIG 3. Jacobus de Cessolis, *Schachzabelbuch*, 1479. Pen, ink, and watercolor, ca. 1470–75. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna. Cod. 3049, fol. 163v

mechanical production, whether woodblocks or stamps made of molded clay or other materials, had to have been employed. Cards were printed in sheets (fig. 49) and then cut apart; the individual cards were glued to several layers of paper to make a stiff pasteboard and then trimmed. The cards were probably relatively crude, with little artistic pretention but designed so that the figures and the suit symbols were easily recognizable and the value of pip cards readily determined (fig. 3; also fig. 1) This remains in the realm of speculation, however, as no ordinary playing cards from the early decades have survived.

THE STUTTGART PLAYING CARDS

Cards produced for the nobility or for rich patrician families such as the Tuchers of Nuremberg were undoubtedly of a distinctly higher caliber. The earliest preserved playing cards belong to a luxury deck known as *The Stuttgart Playing Cards* (*Das Stuttgarter Kartenspiel*), probably from about 1430. Exquisitely hand painted on a gold ground, each card is a work of art. The high quality of the painting and the remarkably good state of preservation indicate that the pack was likely commissioned as a collector's item rather than for play. The original commissioner is unknown, but these exceptionally fine and unusually large cards—7½ by 4¾ inches—soon found their way into the collections of the dukes of Bavaria. They are first mentioned in an inventory of the archducal *Kunstkammer* compiled in 1598: "A case in box form covered in black leather impressed with gilded decoration and likewise along the edge, lined with carmine and containing a large deck of cards painted in the old Franconian style on a gilded background with hounds, birds, stags and sparrow hawks instead of bells, leafs, hearts and acorns. The cards are a span long and a half span wide."[10] In 1653 the deck came into the possession of the dukes of Württemberg and remained with them by descent until 1927, when it entered the public collections and ultimately

FIG. 5. 5 of Falcons, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

FIG. 6. 3 of Ducks, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

FIG. 4. Banner (10) of Hounds, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*, see checklist 1

the Landesmuseum Württemberg, Stuttgart, where it is housed today.[11]

The suit signs of *The Stuttgart Playing Cards* are Falcons, Ducks, Hounds, and Stags, and each suit comprises thirteen cards, for a total of fifty-two. For Falcons and Ducks, the sequence is a mounted king, an upper knave, an under knave, a banner (10), and 9 through 1; for Hounds and Stags, an enthroned queen, an upper dame, an under dame, a banner (10, fig. 4), and 9 through 1.[12] This segregating of the sexes may seem odd to us now, but it appears in some of the earliest decks in northern Europe. In his description of playing cards written in 1377, Johannes von Rheinfelden noted a pack of fifty-two with just such a sequence.[13] The Latin text "De animalibus," a treatise on hunting by Albertus Magnus, was translated into German for the Elector of the Palatine Ludwig III in 1404 and again in 1440 for Count Ludwig I of Württemberg. Perhaps it was during this period, when hunting became an obsession with the nobility of Swabia and southwestern Germany, that suit symbols related to the hunt were introduced.[14]

Each suit here has associated colors signaled by the bicolor pennants displayed by the kings—red and green for Falcons, red and blue for Ducks—which are reprised in the colors of the costumes on the three face cards of each suit (figs. 10–14). The

queens have no pennants, so the banner cards indicate the dominant color for the costumes in their suits, though here the arrangement is less precise. The deep red for Hounds becomes a pale rose paired with green and the blue for Stags repeats in the costumes, although behind the Queen of Stags is a prominent red cloth of honor (figs. 15 and 16).

The largest of all the early playing cards, these are made of six layers of paper glued together to make pasteboard. Some of the paper has watermarks that have been identified with a paper mill in Ravensburg and can be dated between 1427 and 1431; this, along with the style, supports the generally accepted date of about 1430. The corners of these cards are rounded, and there is some wear, particularly on the gold ground. Because the wear is on the high relief areas of the cards' uneven surfaces, it evidently resulted from the abrasion caused by stacking one card on another over the centuries. There is no wear or accumulated grime concentrated along the lower edges, where cards are typically handled—a further indication that they were intended primarily for visual delectation.

The pasteboard was first coated with a white primer that was then smoothed and polished, a technique commonly used in panel painting.[15] The backs were all painted with red lead containing vermilion. The outlines of the figures and principal forms were etched into the ground with a stylus, with lesser details underdrawn in pen and ink. For the background of every card, a thin red bole was laid down,

FIG. 7. 4 of Hounds, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

FIG. 8. 5 of Stags, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

FIG. 9. 3 of Stags (detail), *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*. The painter chose not to follow the etched lines and repositioned the forelegs of the stag

over which gold leaf was applied and burnished, again as it would be in panel painting. The pigments were generally mixed with lead white. In some elements, like the feathers of the falcons, a thin black glaze was applied over white to yield shades of gray. Several different techniques of applying gold and silver were used to achieve varying optical effects. Finally, glazes of red lake were used over the gold to tone the feet and bills of the ducks as well as the perches and hoods of the falcons, while a green glaze was used on the heads of several ducks.

The imagery of the Stuttgart cards implies two different types of hunts. The kings and their courts preside over the falcons, which are trained to strike their prey (in this case, ducks), while the queens and their courts dominate the hounds, which were used to bring down large game (here stags). This seems a curious mismatch, as falconry was the one hunting sport in which ladies were allowed to participate. But as no hunt ever actually takes place, the point is moot.[16]

The falcons are mostly shown on their perches, some tethered, some hooded, and one in flight. The images freeze the raptors in varied postures, some calmly perched, others agitated, some with talons raised, others with wings partially outstretched, and several with lures in their talons or beaks (fig. 5). The ducks are more animated, shown grooming, drying

FIG. 10. King of Falcons, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

FIG. 11. Upper Knave of Falcons, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

FIG. 12. King of Ducks, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

their wings, sleeping, feeding, scratching—all very lifelike and suggesting observation of nature. It is uncertain what species is represented, although some have the characteristic brilliant green heads of mallard drakes (fig. 6). The hounds are all of the mastiff type, large and powerful animals used to bring down wounded or cornered prey. All are on leads, though these are all shown adrift in the air, unattached to a handler (fig. 7). Again, the animals indulge in every manner of activity—scratching, sniffing, sitting, lying, licking, and gnawing on bones (fig. 17). Some seem to be playing with each other, while others are in fights serious enough to draw blood. The stags are shown in varied positions, but their activities are far more limited than those of the hounds (fig. 8). More than in any other suit, the painter here disregarded the etched outlines, changing the positions of limbs and heads (fig. 9). The values of the pip cards, indicated by the number of repetitions of the suit symbols, are arranged somewhat systematically, but interest in naturalistic representation took precedence over legibility, and the higher-value pip cards are difficult to decipher quickly.

FIG. 13. Upper Knave of Ducks, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

FIG. 14. Under Knave of Ducks, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

The contrast between the pip cards and the face cards is striking. Whereas the suit symbols, whether hunter or prey, reflect a naturalism based on familiarity and a knowledge of the various types of hunts, the face cards have scant connection to any aspect of the hunt. The childlike figures with round, smooth faces project the insouciance of a world free from worry or strife. The violence of the hunt is eschewed. The King of Falcons is oblivious to the falcon on the ground below (fig. 10), and the Upper Knave of Falcons, who is turned out in the high fashion of the 1420s, has a falcon docilely perched on his forearm,

FIG. 15. Queen of Hounds, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

FIG. 16. Queen of Stags, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

without hood or tether, as though a mere accessory (fig. 11). The King of Ducks likewise seems unaware of the fowl in the streamlet below (fig. 12), and the Upper Knave of Ducks—despite his rough handling of the bird, like an excited child showing off his prize—does not seem to pose a mortal threat (fig. 13). The Under Knave of Ducks bends his head, as though in intimate communication with the bird at his feet (fig. 14). "Hound" is a misnomer for the companion of that suit's queen: a poodlelike lap dog that probably rarely saw the out-of-doors, never mind a hunt (fig. 15). The stag, no longer game, is reduced to a small household pet of the Queen of Stags (fig. 16). The queens remain comfortably indoors, whereas the rest of the court figures occupy shallow strips of pleasant greenery against a shimmering gold backdrop that provides a glittering shield against the world beyond.

The Stuttgart face and pip cards clearly were executed by different artists. In the figures, forms and volumes were created by building up painterly gradations of lights and darks. The suit symbols were developed with the fine point of a brush—tiny strokes of color indicating the soft underfeathers of the falcons and the textures and tonalities of the stags' furry coats. The softness and otherworldliness of the figures contrast with the cool realism of the

FIG. 17. 7 of Hounds, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

suit symbols. This is particularly evident in Hounds: play occasionally turns to vicious bloodletting, while meaty bones, perhaps from a recent kill, are savored (fig. 17). These differences and certain inconsistencies—such as the silver borders that appear around both queens but are lacking in all the other face cards—suggest the cards were produced in a workshop by several different hands.

As was typical in fifteenth-century workshops, model books were consulted. The taut leads from the necks of the hounds to the lead ring (fig. 7), for example, indicate that originally, there was a figure holding the lead, who has been excised from the model used by the Stuttgart workshop. The Under Dame of Stags—an elegant Pisanello-like figure in profile—points meaninglessly to the ground, while the object of her gesture lurks behind her (fig. 18), suggesting the reuse of an Italian model. The stance of the Upper Knave of Falcons (fig. 11) apparently shares a common model with the Under Knave of Coins in the Sola-Busca tarot set from Ferrara of about 1490 (fig. 19). In the latter, the knave points down at the coin while a falcon perches above. The Upper Knave of Falcons points down to where the coin once was, suggesting that the artist here simply substituted the falcon on the arm for the tarot card's coin on the ground.[17]

Basel, Constance, and Ulm, as well as the region of Lake Constance and the Upper Rhineland in general, have all been suggested as the locus of the workshop responsible for the Stuttgart cards. Some scholars have even pointed to individual masters such as Lukas Moser, master of *The Tiefenbronn Altarpiece* of 1432.[18] We are dealing not with a single artist, however, but rather a workshop with a number of contributing hands, some of greater ability than others. The Ducks and Hounds, for example, are appreciably more animated than the Falcons and Stags. The puppetlike face of the Upper Knave of Falcons (fig. 11), his splendid costume notwithstanding, has none of the verve and expressiveness of the Upper Knave of Ducks or the poignancy of the Under Knave of Ducks (figs. 13 and 14). The vaguely quizzical, even slightly vapid, expression of the Queen of Hounds contrasts with the finely delineated features of the contemplative Queen of Stags, who gazes out into the viewer's space (figs. 15 and 16).

Given that the watermarks on the 2 of Falcons and the 6 of Ducks have been identified with a paper mill in Ravensburg, it seems logical to place the workshop within the region in which this particular paper is known to have circulated—that is, in Swabia and the Upper Rhineland.[19] This would accord well with the Upper Rhenish attributions that predominate in

FIG. 18. Under Dame of Stags, *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*

FIG. 19. Attributed to Nicola di Maestro Antonio. *Sola-Busca Tarot*, Under Knave of Coins. Italian, Ferrara, ca. 1490. Engraving, painted in Venice, 5⅝ × 2⅞ in. (14.2 × 7.4 cm). Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

FIG. 20. Upper Rhenish artist. *The Little Garden of Paradise*, ca. 1410–20. Oil on oak panel, 10⅜ × 13⅛ in. (26.3 × 33.4 cm). Städelschen Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt. Inv. no. HM 54

the more recent literature.[20] In both tone and temperament, the face cards have much in common with the painting *Little Garden of Paradise*, created by an Upper Rhenish master in about 1410–20 (fig. 20),[21] including the childlike countenances, the otherworldliness of the paradisiacal setting, and the careful delineation of the flora and verdure. In *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*, the harsh reality of hunter versus hunted yields to a vision of consonance between humankind and the natural world. The youthful, elegant court figures evince the innocence and vitality of a privileged people untroubled by coarse quotidian concerns. Thus, in this deck, the hunt serves as metaphor for a world where man and beast cohabit in concord, where the cares of life evaporate—a blissful idyll with little basis in late medieval reality.

DETAIL OF FIG. 14

THE COURTLY HUNT CARDS

Another luxury set of painted playing cards—known as *The Courtly Hunt Cards* (*Das Hofjagdspiel*)—once belonged to Archduke Ferdinand II of Austria (brother of Emperor Maximilian II) and was kept in the *Kunstkammer* he created at Schloß Ambras, near Innsbruck, sometime after 1567. Their first mention

FIG. 21. Upper Knave of Hounds, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*, see checklist 2

appears in Ferdinand's posthumous inventory, drawn up on May 30, 1596: "Furthermore in a small wooden box, painted gray, a set of cards with hounds, lures, cranes, hawks and men riding on horses."[22] The cards, along with much else from the archduke's collections, were moved to Vienna and are now housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

The four suits are Falcons, Herons, Hounds, and Lures, and each suit comprises a king, queen, upper knave, and under knave—all on horseback—plus a banner (10) and 9 through 1.[23] This deck is unusual for German playing cards in having fifty-six rather than the more conventional forty-eight or fifty-two cards. In this regard, it resembles an Italian tarot pack, though minus its many trump cards. Measuring about 6¼ by 3⅞ inches each, the cards are smaller than those in the Stuttgart deck but still large by current-day standards. The kings and queens are all set against a gold ground, but the rest of the cards in each suit are dominated by a background color: Falcons, deep blue; Herons, lighter sky blue; Hounds, carnelian red; and Lures, vermilion. Particular colors are likewise associated with the costumes in the face cards in each suit: Falcons, pale crimson; Herons, yellow tones; Hounds, blue; and Lures, green tones. The backs of most, but not all, the cards are painted crimson.

FIG. 22. Queen of Falcons, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*

FIG. 23. Anonymous Master. Guillaume Tardif, *Art de fauconnerie et des chiens des chasse*, Antoine Vérard presents the book to the king on his way to the hunt (detail), French, Paris, 1492. Woodcut with color. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Vélin 1023, fol. a2r. In the upper right corner, a falcon attacks a heron while another returns to a man swinging a lure on the end of a leather strap

Like the Stuttgart cards, these are made of sheets of paper pasted together into stiff cardboard, but here the bottom and somewhat larger sheet was wrapped over the front to make borders, which were subsequently colored gold. In the face cards, the images were first drawn in pen and ink, then the green turf was sprinkled with flowers and the backgrounds were painted. A number of horses are highly finished, but others were left nearly or completely unfinished (figs. 21 and 22). The suit symbols of Herons and Hounds are drawn so expressively and with such control and economy of line that they appear to be finished drawings in their own right, but a light wash of blue over the necks and heads of the herons in the lower values indicates that they were intended to be painted (fig. 29). Why some cards were left incomplete is unknown. The unfinished hands and faces of the court figures may have been left for the master of the workshop himself, but, for whatever reasons, the project was abruptly ended before he completed them. A pen-and-ink drapery study on the unpainted back of the King of Falcons, which could not have been covered by the thin coat of crimson paint applied to the backs of other cards in the deck, most likely was added after the project had been abandoned, leaving the unfinished cards in the workshop inventory.[24]

FIG. 24. 6 of Falcons, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*

FIG. 25. 9 of Lures, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*

FIG. 26. 5 of Hounds, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*

FIG. 27. 9 of Hounds, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*

FIG. 28. Under Knave of Hounds, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*

Collectively, these symbols represent the progression of a particular type of hunt. The falcon strikes and kills the heron, the hound retrieves the heron, and the lures attract the falcon back to the falconer (fig. 23). The face cards represent the various members of the hunting party. The ordering of the pip cards for Falcons and Lures is relatively systematic, as it is in the Stuttgart cards. Because the falcons are all hooded, they are relatively static—one has wings outstretched, two, surprisingly, are in flight, but all the others are in repose, with a few perched on a horizontal stick but most freestanding against the blue background (fig. 24). The inanimate lures were easily arranged in legible order (fig. 25). Lures were made of two or more pairs of duck wings tied together and attached to a cord about three feet long. The lure was swung around in the air, sometimes with a piece of meat attached, to attract the falcon back to its keeper. The lures were never drawn in for the King or Queen of Lures, nor were the cords for the lures of the upper and under knaves.

In Herons and Hounds, the suit symbols are animals engaged in natural movement and activity. The Hounds—all set on a narrow foreground strip of greenery punctuated with leaves, blossoms, and blades of grass, against a carnelian background—cavort together in such a variety of positions and activities that it makes a quick count difficult. In the 5 of Hounds, four of the dogs are in full profile; behind the first two, the head of another pops up to face the viewer (fig. 26). In the 7 of Hounds, one dog in the background sniffs another; in the foreground, five more tumble in play. In the 8 of Hounds, a large bitch watches over five tiny puppies as two larger pups (similar to the one in the under knave) caper in the right foreground. In the 9 of Hounds, a pack circles its object of interest, which upon closer scrutiny proves to be a cat with arched back and raised hackles (fig. 27). In the Under Knave of Hounds, a young dog (whose lead appears to be tangled around the horse's foreleg) looks up expectantly at his master, who has a stick in his upraised hand, his intentions unclear (fig. 28). The figures in the three highest face cards each hold a pup in one hand (fig. 21).

In Herons, the water birds are placed in fully developed landscapes, some wading in rivers, others moving around on open greenswards. In some, a riverbank, a row of trees, or reeds separate the foreground from the sky, which is hazy pale blue near the horizon and progressively deeper blue as it rises. In the 5 of Herons, the birds wade and forage in a river that meanders deep into the distance, where jagged rocky peaks rise precipitously (fig. 29). In the 9 of Herons, the birds posture on an open green field,

FIG. 29. 5 of Herons, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*

FIG. 30. 9 of Herons, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*

FIG. 31. Under Knave of Herons, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*

FIG. 32. Under Knave of Falcons, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*

FIG. 33. Konrad Witz (early 15th century–ca. 1446). The Saint Peter Altarpiece, *Adoration of the Magi* (inner wing). Basel, 1444. Oil and tempera on fir, 52 × 60⅝ in. (132 × 154 cm). Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva. Inv. no. 1843-11

with a hedgerow and trees marking off a farther field; in the distance rise foothills, the near one blanketed with yellow flowers that may be rapeseed (fig. 30). Below the Under Knave of Herons—it is uncertain if he is mounting or dismounting his horse—lies a dead heron, presumably the victim of a falcon (fig. 31).

The cards, which date to about 1440–45, were, in an early study, attributed to the workshop of the Basel artist Konrad Witz, who was born in Rottweil in southern Germany and became a member of the painters' guild in Basel in 1434.[25] This widely accepted attribution is in large measure based on similarities with Witz's figural style. Notable in the face cards are the rather awkward open stances of both horses and men—a hallmark of Witz's paintings. Compare, for example, the Under Knave of Falcons (fig. 32) with the Magus Caspar at left in the Adoration scene of his Saint Peter Altarpiece at the Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva—the last major work of his career (fig. 33). The frame is signed "This work was painted by master Conrad Witz of Basel 1444."[26] With his full beard and upturned hat, the King of Hounds has much in common with King David in a panel in Basel from Witz's *Mirror of Salvation Altarpiece* of about 1435 (figs. 34 and 35); similarities also link the King of Herons with Melchizedek from the

FIG. 34. King of Hounds, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*

FIG. 35. Konrad Witz (early 15th century–ca. 1446). The Mirror of Salvation Altarpiece, *Abishai before David*. Basel, ca. 1435. Oil and tempera on panel, 40 × 31⅞ in. (101.5 × 81 cm). Kunstmuseum, Basel. Inv. no. 645

FIG. 36. Konrad Witz (early 15th century–ca. 1446). The Saint Peter Altarpiece, *The Miraculous Draft of Fish* (outer wing). Basel, 1444. Oil and tempera on fir, 52 × 60⅝ in. (132 × 154 cm). Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva. Inv. no. 1843-11

same altarpiece.[27] Additionally, the artist displays an uncanny ability to conjure the surface effects and play of light that abound in Witz's paintings. Note, for example, the shimmering finish of the King of Heron's silky garments, which resembles that of the middle Magus's long robe in the Adoration panel.

Whereas Witz tended to place his figures in rather shallow, stagelike settings, the opposite is true of his depictions of open space. The most notable example is *The Miraculous Draft of Fish*, the central panel of The Saint Peter Altarpiece. The painting relocates the biblical scene from the Sea of Galilee to Lake Geneva (Lac Léman) (fig. 36). The view is from the northwest side of the lake, with the eastern end of the island at the entrance to the Rhône at the right edge, looking across to open rolling fields, rows of trees, and foothills (from left to right: the gently rising Voirons, the pointed Môle, and the rocky Petit-Salève); snow-capped peaks of the Alps, including Mont Blanc, can be glimpsed in the far distance. Certainly Witz's most renowned painting, it can be considered the first landscape portrait in Northern painting, with the landscape dominating the entire picture plane.

The extreme difference in scale notwithstanding, the extended landscapes in the Heron pip cards, beautifully constructed with recessive perspective and atmospheric rendering of the sky, are remarkably

FIG. 37. 1 of Herons, *The Courtly Hunt Cards*

FIG. 38. Master of the Playing Cards (active ca. 1425–50). Under Knave of Flowers. German, Upper Rhineland, ca. 1435–40. Engraving (suit sign printed from a separate plate), approx. 5⅛ × 3½ in. (13 x 9 cm). Kupferstichkabinett der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen, Dresden

akin to that of the Geneva panel. The expansive landscape in the 9 of Herons (fig. 30) shares the same open fields separated by rows of shrubs and trees, with diminishing scale drawing the eye to the far background and with gradations of green from very dark to pale and patches of yellow. The sensitive play of light brings atmospheric intensity to the exceptional landscape of the 5 of Herons (fig. 29), in which the limpid blue water in the foreground contrasts with the darker reflections of the rocky outcroppings on the placid surfaces of the broad river as it meanders into the distance, merging with the hazy pale sky at the horizon.[28] It is this expansive and luminous vision of the natural world, infused with a clarion light and harmonious beauty, that distinguishes the pip cards of Herons, a highlight of this exceptional deck (fig. 37).

FIG. 39. Queen of Flowers, *Playing Cards by the Master of the Playing Cards*, see checklist 3

ENGRAVED CARDS

About 1435–40, more or less contemporary with *The Courtly Hunt Cards*, the earliest known set of engraved cards—a considerably less costly alternative to hand-painted decks—was produced by an anonymous Upper Rhenish artist known as the Master of the Playing Cards. The earliest known intaglio prints, they were printed from engraved copper plates. The

FIG. 40. Master of the Playing Cards (active ca. 1425–50). 5 of Beasts (L. 91). German, Upper Rhineland, ca. 1435–40. Engraving (suit signs printed from separate plates), approx. 5⅜ × 3⅝ in. (13.8 × 9.2 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (*Inventaire*, 1982, no. 36). Inv. no. Kh 25 rés., in-4°

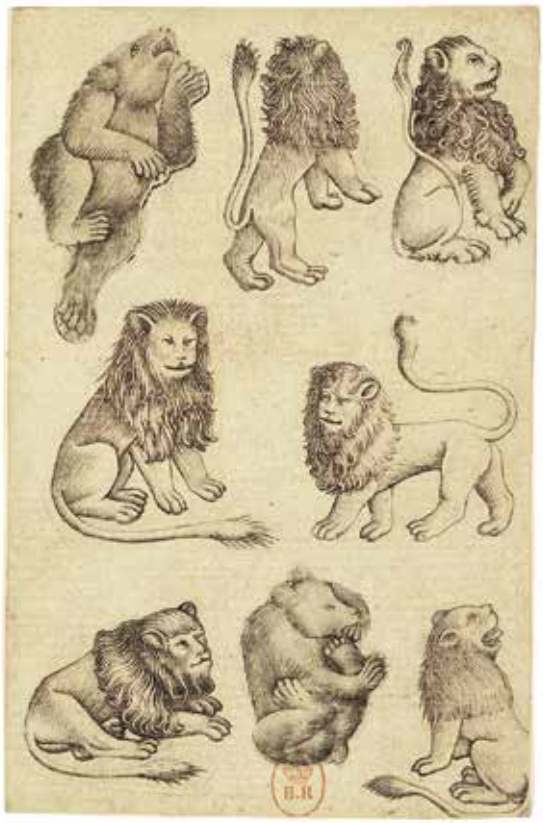

FIG. 41. Master of the Playing Cards (active ca. 1425–50). 8 of Beasts. German, Upper Rhineland, ca. 1435–40. Engraving (suit signs printed from separate plates), approx. 5⅜ × 3⅝ in. (13.8 × 9.2 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. (*Inventaire*, 1982, no. 39). Inv. no. Kh 25 rés., in-4°

figures are brilliantly modeled, with fine parallel lines creating a masterful play of light and shadow as well as sculptural volumes. The artist's sure control of both the burin and the stylus suggests he had traditional training as a goldsmith, whereas his painterly style with a skilled command of line and tonality may well be indicative of experience in a painter's workshop. Scholars have often noted distinct affinities with Konrad Witz, both in the card designer's plastic treatment of figures and in his close observation of nature.[29] The Under Knave of Falcons (fig. 32), which shares the formal similarities with Witz noted above, is in turn close in stance to the Under Knave of Flowers by the Master of the Playing Cards (fig. 38). His deck comprises five suits, some of which (like those in the two hand-painted decks) are creatures of the hunt—Stags, Birds, and Beasts of Prey—to which were added Wild Men and Flowers (fig. 39). The Beasts of Prey were subdivided into Bears and Lions, and the Flowers into Roses, Cyclamen, and Pinks. Each of these eight suit symbols (there may have been more originally, but if so they are now lost) was engraved on a separate plate only slightly larger than the image. The pip cards, with values indicated by the number of repetitions of the suit sign, vary in both the choice and the placement of the symbols (figs. 40 and 41). The face

FIG. 42. Master of the Playing Cards (active ca. 1425–50). *Knave Reading Letter*. German, Upper Rhineland, ca. 1435–40. Engraving, approx. 5⅜ × 3⅝ in. (13.8 × 9.2 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1996.2

FIG. 43. Master of the Playing Cards (active ca. 1425–50). Under Knave of Flowers. German, Upper Rhineland, ca. 1435–40. Engraving (suit sign printed from a separate plate), mounted on cardboard and colored, approx. 5⅜ × 3⅝ in. (13.8 × 9.2 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. (*Inventaire*, 1982, no. 5). Inv. no. Kh 25 rés., in-4°

FIG. 44. King of Helmets, *The Small Playing Cards of Master ES*, see checklist 4

FIG. 45. 6 of Birds, *The Large Playing Cards of Master ES*, see checklist 5

FIG. 46. Master PW, Under Knave of Pinks, see checklist 6

FIG. 47. Master PW, Upper Knave of Parrots

cards were produced with a suitless image for each of the four ranks (king, queen, upper knave, and under knave), to which a suit symbol could be added (fig. 42). Theoretically, the same suitless face card could be used for all five suits, which eliminated the need for a separate plate for each figure, but the Master of the Playing Cards also created an individual face card for each suit, thus numerous combinations were possible in different decks. Of the seventy some impressions known, only one actually mounted as a card and hand-colored has survived (fig. 43). Whether these exceptional engravings were widely made into playing cards, as the flexible printing system suggests, remains a matter of speculation.

Another Upper Rhenish engraver who followed in the wake of the Master of the Playing Cards is known as the Master ES, after the monogram with which he signed many of his works. In the early 1460s, he produced two sets of engraved playing cards, *The Small Playing Cards* and *The Large Playing Cards* (the former measuring approximately 3¾ by 2½ inches; the latter, 5⅛ by 3½ inches). As in *The Courtly Hunt Cards*, each suit of the small deck has four face cards: King, Queen, Upper Knave, and Under Knave,; the pip cards run from 9 through 1, fifty-two in all. The suits are Animals, Helmets (fig. 44), Shields, and Flowers. The large deck utilizes the same face cards, all mounted on

DETAIL OF FIG. 39

FIG. 48. Upper Rhenish artist. *The Liechtenstein Playing Cards.* Upper and Under Knaves of Swords, Batons, Cups, and Coins. German, Upper Rhineland, ca. 1440–50. Woodcut, 8½ × 5½ in. (21.6 × 14 cm). Musée du Louvre, Réserve Edmond de Rothschild, Paris. Inv. no. 3806

FIG. 49. Upper Rhenish Master. *Maihingen Sheet*. Upper Knaves of Bears, Lions, and Hounds. German, Upper Rhineland, ca. 1450. Woodcut, 8¼ × 12⅛ in. (21 × 30.7 cm). Museo Fournier de Naipes, Vitoria, Spain

horseback, but the pip cards run from 9 through 2, for a total of forty-eight cards. The suits are Men, Hounds, Birds (fig. 45), and Shields. Both decks were copied within a decade by the Netherlandish engraver Israhel van Meckenem. Around 1500, a Cologne engraver known only as the Master PW created a pack of round cards with the suits of Pinks, Columbines, Roses, Parrots, and Hares, with each suit comprising a King, Queen, Upper Knave, Under Knave, and pip cards from 9 through 1, for a total of seventy-two cards (figs. 46 and 47). These small (about 2¾ inches in diameter) and finely engraved cards were published with a title and a colophon suggesting that they were intended as a series of fine prints to be admired rather than as playing cards.[30]

WOODBLOCK CARDS

Cards produced from woodblocks were by far the most common. Simple in both design and production, the decks were printed on large woodblocks, typically two blocks with twenty-four cards each, then cut from the printed sheet into individual cards. There were, of course, many variations. Most were not colored, but those that were usually were limited to two colors, applied with the aid of stencils. The earliest of the extremely rare surviving woodblock cards are two uncut partial sheets, known as *The Liechtenstein Playing Cards* (fig. 48); they are generally dated about 1440–50. Thought to have originated in Swabia or the Upper Rhineland, the cards nonetheless employ standard Italian suits—Cups, Swords, Batons (which here look more like polo mallets), and Coins—to which a fifth suit, Shields, has been added. The use of Italian suits, in whole or part, north of the Alps was not uncommon. One sheet has the kings of all five suits and the Upper and Under Knaves of Shields; the other has both knaves of the remaining four suits. The Under Knave of Batons is, in fact, a naked female, the first known nude to appear in playing cards.

Another early woodblock survivor is the partial *Maihingen Sheet*, with three cards: the Upper Knaves of Bears, Lions, and Hounds (fig. 49). Produced in the Upper Rhineland about 1450, these cards were printed from a woodblock of significantly higher quality and stylistically recall the figures engraved by the Master of the Playing Cards (fig. 50). Slightly later, dating to about 1460–65, are nine cards found behind paneling in a room in the village of Fliess, near Landeck, in the Oberinntal region of the Tirol (fig. 51). Because woodblocks were used continuously until they were worn or damaged beyond repair, and

FIG. 50. Master of the Playing Cards (active ca. 1425–50). Under Knave of Stags. German, Upper Rhineland, ca. 1435–40. Engraving (suit sign printed from a separate plate), approx. 5⅜ × 3⅝ in. (13.8 × 9.2 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Inv. no. Kh 25 rés., in-4°

FIG. 51. Unknown artist. Landeck King of Leafs. South German or Austrian, Oberinntal, ca. 1460–65. Woodcut with stenciled coloring. Museum Schloss Landeck

FIG. 52. Upper Knave of Acorns. *Basel Playing Cards,* see checklist 7

FIG. 53. Under Knave of Flowers. *Basel Playing Cards*

because they were widely reproduced and replicated, *The Landeck Cards* may well reflect earlier designs. The costumes of the knaves in two colored woodcut cards attributed to Basel, about 1480–1520, suggest the designs may date as early as the middle of the fifteenth century (figs. 52 and 53).

THE COURTLY HOUSEHOLD CARDS

In the context of these early woodblock cards, a second luxury deck from the extensive collections of the Archduke Ferdinand at Schloß Ambras is all the more remarkable. These cards also appear in the archduke's posthumous inventory of 1596: "in a gray wooden box, therein a set of playing cards, painted with a number of figures and all officials, such as belong to a princely court, thereto inscribed."[31] Based on this description, the set is called *Das Hofämterspiel* or, loosely translated, *The Courtly Household Cards*. The deck is structured according to the hierarchy of officials and functionaries in a late medieval princely court, from those of the highest rank down to the lowest (see chart, p. 127). The deck comprises four suits: heraldic shields blazoned with the arms of the kingdoms of Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, and France. Each suit is led by a king and a queen (figs. 54 and 55), identifiable by their crowns and thrones, followed by a master of the household (10) (fig. 56) and a marshal (9) (fig. 57), with a fool (1) at the bottom—male in Germany (fig. 58) and Bohemia, female in Hungary and France (fig. 59). A young lady, or lady-in-waiting (6), appears in all four suits (figs. 72 and 78). The rest of the pip cards (8, 7, 5, 4, 3, and 2) are all court functionaries or purveyors of descending ranks and are different in every suit—except the 4 of Bohemia and the 4 of Hungary, which are both mounted trumpeters (fig. 80)—for a total of twenty-three subordinates. These range from a medical doctor and a cupbearer (figs. 60 and 61), to a falconer and a cook (figs. 62 and 63), to a court tailor and a fishmonger (figs. 64 and 65), to a barber and a potter (figs. 66 and 67). The cards, which constitute a complete deck of forty-eight, were printed with woodblocks, mounted on pasteboard, then colored with watercolor and opaque paint and enhanced with tooled gold and silver. Inscriptions were added in pen and ink, and the backs are painted black. Each card measures approximately 5½ by $3^{15}/_{16}$ inches. Largely on a stylistic basis, they are usually attributed to the region of the Upper Rhineland in southwestern Germany and date to about 1450.

The king and queen are, of course, at the top of the hierarchy (figs. 54 and 55). Just below them in

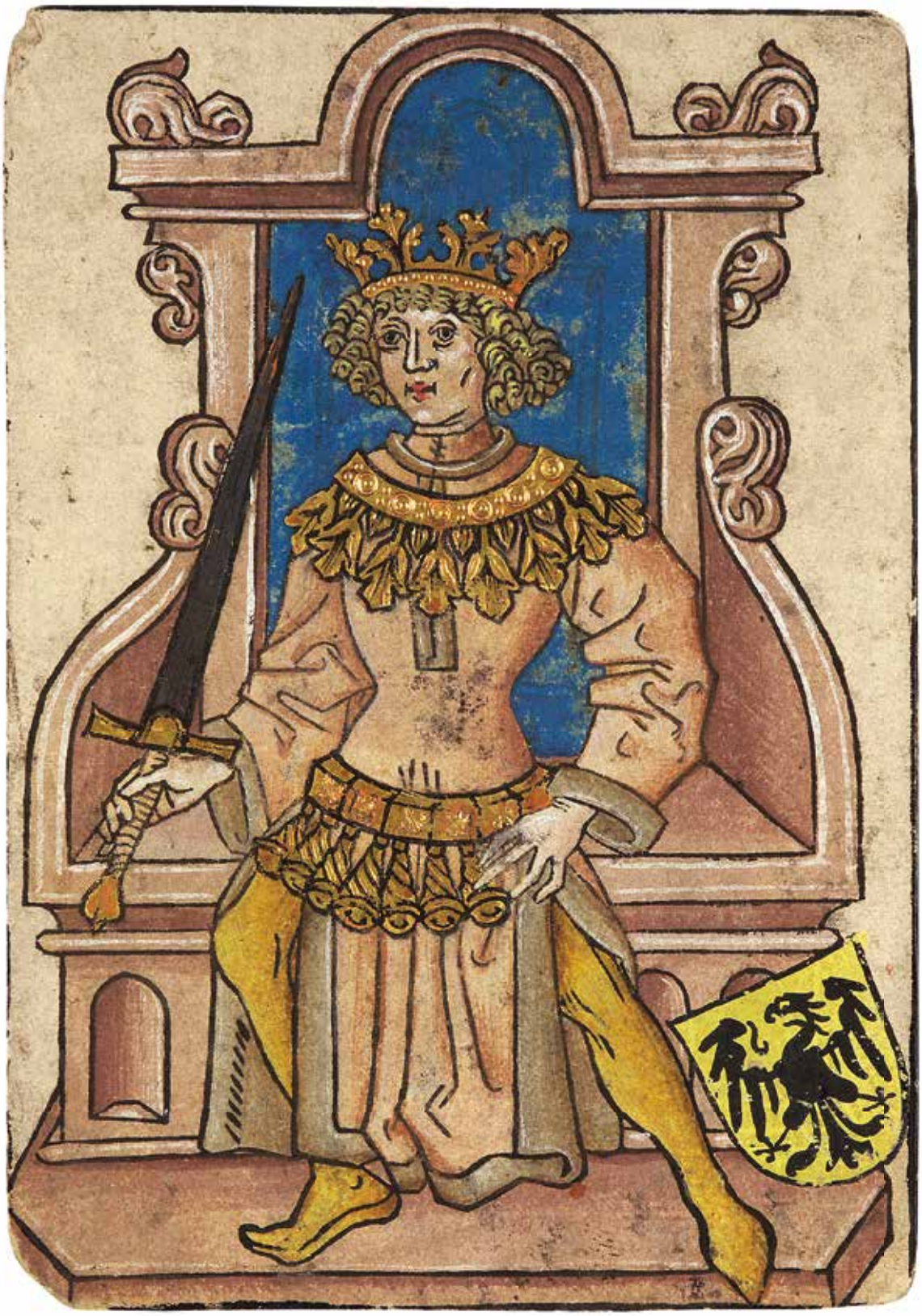

FIG. 54. King of Germany, *The Courtly Household Cards*, see checklist 8

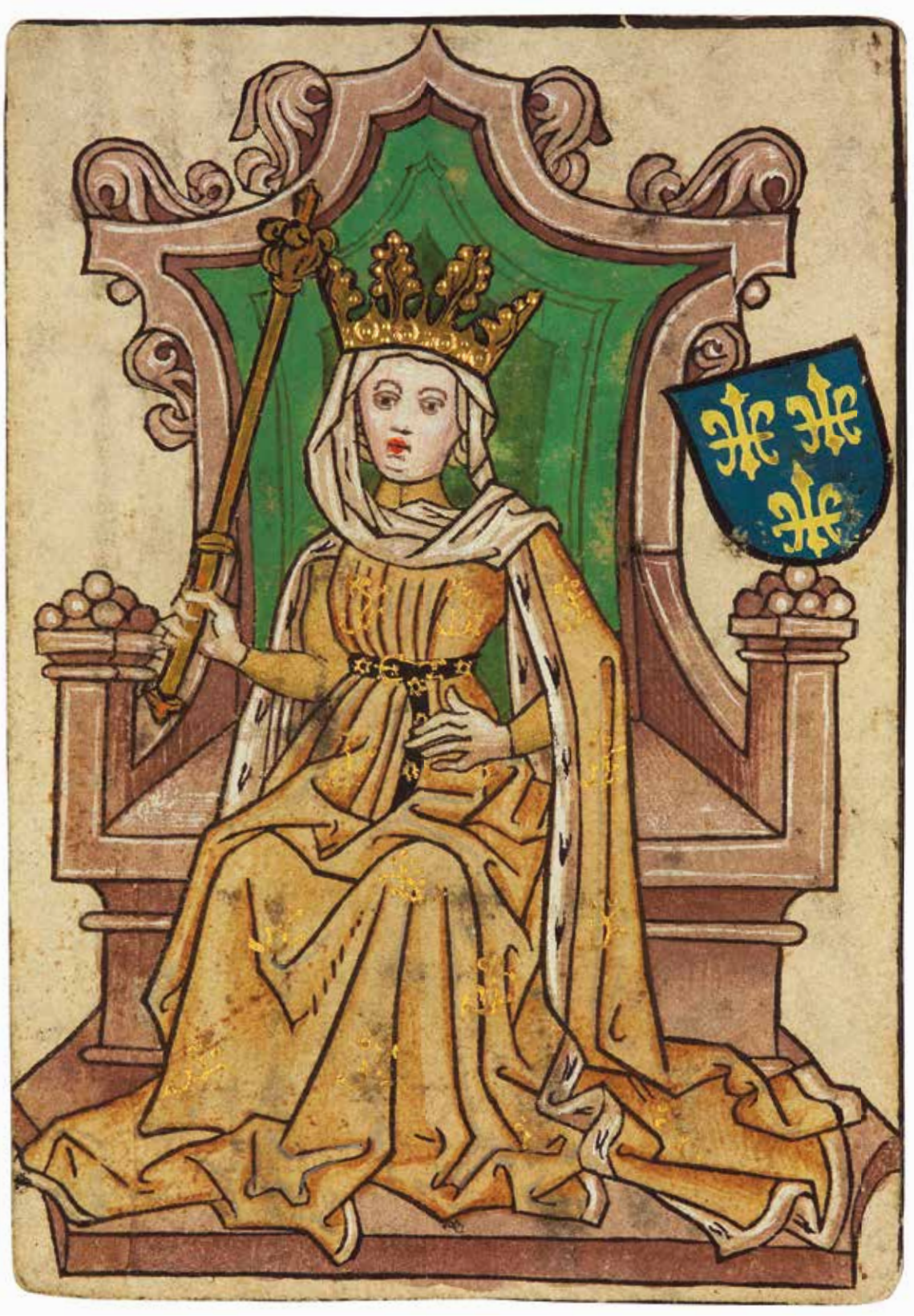

FIG. 55. Queen of France, *The Courtly Household Cards*


Hofmeister

FIG. 56. 10 of Germany: Master of the Household, *The Courtly Household Cards*

all four suits is the master of the household (fig. 56), who was the most powerful man after the king and held overall responsibility for all the functions and activities of the household and its attendant lands. That position was established only in the later Middle Ages, but other titles such as marshal, steward, chamberlain, and cupbearer can be traced back to early medieval times. The marshal, the second most powerful official, was originally charged with all duties and activities involving horses, particularly making travel arrangements for the king and his entourage (figs. 57 and 68). In courts that housed armies, a distinction was made between the person in charge of military activity—the field marshal—and the person in charge of the household: the court marshal. Managing the stables fell to the *Marstaler*—the stable man or groom. The chamberlain (fig. 69) was responsible for all the household goods and possessions, including accommodations and food supplies. He also served as the household treasurer. The steward, cupbearer (fig. 61), and master chef were of equal status and looked after the vineyards and estates, cellars, and kitchens, but eventually the steward devolved to an honorary position, with his duties falling to lower functionaries such as the footman and the cook (fig. 63). The court marshal, steward, and cupbearer were actually redundant in *The*

FIG. 57. 9 of Germany: Marshal, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 58. 1 of Germany: Fool, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 59. 1 of France: Fool, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 60. 8 of Bohemia: Doctor, *The Courtly Household Cards*

Courtly Household Cards, since by the middle of the fifteenth century, their functions would have been handled by the master of the household, who also was responsible for the education of the princes. The chamberlain (fig. 69) likewise yielded all his responsibilities to the master of the household—except financial matters, over which he took greater control and responsibility.[32]

The chancellery, the office of the court secretary or notary, was charged with all written communications and record keeping. Traditionally, the position of chancellor (fig. 70) had been filled by a high cleric because of his literacy, though by the mid-1400s, the role was largely advisory or honorary. Because the clerics—or the chaplains (fig. 71), who read the Mass and led services in the chapel, were attached to the chancellery in the early Middle Ages, they enjoyed the same rank as the chancellor in *The Courtly Household Cards*. And because of his literacy, the physician also had equal rank. Ladies-in-waiting were an integral part of a queen's household staff and played a major role in organizing court social activities and entertainments, perhaps explaining why most here have musical instruments (figs. 72 and 78). The footman, falconer, crossbowman (fig. 77), cook (fig. 63), trumpeter (fig. 80), groom, knight (fig. 73), herald (fig. 74), messenger (fig. 75), hunter, and fool (figs. 58


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FIG. 61. 7 of France: Cupbearer, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 62. 5 of Bohemia: Falconer, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 63. 5 of France: Cook, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 64. 3 of France: Tailor, *The Courtly Household Cards*


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FIG. 65. 3 of Hungary: Fishmonger, *The Courtly Household Cards*

and 59) were all court positions. The fool enjoyed privileged status at court; he entertained but also commented or criticized in ways no one else would dare. Whoever held the position was, as Shakespeare put it, "wise enough to play the fool."[33] The fishmonger (fig. 65), tailor (fig. 64), potter (figs. 67a and 67b), and baker, on the other hand, were merely regular purveyors of goods and services. One trade in which women were well represented in the later Middle Ages was pottery making, a fact acknowledged in *The Courtly Household Cards* by the representation of the potter in the 2 of Bohemia as a woman (fig. 67a).[34]

There is a historical basis for the four suits of *The Courtly Household Cards*. With the death of Louis the Great of Hungary in 1382, his daughter Marie inherited the kingdom and married Sigismund of Luxembourg (son of Charles IV), who ruled as king of Hungary from 1387 to 1437.[35] Sigismund became king of Germany in 1410 and king of Bohemia in 1419. Finally, in 1433, he was crowned Holy Roman Emperor and the three kingdoms were subsumed into the empire. Sigismund introduced the double-headed eagle as the imperial arms (*imperium romanum*), while the single-headed eagle, used as Germany's suit symbol in *The Courtly Household Cards*, remained the heraldic device for the kingdom of Germany (*regnum teutonicum*). Sigismund's successor, Albrecht V of

FIG. 66. 4 of Germany: Barber, *The Courtly Household Cards*


Hefnerin
11

FIG. 67A. 2 of Bohemia: Potter, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 67B. Jug. German,Siegburg, late 14th–early 15th century. Stoneware, height: 10⅜ in. (26.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Robert A. Ellison Jr. Collection, Gift of Robert A. Ellison Jr., 2014 (2014.728)

FIG. 68. 9 of France: Marshal, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 69. 7 of Bohemia: Chamberlain, *The Courtly Household Cards*

Austria, maintained the bonds between the three kingdoms but died suddenly, leaving his posthumously born son, Ladislas, as heir. A regent ruled until 1452, when Ladislas was recognized as duke of Austria and king of Bohemia and Hungary; his subsequent engagement to Madeleine of France, daughter of Charles VII, tightened the connections with France. His cousin, however, was crowned king of Germany and, in the same year as Ladislas's accession, became Emperor Frederick III. Thus, by the time of Ladislas's death in 1457, all four kingdoms formed a loose constellation. To a degree, then, the heraldic suits in *The Courtly Household Cards* reflect the political and dynastic relationships in Central Europe in the middle of the fifteenth century.[36] One theory holds that the cards were commissioned to honor Ladislas, which is unproven but does account for the choice of heraldry.[37]

Beyond their historical interest, *The Courtly Household Cards* are a unique compendium of secular woodblock prints of a quality unsurpassed at this early date. The articulated lines, cut to a remarkable thinness with assured fluidity, resemble those of pen and ink. This is most pronounced in the detailing of the highly individualized faces, the contouring of the outlines, and the hook-shaped folds in the drapery. The coloring of the figures and of their surrounds—

FIG. 72. 6 of France: Lady-in-Waiting, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 70. 8 of Hungary: Chancellor, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 71. 8 of Germany: Chaplain, *The Courtly Household Cards*


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VI


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FIG. 73. 3 of Germany: Knight, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 74. 3 of Bohemia: Herald, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 75. 2 of Germany: Messenger, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 76. 5 of Hungary: Crossbowman, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 77. Anonymous artist. Crossbowman. German, ca. 1430. Ink and wash, 5⅛ × 4 in. (13 × 10.3 cm). Erlangen. Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg. Inv. no. 1 A 29

a rarity in surviving early woodblock prints—is executed with a painterly refinement associated more with manuscript painting than with printmaking, as is most evident in the tonal gradations and the highlighting that defines sculptural volumes. Great care is given to the detailing of costumes, fabrics, and appurtenances, while decorative elements are richly enhanced with applied gold and silver, frequently embellished with punchwork that scatters reflected light.

Following standard practice for the period, the workshop that produced *The Courtly Household Cards* relied heavily on model books, which would have been compiled over a long period. Thus, popular motifs and images were repeatedly reproduced, often over decades. In the 5 of Hungary (fig. 76), for example, the eye-catching motif of the crossbowman aiming his bolt directly at the viewer can be traced back at least two decades earlier (fig. 77). It also reappears in the background of an engraving of about

FIG. 78. 6 of Bohemia: Lady-in-Waiting, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 79. Burgundian-Netherlandish artist. *Lady with Portative Organ.* South Netherlands, ca. 1420–30. Pen and ink, 6¾ × 7 in. (17 × 17.9 cm). Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins, Paris. Inv. no. 20-676

1450 by the Master of the Death of the Virgin and again in the engraving *Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl* made a decade later by the Master ES. The lavishly costumed Lady-in-Waiting of Bohemia (fig. 78) appears to rely on models originating both in the Upper Rhineland and in the Burgundian Netherlands (fig. 79).[38] The trumpeter in the 4 of Hungary (fig. 80) finds an analogue in the engraving by the Master of the Death of the Virgin (fig. 81), and it is repeated later in a pen, ink, and watercolor drawing from the Wolfegg *Medieval Housebook*, illustrated by the Master of the Housebook in about 1470–90 (fig. 82). The pair of hounds in the 2 of France (fig. 83) will look familiar, for they clearly share a model with the lower pair of dogs in the 4 of Hounds in the Stuttgart cards discussed above (fig. 7). Their shared model, which may well have been Italian, was likely also the source for a very similar pair of hounds in the Zintilomo (Gentleman) V card from the so-called *Mantegna Tarot* cards of 1465 (fig. 91).[39] The master of the household in the 10 of France (fig. 84) and the King of Hounds in *The Courtly Hunt Cards* (fig. 34) likewise derive from a common model, suggesting that playing-card workshops relied on model books compiled from shared or similar sources.

The reliance on model books makes pinpointing where *The Courtly Household Cards* were made all the

FIG. 80. 4 of Hungary: Trumpeter, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 81. Master of the Death of the Virgin (active 1440–50). *Battle Scene* (detail). South German, ca. 1450. Engraving, 11⅜ × 16¼ in. (28.9 × 41.4 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris, Réserve Edmond de Rothschild. 78 LR/ Recto

FIG. 82. Master of the Housebook. *The Medieval Housebook* (detail of trumpeting horseman from *An Army on the Move*). German, Middle Rhineland, ca. 1470–90. Ink, colored washes, gold, and silver on vellum. Schloß Wolfegg, Fürstlich zu Waldburg-Wolfegg'sche Kunstsammlungen, fol. 52r1

more difficult, as much of their visual imagery was in wide circulation. Attribution is further complicated by the scarcity of comparative woodblock images from about 1450. Some correspondences between *The Courtly Household Cards* and engravings by the Master ES have long been noted—the fool in 1 of Bohemia and the similar figure in the letter *M* in the grotesque alphabet by the Master ES, for example (figs. 85 and 86). That alphabet, which dates a decade or more after the *Courtly Household* deck, is itself dependent on drawings of intertwined men and animals in the model book by Giovannino de Grassi (figs. 87 and 88). The possible connection to the Master ES and the fact that heraldic shields were used as suit signs in other card decks from the Upper Rhineland led to linking *The Courtly Household Cards* to this region of Germany.[40] Other scholars have suggested that the cards may have been produced in Austria—perhaps Vienna, based on particular details rather than strong overall stylistic similarities.[41]

The Courtly Household Cards are unique survivors, but written sources indicate the structure of the deck was not uncommon. Johannes von Rheinfelden described a deck in which a king and a marshal, along with a queen and her lady servant (perhaps the equivalent of a lady-in-waiting), are at the top of each suit. In his series of sermons called *Das Guldin Spil* (The

FIG. 83. 2 of France: Hunter, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 84. 10 of France: Master of the Household, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 85. 1 of Bohemia: Fool, *The Courtly Household Cards*

FIG. 86. Master ES. *Letter M,* ca. 1465. Engraving, 5½ × 7½ in. (14 × 19 cm). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin. Inv. no. 359-1

FIG. 87. Master ES. *Letter K,* ca. 1465. Engraving, 5⅝ × 4⅜ in. (14.4 × 11 cm). Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich. Inv. no.10894

golden game), written in 1432,[42] Master Ingold, a Dominican monk from Strasbourg, described a deck of cards based on a social order that seems even more akin to that of *The Courtly Household Cards.* The highest cards in this deck are kings, each with his coat of arms, followed by queens and ladies-in-waiting. The suit symbols differed, but as in *The Courtly Household Cards,* the pip cards are individuals of varying social ranks. These cards could not trump the face cards, but they could trump one another in a topsy-turvy order. Thus, the moneylender trumps the nobleman, the priest the moneylender, the bawd the priest, the pimp the bawd, the innkeeper the pimp, the wine merchant the innkeeper, and so on.[43] Such decks of cards based on social strata may well have been common for German playing cards before suit symbols related to the hunt were adopted.[44]

FIG. 88. Giovannino de Grassi. Model Book, *Letter K.* Italian, Milan, ca. 1390–95. Ink and colored washes on vellum. Biblioteca Civica, Bergamo. Ms. VII. 14, fol. 29v

FIG. 89. 5 of Cups, *The Visconti-Sforza Tarot*, see checklist 10

FIG. 90. Pope, *The Visconti-Sforza Tarot*

FIG. 91. Anonymous artist. The so-called *Mantegna Tarot*, *Zintilomo V.* North Italian, Ferrara, ca. 1465. Engraving, 7⅛ × 4 in. (18 × 10.2 cm). Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna. Inv. no. 1938/833

TAROT CARDS

If ranks of *The Courtly Household Cards* were trump cards, conforming to Ingold's description, they are then related to the tarot decks that were developing at more or less the same time in northern Italy.[45] From the beginning, the suit symbols of Italian cards were Cups, Swords, Batons, and Coins, and they remain so to this day. The pip cards were organized like those in *The Courtly Hunt Cards*, with the repetition of the symbol indicating the value (fig. 89). In tarot cards, however, twenty-one trump cards, or *tarocchi*, were added, and these were figural, as in the *Courtly Household* deck, with the fool at the bottom leading up to the emperor and pope at the top (fig. 90). In one set, the so-called *Mantegna Tarot*, the cards were similarly organized, with the addition of a roman numeral identifying the value and a title identifying the figure (fig. 91). A number of correspondences suggest a close interrelationship between early Italian and German cards. As noted above, *The Liechtenstein Cards* employ the four Italian suits, to which was added a fifth suit—Shields, with the arms of the kingdom of Germany. We have already seen that the pair of hounds in the 4 of Hounds in the Stuttgart pack is based on the same model as the pair in the Mantegna deck (figs. 7 and 91). The Under Knave of Stags in the engraved set by the Master of the Playing Cards (fig. 50) shares the stance, costume, and hand gesture of the Knave of Coins in *The*

FIG. 92. Queen of Swords, *The Visconti-Sforza Tarot*

FIG. 93. Knight of Batons, *The Visconti-Sforza Tarot*

FIG. 94. Knight (female) of Swords , *The Visconti Tarot*, see checklist 11

FIG. 95. Knave of Cups, *The Visconti Tarot*

FIG. 96. Love, *The Visconti Tarot*

FIG. 97. World, *The Visconti Tarot*

Visconti-Sforza Tarot and recurs in *The Maihingen Sheet* (fig. 49).

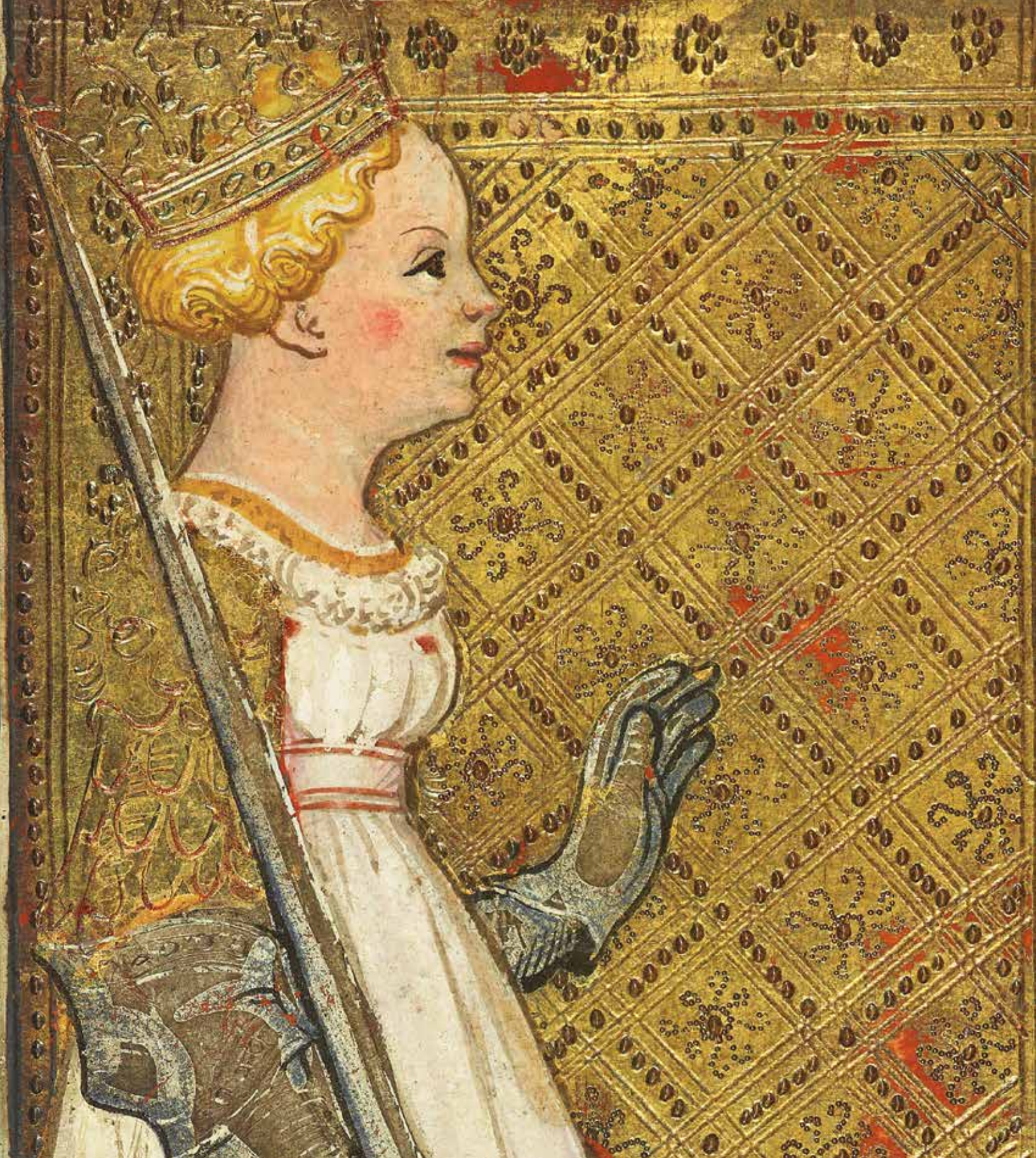
The earliest references to tarot all date to the 1440s and 1450s, and all fall within the quadrilateral defined by the northern cities of Venice, Milan, Florence, and Urbino.[46] Because of the complicated nature of the game by that point, it is likely that it had begun evolving earlier in the century. Tarot cards employed the standard Italian suits, with values from 10 to 1 and with four face cards: king, queen (fig. 92), knight (figs. 93 and 94), and knave (fig. 95), for a total of fifty-six cards. To these were added a fool (*matto*), which was a wild card, and the twenty-one trump cards. Tarot is a game of trick taking, as the many trump cards clearly indicate, and even though there are many variations (mostly minor), the rules of the game likely have not changed significantly since the fifteenth century.[47] (The present-day association of tarot with fortune-telling and the occult gained currency only in the nineteenth century and has nothing to do with the medieval tarot cards.) Trump cards were apparently invented in Europe, but perhaps not in Italy. The first trump-card game appears to have originated in Germany in the 1420s with a game known as *Karnöffel* in which a suit of trump cards could beat only cards of a lower rank.[48] Tarot and *Karnöffel* developed independently,

FIG. 98. Death, *The Visconti Tarot*

and all subsequent trump games appear to have derived solely from tarot.[49]

Three luxury tarot decks have survived from the mid-fifteenth century. One of the decks is thought to have been made for Filippo Maria Visconti, the last duke of Milan of that name, prior to his death in 1447; known as *The Visconti Tarot*, the sixty-nine surviving cards are preserved in the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University. The other deck was more than likely made for Francesco Sforza, a mercenary commander who served in both Milan and Venice and married the only child of Filippo Maria Visconti.[50] Known as *The Visconti-Sforza Tarot*, the deck was made sometime shortly after 1450. It is now divided: twenty-six of the surviving cards are in the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo, and thirty-five are in the Morgan Library & Museum, New York.[51] A third luxury deck, almost certainly painted for Filippo Maria Visconti before his death in 1447, is known as the *Brambilla Deck* (after a former owner) and is in the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan. All three decks are attributed to the workshop of the Milan court painter Bonifacio Bembo.[52]

Because the trump cards in these decks are not numbered—unlike *The Mantegna Tarot* or *The Courtly Household Cards*—the hierarchy of trumps varies according to their geographic origin. In the Visconti-



Sforza pack, the highest trump is the world, followed by the angels. The remaining trump cards, in descending order, are the sun, moon, star, temperance, death, traitor, old man, wheel of fortune, fortitude, chariot, justice, love, pope (fig. 90), emperor, popess, empress, and mountebank, followed by the fool.[53] *The Visconti Tarot*, the older pack, diverges from the standard: it has as many as six court cards per suit, including a male and female of all ranks (fig. 94). In addition to the more usual trumps (figs. 96, 97, and 98), it also included the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity. It is uncertain if this pack was uniquely structured or if it represents an earlier stage before the tarots were standardized.

THE CLOISTERS PLAYING CARDS

The Cloisters Playing Cards return us to the North, several decades later.[54] Largely on the basis of style, these cards have been attributed to the Burgundian Netherlands and dated to about 1475–80.[55] Beyond style, however, the deck has a greater affinity with the German packs discussed above than with any cards in France. Like the German decks, the suit symbols pertain to the hunt, but here they are all inanimate: Collars (for dogs, fig. 99), Tethers (for hounds, fig. 100), Horns (for hunting, fig. 101), and Nooses (for suspending birds or small game from the belt, fig. 102). All of these appurtenances can be seen in use by the huntsman and his white hound in the center foreground of the calendar page for August in the Grimani Breviary (fig. 103). As with the German packs, the relative value of the suits is unknown. The face cards comprise a king, a queen, and a single knave, followed by pip cards 10 through 1. The suit of the face cards is denoted by the appropriate symbol that each figure wears, carries, or has emblazoned on his or her costume—except for Tethers, which are repeated four times in the background.

FIG. 99. 6 of Collars, *The Cloisters Playing Cards*, see checklist 12

FIG. 100. 7 of Tethers, *The Cloisters Playing Cards*

FIG. 101. 7 of Horns, *The Cloisters Playing Cards*

FIG. 102. 3 of Nooses, *The Cloisters Playing Cards*

FIG. 103. Gerard Horenbout (1465–1541). Grimani Breviary, calendar page for August, *A Hunting Party Sets Out* (detail). Netherlandish, Ghent or Bruges, ca. 1510–20. Tempera on vellum. Biblioteca nazionale Marciana, Venice. Cod. Marc. It. XI, 67 (=7351), fol. 8v

FIG. 104. 9 of Horns, *The Cloisters Playing Cards*

The values of the pip cards are indicated by the appropriate repetition of the symbol, just as they are in *The Courtly Hunt Cards* (fig. 25).

The ends of the cards are rounded, a form otherwise unknown in European playing cards, and the backs are unpainted. The cards are made of four layers of paper glued together. Watermarks have been detected on two sheets; both are a version of a Gothic *p* capped with an ornament, and both, appearing at the edge of the sheets, have been cropped.[56] Neither has been identified, but both are similar to watermarks that were in use in the Netherlands during the 1460s and 1470s.[57] The outline of each card was traced on pasteboard, probably with the aid of a template. The unpainted cards were then cut out with shears, as evidenced by the downward-pressed edges on the face side of each card and by the slight tangential cuts at the ovoid ends. Each blank was then overlaid with a slightly smaller template or a cutout and scored, seemingly with a metal stylus, resulting in an impressed line that extends neatly around each card about one-eighth of an inch from the edge; this was later used as a guide for the outer line in the red and blue border. In Collars (it is less clear in the other suits), stencils were employed to provide uniformity in reproducing the suit signs, as evidenced

in radiographs that show the gaps left by the stencil bridges, which were then painted in with a loaded brush and appear as the denser areas.[58] The slightly irregular placement of the suit signs suggests that a single stencil was used, much the way that the Master of the Playing Cards used individual plates for each suit symbol. Unlike *The Stuttgart Playing Cards* or *The Courtly Hunt Cards*, in which the size of the suit symbols decreases as the values increase, those of *The Cloisters Playing Cards* remain of uniform size throughout. As a result, many symbols encroach on the borders, particularly in the higher values (fig. 104).

The face cards were produced entirely freehand. The outlines of the figures were sketched in with both score marks made with a stylus and charcoal underdrawing, some traces of which can still be detected. This technique very much accords with that of *The Courtly Hunt Cards*. The figures were then filled in with pen and ink and colored with typical medieval pigments bound in organic glue, glair (a sizing made of egg white and vinegar), or gum arabic. The reds, for example, are red ocher; or a pigment containing purpurin, extracted from madder; or an aluminum mordant. The blue contains azurite, and the green, earth green; the yellow is lead-tin yellow. These pigments were common in the fifteenth century but are rarely found after the seventeenth century.[59] Glazes

FIG. 105. King, Queen, Knave of Horns, *The Cloisters Playing Cards*

were used extensively to finish the figures, and gold and silver leaf applied over an organic adhesive was employed liberally throughout.

This artist worked in a sketchy but engaging style, relying more on body color and finishes than on descriptive modeling to give the figures volumetric presence. All these figures stand in three-quarter profile with—in the case of the men, at least—the left foot leading and often stepping on or beyond the double-line border (figs. 105, 106, 107, and 108). Each king and queen holds an object in one hand and raises up the other with unflexed fingers together and the thumb pointing outward in a gesture rather conspicuous for an artist who did not excel at hands. Three of the knaves hold a weapon in one hand; the fourth, the Knave of Nooses, is a jester who holds a staff capped with his likeness and hooks the thumb of his other hand under his belt (fig. 106). The Knave of Collars tips his cap while clutching a boar spear (fig. 107); the Knave of Horns also holds a spear while blowing a hunting horn (fig. 105); and the Knave of Tethers grasps a spiked club while whimsically gripping the blue line of the border (fig. 108).

The figures all have full, rounded faces with nubby chins, small tight lips, arched brows, and eyes consisting of a circle often centered on a dot for the pupil and set within abbreviated curved lines. The

FIG. 106. King, Queen, Knave of Nooses, *The Cloisters Playing Cards*

FIG. 107. King, Queen, Knave of Collars, *The Cloisters Playing Cards*

scant modeling is indicated with a few rather short parallel strokes, and the volumes of the otherwise linear forms are defined by varying the density of the flesh tones. Even though the facial expressions are somewhat limited, these court figures nonetheless project a certain naive charm. This competent if not gifted artist has been compared to the Caxton Master, who was active in Lille and then moved to London about 1480, where he entered the employ of the famous English printer from whom his sobriquet derives. There are some close parallels, particularly with the drawings in one of the Caxton Master's better-known works, the *Pageant of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick,* which was probably executed between 1483 and 1487 and is now preserved in the British Library.[60] Evident in his scene of the marriage of Henry V of England to Catherine of Valois (fig. 109), for example, are such familiar idiosyncrasies as the preference for figures in three-quarter view; the curious hand gestures with the thumb pointing up; the high rounded foreheads and long necks of the women and the short necks of the men; the small, beady eyes; and the insistently linear drapery folds. The similarity of the head of the Knave of Tethers (fig. 108) to that of the third Magus on the right shutter of *The Middelburg* (*Bladelin*) *Triptych*, painted by Rogier van der Weyden about 1445–50

FIG. 108. King, Queen, Knave of Tethers, *The Cloisters Playing Cards*

and now in Berlin (fig. 110), further draws the cards into the Burgundian-Netherlandish orbit.

Perhaps most striking in the Cloisters' face cards are the elaborate, sumptuous costumes of the kings and queens, displaying abundant amounts of ermine and bejeweled trim, gold embroidery, and substantial gold necklaces with gem-studded pendants. The knaves wear the less-opulent costumes appropriate to their varying stations: jester, herald, foot soldier, and huntsman. The royal figures in all their sartorial splendor function as fashion plates representing the middle and later decades of the fifteenth century, rather than as a record of some specific time or event. The King of Horns (fig. 105) wears a long gown with ermine-trimmed cuffs and hems and the narrow sleeves with open seams that were fashionable in the 1440s. The Queen of Tethers (fig. 108) wears a balloonlike burlet with trailing cornets tied together near the ends, a style likewise of the 1440s (fig. 111). The tied sleeves of the Knave of Collars (fig. 107) were in vogue during the late 1450s, whereas the mixed footwear of the King of Nooses (fig. 106), one white bootlet and one brown shoe, was a fad of the 1470s (fig. 112). The Queen of Collars' ermine open-sleeve surcoat (fig. 107)—ceremonial dress worn at coronations or court weddings—enjoyed favor from the 1450s through the 1480s (fig. 113); the veil with

FIG. 109. Netherlandish artist active in England (Caxton Master?). *The Pageant of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick*, The Marriage of Henry V and Catherine of Valois (detail). English, London? 1475–1500. Pen and ink on vellum. The British Library, London. Cotton MS Julius E IV, part III, fol. 22

FIG. 110. Rogier van der Weyden (1400–1465). The Magi See a Star in the Form of a Child (detail), from *The Middelburg* (*Bladelin*) *Triptych*, ca. 1445–50. Oil on oak panel, 35⅞ × 15¾ in. (91 × 40 cm) (right wing). Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (cat. no. 535)

FIG. 111. Woman wearing a burlet with the cornets wrapped under her chin and over the top of her headdress. House of Jacques Coeur, upper gallery, fireplace (detail). Stone relief. Bourges, France, 1448

a black velvet frontal dates this version to around the 1480s (fig. 114). Her U-shape ermine collar over a gorget with a rectangular neckline was also a fashion of the 1480s. Clearly relying on secondary source material, this artist certainly had never witnessed a Burgundian court event.

A number of details seem odd or excessive even by the standards of Burgundian court fashion. The short doublet with open-seam sleeves worn by the King of Nooses (fig. 106), for example, is a costume usually identified with a courtier rather than a king. By the late Middle Ages, the emblazoned tabard of the King of Collars (fig. 107) was generally worn by a knight over his armor or was the garb of a herald and not the king. In the *Pageant*, for example, the Earl of Warwick's herald wears a similar tabard emblazoned with his lord's arms (fig. 115). The long sleeves of the doublet worn by the King of Tethers, which trail along the ground behind him, appear to be a fanciful exaggeration (fig. 108). The extravagant gold-embroidered devices on the leggings of the King of Tethers and the King of Collars as well as on the leggings and sleeves of the Knave of Nooses were considered eccentric (figs. 108, 107, and 106).[61] It is difficult to discern whether these sartorial oddities reflect the excesses of Burgundian court fashion or whether they are deliberate exaggerations to lampoon those

FIG. 112. Loyset Liédet and assistants (active ca. 1448–78). Quintus Curtius, *Fais d'Alexandre le Grant*. The Translator (Vasco da Lucena) Presents His Book to Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy (detail). Netherlandish, Bruges, 1470. Ink, tempera, and gold on vellum. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. MS fr. 22547, fol. 1. The man on the left wears mismatched footwear; the leggings of both men are richly embroidered with devices

FIG. 113. Jean Fouquet (1420–1481). *Grandes chroniques de France*, Marriage of Charles IV and Marie of Luxembourg. France, Tours, 1458. Ink, tempera, and gold on vellum. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. MS fr. 6465, fol. 332

FIG. 114. Master of the White Inscriptions. Jean de Courcy, *Chemin de vaillance*, Author Accompanied by the Virtues Leaves the Forest of Temptation. Netherlandish, Bruges, ca. 1479. The British Library, London. Royal MS 14 E ii, fol. 194

FIG. 115. Netherlandish artist active in England (Caxton Master?). *The Pageant of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick*. Herald with a surcoat blazoned with the Warwick arms receives a letter then rides away (detail). Pen and ink on vellum. The British Library, London, Cotton MS Julius E IV, part III, fol. 14

FIG. 116. Detail of King of Nooses with an embroidered dragon on his hose and shoes of different colors, and a walking stick instead of a scepter, see checklist 12

FIG. 117. Rogier van der Weyden (1400–1464) or workshop. Jean Wauqelin, *Les Chroniques de Hainault*, The author presents his book to Philip the Good (detail of the border, showing the arms of Philip the Good flanked by spark-throwing flints, the emblem of the dukes of Burgundy). Netherlandish, Brussels, ca. 1448. Tempera and gold on vellum. Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, Brussels. MS 9242, f. 1r

immoderations. In any event, these embroidered devices identified the wearer with the master he served and were generally worn by courtiers and not by the lord. One wonders if the fire-breathing dragon on the hose of the King of Nooses (fig. 116, detail) is an irreverent reference to the spark-throwing flint, which was the emblem of the dukes of Burgundy (fig. 117). Similarly, the golden horn and collar worn by the King of Horns (fig. 105 and detail to the right) may be a facetious allusion to the Order of the Golden Fleece, the highest honor bestowed by the Burgundian dukes. The King of Nooses, furthermore, has a simple wooden walking stick in hand rather than a scepter (fig. 106), ceremonial staff, or sword. These court figures in their lavish dress displaying ordinary equipment of the hunt as if it were regal appurtenances might have been intended to parody the extravagances of the Burgundian court. Unlikely a noble commission, *The Cloisters Playing Cards* may well have been made for a wealthy urban mercantile client who felt sufficiently secure in a newly established social order to hazard satirizing a declining one. If so, the cards were eerily prescient, for the death of Charles the Bold on the battlefields of Nancy in 1477 heralded the demise of the court of Burgundy as it had been known.

DETAIL OF FIG. 105

FIG. 118. Sebald Beham (1500–1550). Design for Upper Knave of Roses. German, Nuremberg, ca. 1520. Pen and brown ink, 3½ × 2¼ in. (8.8 × 5.8 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris, Réserve Edmond de Rothschild. 37 DR/4 Recto

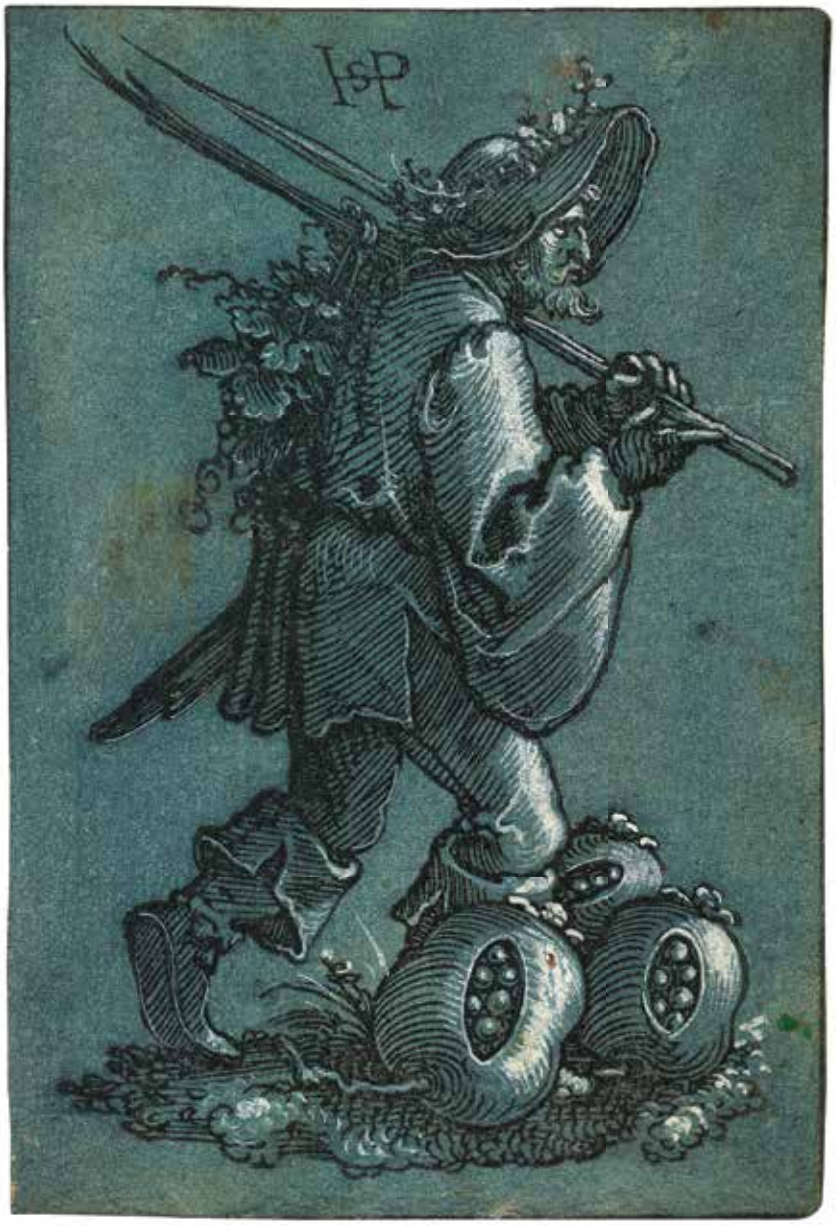


FIG. 119. Sebald Beham (1500–1550). Under Knave of Pomegranates. German, Nuremberg, ca. 1523. Woodcut on gray-blue-toned paper with white highlights, 3¾ × 2½ in. (9.6 × 6.5 cm). Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna. Inv. no. D 1, 21, fol. 79

NUREMBERG PLAYING CARDS

The production of German playing cards was centered largely in Swabia and the Upper Rhineland region throughout much of the fifteenth century, but by about 1520, the creative center had moved eastward into Franconia—in particular, to the free imperial city of Nuremberg. With no local tradition to constrain them, and in a burst of creativity and invention, artists trained or influenced by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) produced decks of cards with imagery of great originality, quite unlike anything that had preceded them.[62]

The earliest of these exceptional Nuremberg decks are the woodblock cards designed by Sebald Beham in about 1523.[63] Much influenced by Dürer, though perhaps through his prints rather than direct association, Beham was an engraver, an illustrator, and a designer of woodcuts, ornamental prints, and stained glass. He and his brother Barthel rank among the finest of the so-called Nuremberg Little Masters (*Nürnberger Kleinmeister*), an epithet referring to the small scale of their printed works. Sebald was accused of debauchery, but that seems questionable given his prodigious and meticulous output; he is credited with over a thousand woodcuts and two hundred seventy copperplate engravings and etchings. He had to flee Nuremberg twice—once for heretical beliefs and again for publishing a work thought to plagiarize Dürer—and ended his life in Frankfurt. The two decks that Beham designed had the suits Acorns, Leafs, Roses, and Pomegranates, straying somewhat from the conventional German suits of Acorns, Leafs, Hearts, and Bells.[64] His cards were groundbreaking in that he imbued his figures with verve and vitality, and he transformed the stiff uniformity of the suit symbols into vibrant natural forms (fig. 118).[65] Interest in organic forms may have motivated him to replace the standard but inanimate Hearts and Bells with vegetal forms. Some of his cards were enhanced by being printed on gray-blue-toned paper and highlighted in white (fig. 119). The compositions of many of Beham's cards were adapted from his sensitive observations recorded in his engravings. He revolutionized playing-card imagery and established the formal and thematic template that Nuremberg artists would follow for several decades. For the first time, the quality of the woodcut playing card rose to the highest levels of graphic arts in the age of Dürer.

Erhard Schön was a prolific graphic artist greatly influenced by Dürer and Hans Springinklee (ca. 1495–after 1522), with whom he collaborated on several projects. Schön created an enormous number of book illustrations and single-leaf woodcuts.

FIG. 120. Erhard Schön (1491–1542). 7 of Pomegranates. German, Nuremberg, ca. 1530. Woodcut, 3⅝ × 2⅜ in. (9.3 × 6.1 cm). Bodleian Library, Oxford

FIG. 121. Master b x g. *Peasant Dragging His Wife in a Basket*. German, Middle Rhineland, ca. 1475–80. Engraving, 3¼ × 5 in. (8.4 × 12.6 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris, Réserve Edmond de Rothschild. Inv. no. 303 LR

FIG. 122. Erhard Schön (1491–1542). Under Knave of Grapes, 3⅝ × 2⅜ in. (9.3 × 6.1 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. G1311

His early works were largely religious subjects, but the greater part of his production was devoted to historical and mythological subjects, as well as anticlerical allegories and other temporal topics, generally accompanied by narrative or explanatory texts—often written by Hans Sachs (1494–1576), the Nuremberg *Meistersinger*, poet, and playwright. About 1530, he designed a deck of cards with Roses, Vine Leafs, Grapes, and Pomegranates as suits.[66] Schön was the first to introduce quotidian vignettes in the lower zones of cards, borrowing many of the images from his single-leaf woodcuts. Influenced by the Beham brothers, he focused mostly on the lower classes, with imagery taken from droll tales and folklore. In the 7 of Pomegranates, for example, a farmer drags his wife along in a basket as she urges him on with a stick (fig. 120). In this case, Schön found his model in an earlier engraving by the Master b x g (fig. 121). Even though his deck has no clear thematic structure, it often seems that the lower the value of the card, the baser or coarser the incident depicted: in the 7 of Roses, a seated couple is serenaded by a man playing a stringed instrument; in the 3 of Roses, a man beats his wife. In the Under Knave of Grapes, a farmer trudges off to market with a goose under his arm (fig. 122); in the 3 of Pomegranates, a woman flogs the bare bottom of a man on all fours, a recurring image in Nuremberg cards. Other imagery focuses on a topsy-turvy world. In the 6 of Leafs, hares roast a hunter on skewers, perhaps a reference to the overturned social values of the day but also a vivid image of the reversal of fate often encountered while playing cards.

Hans Schäufelein, probably born in Nuremberg, worked in Dürer's studio from 1503 or 1504 until 1507, and then he was intermittently active in Augsburg from 1507 until 1514. From 1515 on, he lived in Nördlingen, spending several years producing designs for major print projects for Emperor Maximilian I. He was a painter, a prolific draftsman, and produced more than twelve hundred woodcuts, which are famed for their wit and epigrammatic content

(no engravings by him are recorded). About 1535, he designed a deck of cards that was published in Nuremberg by Wolfgang Rösch.[67] Printed from woodblocks and then hand colored, the pack comprised a King, Upper and Under Knaves, and 10 through 1, for a total of fifty-two cards with the standard German suits: Acorns, Leafs, Hearts, and Bells. The lower zones of the cards are again filled with vignettes all set at the front of the picture plane on a narrow strip of ground, rarely expanding to a more developed landscape. The pip cards indicate value by symmetrically ordered repetitions of the suit symbol flanked by the appropriate arabic and roman numerals; the higher the value, the more space it occupies in the upper zone. A varied cast from all social classes—in vignettes of humorous folklore, bawdy tales, social parody, and moralizing exempla, occasionally erotic or often scatological—occupies the lower zones. The sources of the images included printed books, single-leaf woodcuts, and other graphic works. A master of economy, Schäufelein created spare compositions with a taut line and narrative conciseness that convey the essence of each image with arresting directness.

The kings, following convention, sit on their thrones holding their suit signs or gesturing toward them. The knaves, on the other hand, are more socially stratified: the upper knaves are elegantly

FIG. 123. Under Knave of Acorns, *The Playing Cards of Hans Schäufelein*, see checklist 13

FIG. 124. 2 of Bells, *The Playing Cards of Hans Schäufelein*

FIG. 125. 3 of Leafs, *The Playing Cards of Hans Schäufelein*

turned out, some as mercenaries, while the under knaves reflect various degrees of subservience, as their attire ranges from modest to rags (fig. 123). Schäufelein's scenes in the lower zones of the pip cards present a more forthright view of the social condition. Some merely depict pleasantries among the denizens of the upper strata: a patrician couple greeting each other, a seated couple in discourse, a falconing couple on horseback led through the countryside by a mercenary, and a copious plein-air meal (fig. 124). Most, however, underscore the uncouth, even salacious behavior of farmers and peasants or, more generally, the foibles and failings of mankind expressed through imagery loaded with sardonic, proverbial, or moralizing messages. In the 3 of Leafs, for example, a woman with a basket of geese on her head lifts her skirt flirtatiously as she trudges to market; clearly, she has more to sell than her geese (fig. 125). In the 7 of Leafs, a farmer squats and defecates as a pig looks on with interest; both were considered foul and gluttonous. In the 8 of Acorns, a couple fight while another man looks on, bringing to mind the proverb "when two dogs fight, the third gets the bone." In the 6 of Bells, a seated woman gazes at a urine glass, emulating the charlatan practice of analyzing urine. Here the old woman is conducting a pregnancy test; the urine bottle she contemplates, however, holds a

FIG. 126. 10 of Hearts, *The Playing Cards of Hans Schäufelein*

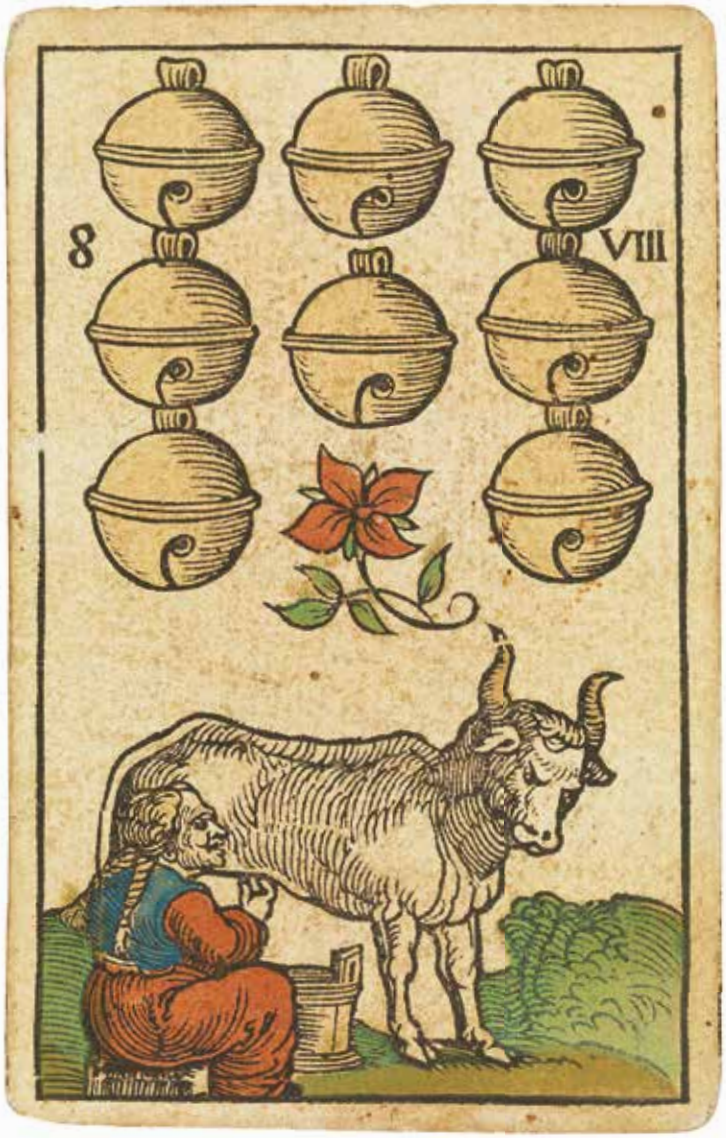


FIG. 127. 8 of Bells, *The Playing Cards of Hans Schäufelein*

mound of feces, the only thing this woman is likely to give birth to.[68]

Some of the cards address religious issues.[69] An old woman, apparently a Catholic, lies dejectedly on the ground in the 10 of Leafs, her arm around the trunk of a tree and a rosary in her hand, laid low in a post-Reformation Nuremberg. In the 10 of Hearts, a monk and a nun play a game of chance as the monk clutches a sack of money, a pointed reminder that card playing leads to moral downfall and a jab at the purported hypocrisy of the Catholic Church (fig. 126). Other images merely underscore the foolishness of human behavior. A fool sits between two benches, a farmer serenades his cow with a shawm, a man entertains a hare with a fife and drum, a woman attempts to milk a bull to its obvious disconcertment (fig. 127), and a man blows a pipe up the rear of a dog. Two other depictions of peasant life are both based on fifteenth-century engravings by the Master b x g: a squatting old woman with her skirt hiked up examines a urine bottle and a peasant couple trudges along (figs. 128 and 129). Schäufelein seems to have assembled an almost arbitrary selection of images poking fun at humanity's failings, arranged in no particular order, as though the random dealing of cards were a metaphor of life's vicissitudes.

FIG. 128. Master b x g. *Pair of Beggars*, ca. 1475–80. Engraving, 3⅜ × 2⅞ in. (8.6 × 7.4 cm). Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich. Inv. no. 10930

FIG. 129. 1 of Acorns, *The Playing Cards of Hans Schäufelein*

FIG. 130. Peter Flötner (1485–1546). *Adam*, ca. 1525. Boxwood with traces of polychrome, height: 13⅝ in. (34.5 cm). Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer. Inv. no. KK_3896

THE PLAYING CARDS OF PETER FLÖTNER

Many of the themes introduced by Schäufelein are expanded in the deck of hand-painted woodblock cards designed about 1540 by Peter Flötner, who is thought to have trained in Augsburg before coming to Nuremberg in 1522. One of the most gifted sculptors in that city, he was also an accomplished medalist, a graphic artist, and a designer of Renaissance ornament as well as all manner of decorative objects from household furnishings to outdoor fountains.[70] His signature often appears with a mallet and chisel, suggesting he thought of himself primarily as a sculptor; indeed, he is so described in sixteenth-century biography. The only signed example of his sculpture is a small figure of Adam in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (fig. 130).[71] Compared to many of his contemporaries, Flötner produced relatively few woodcuts. The majority were for ornament, but he also made single sheets illustrating verses by Hans Sachs and various subjects aimed at the popular market, along with what is arguably the most arresting deck of cards produced in post-Reformation Germany.[72] Printed and published by Hans Christoph Zell (active 1524–43), the deck comprises the four standard German suits—each with a King, Upper and Under Knave, Banner 10 (a female figure holding the banner with ten suit symbols)—and 9 through 2, for a total of forty-eight cards.[73] Separate blocks were used for the suit symbols and for the figural scenes below; the cards of the deck illustrated here were hand painted with watercolor and opaque paint, enhanced with white highlight and gold. The figures of the three face cards are nearly the height of the cards, whereas the pip card figures in the lowest values are about half that size and decrease in scale as the values increase. All the figures or scenes are set on grounds of varying depth, from mere strips of green to deeper, more developed landscapes. The fine quality of the woodcuts has led some scholars to conclude that Flötner cut the blocks

FIG. 131. 2 of Hearts with the arms of d'Este, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*, see checklist 14

himself.[74] In 1557, nearly two decades after Flötner designed the cards, Hans Sachs wrote a couplet for each card.[75] Word and image do not always match, but even though Sachs's interpretations may not necessarily concur with Flötner's intentions, they do cast a sixteenth-century light on some of the obscure imagery.[76]

In this deck, the figural scenes of the 2s are replaced by the arms of the d'Este family of Ferrara, executed in pen and ink rather than woodblock and then colored (fig. 131). These are perhaps the arms of Francesco d'Este (1516–1578), brother of Ercole II, Duke of Ferrara and Modena (r. 1534–59).[77] Francesco is known to have attended an imperial reception for Emperor Charles V in Nuremberg in 1541, an event for which Flötner designed a magnificent triumphal arch.[78]

A unique feature of these cards is that the backs are inscribed with musical notations and lyrics that collectively form four-part songs, with each suit given a particular voice: Acorns, bass; Leafs, tenor; Hearts, treble; and Bells, alto (fig. 132). The songs pertain to themes of love and appear to have been part of the original design of the deck.[79] Because each back is different, an astute player would be able, in time, to identify the suit and value of the cards. This anomaly, the exceptional quality of the cards, and the German suit symbols (which would have had little currency in Italy) suggest that the deck was commissioned as a collector's item and was never intended to be used.

The kings all loom like giants over extensive but diminutive landscapes, and a manservant accompanies each one. The King of Acorns, in full armor, distinctly resembles Emperor Maximilian I;[80] a castle appears in the middle ground between his legs (fig. 133). The King of Leafs appears to be Maximilian's successor, Charles V; a merchant ship sails off in the distance, perhaps a reference to his far-flung empire (fig. 134). The King of Hearts is costumed as a Turkish sultan; the dead children at his feet were a conventional way of conveying the perceived cruelty

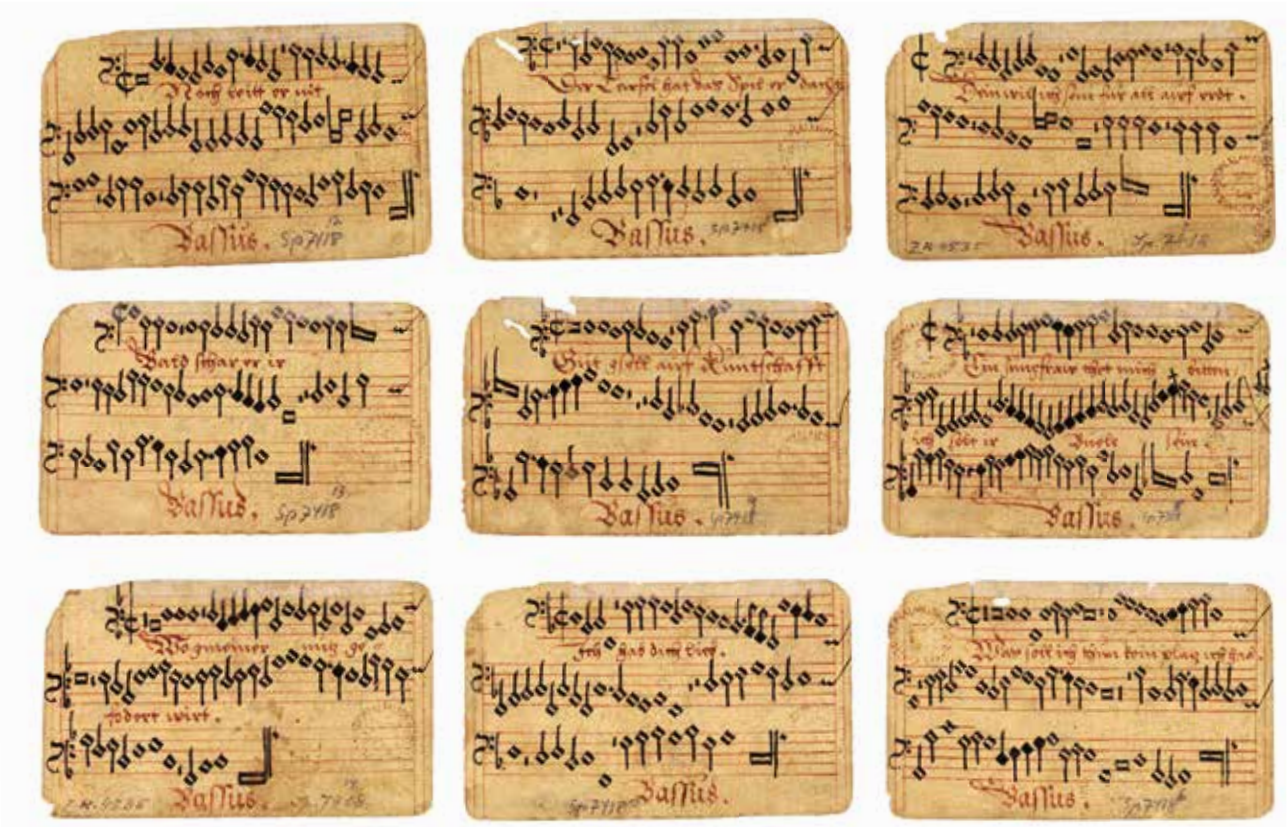


FIG. 132. Backs of cards, showing musical notations, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

of the Turks as well as recalling Herod and the Massacre of the Innocents (fig. 135). The King of Bells—an Indian potentate, according to Hans Sachs—is dressed as an exotic: the parrot on his arm, his attendant with a bow and arrow, and the elephant in the landscape all point to his distant origins (fig. 136).

Reminiscent of *The Courtly Household Cards*, the knaves range in rank from court officials down to a fool. The upper knaves, who stand on a narrower, less-developed landscape than the kings, are all well-turned out in a manner appropriate to their office: the Upper Knave of Acorns is a master of the mint, according to Hans Sachs; of Leafs, a secretary (fig. 137); of Hearts, a cupbearer (fig. 138); and of Bells, a trombonist. In sharp contrast, the under knaves are from distinctly lower ranks of household functionaries: the Under Knave of Acorns is a messenger with a letter in hand and a hare and a sausage on a branch over his shoulder; the Under Knave of Leafs is a large and unsavory cook with a pan in one hand and a large spoon in the other (fig. 139). Inspired by Dürer's engraving *The Cook and His Wife* (fig. 140), this unappealing figure was the embodiment of lust, as confirmed by Sachs's couplet: "I'm the lusty cook by a hot stove / Open up and put me in."[81] The Under Knave of Hearts is a butcher with a lamb (?) slung over his back; and Bells is a fool with a dripping nose—a sausage in hand (a symbol of the linked sins of gluttony and lust) and a jug on his hunched back—who trudges along wearing wooden pattens (fig. 141): "My name is Johnny-Not-in-the-Mood / A truly sorry piece of food." The Banner 10 of all

FIG. 133. King of Acorns, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 134. King of Leafs, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 135. King of Hearts, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 136. King of Bells, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 137. Upper Knave of Leafs, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 138. Upper Knave of Hearts, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 139. Under Knave of Leafs, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 140. Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528). *The Cook and His Wife*. German, Nuremberg, ca. 1496. Engraving, 4¼ × 2⅞ in. (10.8 × 7.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. William H. Osborn, 1967 (67.679.3)

FIG. 141. Under Knave of Bells, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

suits is held by seated women in fashionable dress (fig. 142).

Unlike those of the Schäufelein cards, the suits of the Flötner deck have loose thematic connections. In Acorns, five of the pip cards deal with the scatological antics of pigs, which in popular culture were equated with gluttony and lust.[82] In the 9 of Acorns, two pigs play trictrac (a version of backgammon); a mound of feces on the edge of the board is apparently the prize in play (fig. 143). In the 8 of Acorns, two pigs roast a large mass of fecal matter on a spit over a cushion sitting in open flames (fig. 144): "If the game goes against you / You'll eat like this." In the 7 of Acorns, two pigs eat their filth off a large charger. In the 3 of Acorns—a coarse visual play on the traditional scene of two angels carrying a soul up to heaven on a bolt of linen—two pigs have a tug-of-war with a cloth in their maws loaded with a mound of feces (fig. 145): "He who doesn't avoid the cards / Will see a lot of tug-of-war." In the 5 of Acorns—a coarse parody of the Saint George legend—a hunchbacked dwarf on a goat attacks a pig with a lance; a female onlooker holds a wreath, the victor's prize, in her hand (fig. 146): "Protect your big and small / The old goat wants to poke a hole." In the 4 of Acorns, a woman takes her hunchbacked daughter to a doctor to assess her marriage prospects; the learned man

FIG. 142. Banner 10 of Hearts, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

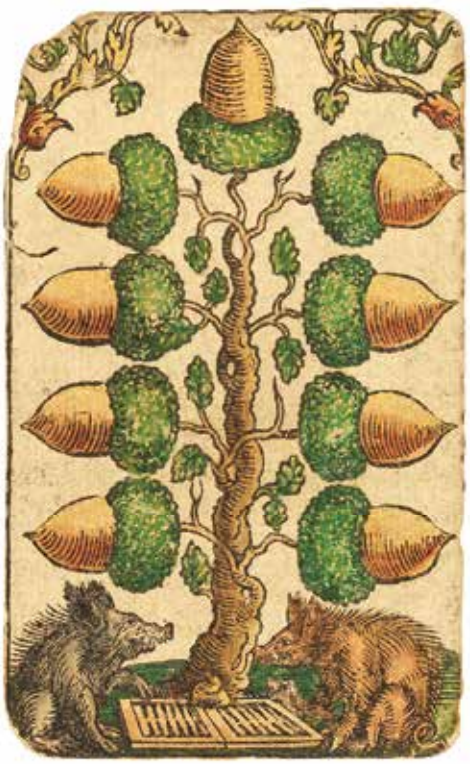


FIG. 143. 9 of Acorns, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 144. 8 of Acorns, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 145. 3 of Acorns, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 146. 5 of Acorns, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 147. 4 of Acorns, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

examines a urine bottle for a prediction and sees only feces (fig. 147): "He who misses a trick in the game / With wife and child will do the same."

In Leafs, several scenes are devoted to the antics of farmers or peasants, underscoring their reputation for drunken and licentious behavior; others seem unrelated. In the 9 of Leafs, a naked baby aims his blowpipe at the rear of another. In the 8 of Leafs, a farmer defecates as he leans over a fence: "Playing cards means looking at / A lot of backsides, how 'bout that." In the 7 of Leafs, a rustic couple dances (fig. 148). In the 6 of Leafs, a pair of lovers sit near a spring and share a drink (fig. 149). In the 5 of Leafs, a lass with a basket on her back and a large flagon in her hand walks behind a promenading patrician couple (fig. 150). In the 4 of Leafs, a farmer squats and defecates while his wife with a rake in her hands inspects (fig. 151): "Cutting, reaping, making hay / Makes the humble farmer's day." In the 3 of Leafs, a man prepares to join a large woman in a bathtub swarming with flies (fig. 152): "Some who sit at the gaming table / Get all heated up and sweat with fear."

Hearts are concerned primarily with the pastimes of the bourgeoisie and the lack of chastity. In the 8 of Hearts, a woman with a sausage on her nose attempts to attract a young gentleman (fig. 153): "Luck and whoring, tricks and hearts / Are often hard

FIG. 148. 7 of Leafs, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 149. 6 of Leafs, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 150. 5 of Leafs, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

to keep apart." In the 7 of Hearts, a pregnant woman holds up a convex mirror to two gentlemen; two fools appear in the reflection (fig. 154): "Some people pick a tramp / who takes them for a fool." In the 6 of Hearts, an ensign or mercenary holds a banner. In the 5 of Hearts, two young lovers meet at a fountain, a refreshingly innocent encounter (fig. 155). In the 4 of Hearts, a woman bends over, exposing her rear, and expels with sufficient force to knock her husband off his stool (fig. 156): " If you shamelessly act / You'll get it right back." In the 3 of Hearts, two women attack a young man with a pitchfork and distaff, the unwelcome consequence of an illicit entanglement (fig. 157).

And in Bells, a number of scenes have to do with folly, vanity, and the futility of foolish behavior. In the 9 of Bells, the upper portion of an old tree stump morphs into a wooden fool. In the 8 of Bells, an anamorphic or attenuated fool stands between bags of money, a symbol of greed (fig. 158). In the 7 of Bells, a silhouette of a fool cut from a plank is flanked by two tiny fools issuing out of tree stumps (fig. 159). In the 6 of Bells, a fool and a woman encounter each other, each holding a candle; the fool points at a large pile of feces on a red cushion (fig. 160): "He who loses money follows its track / When it's too late to get it back." In the 5 of Bells, four naked children

FIG. 151. 4 of Leafs, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

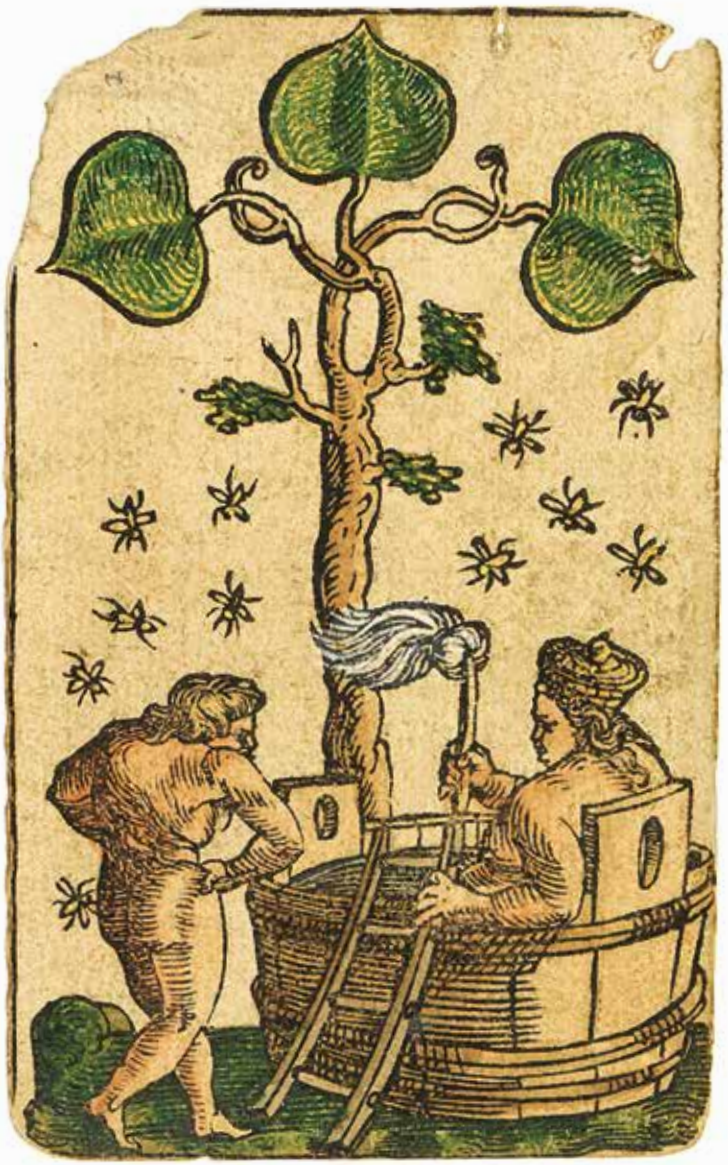


FIG. 152. 3 of Leafs, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

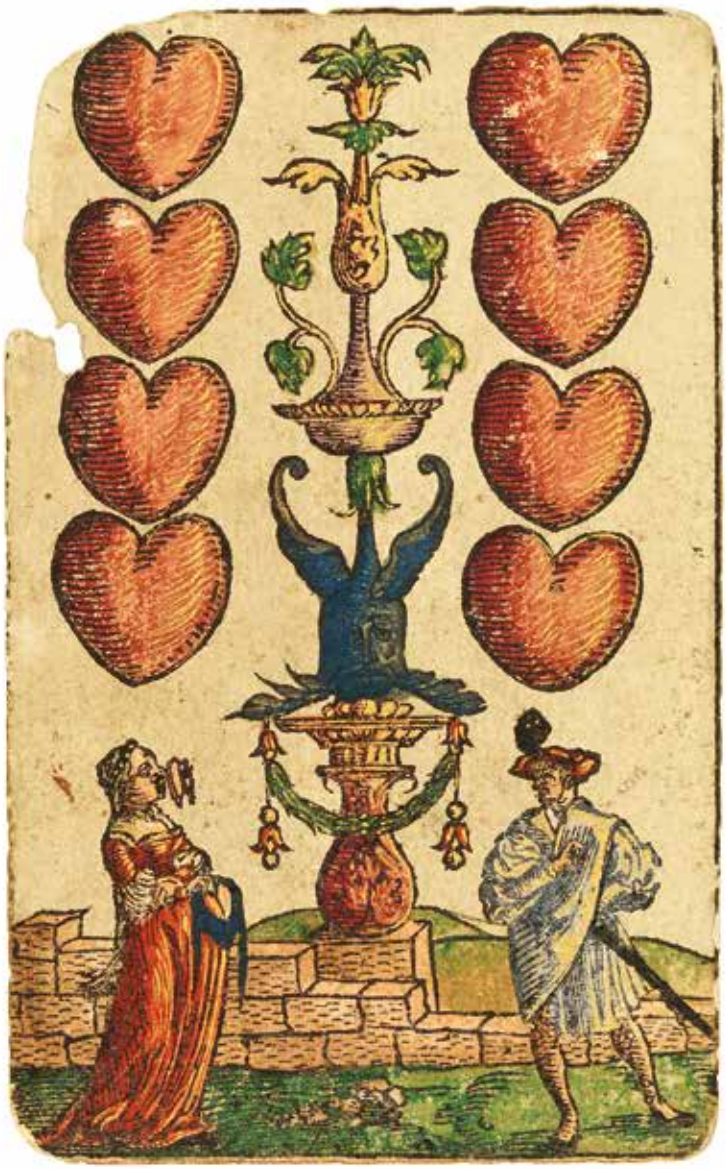


FIG. 153. 8 of Hearts, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

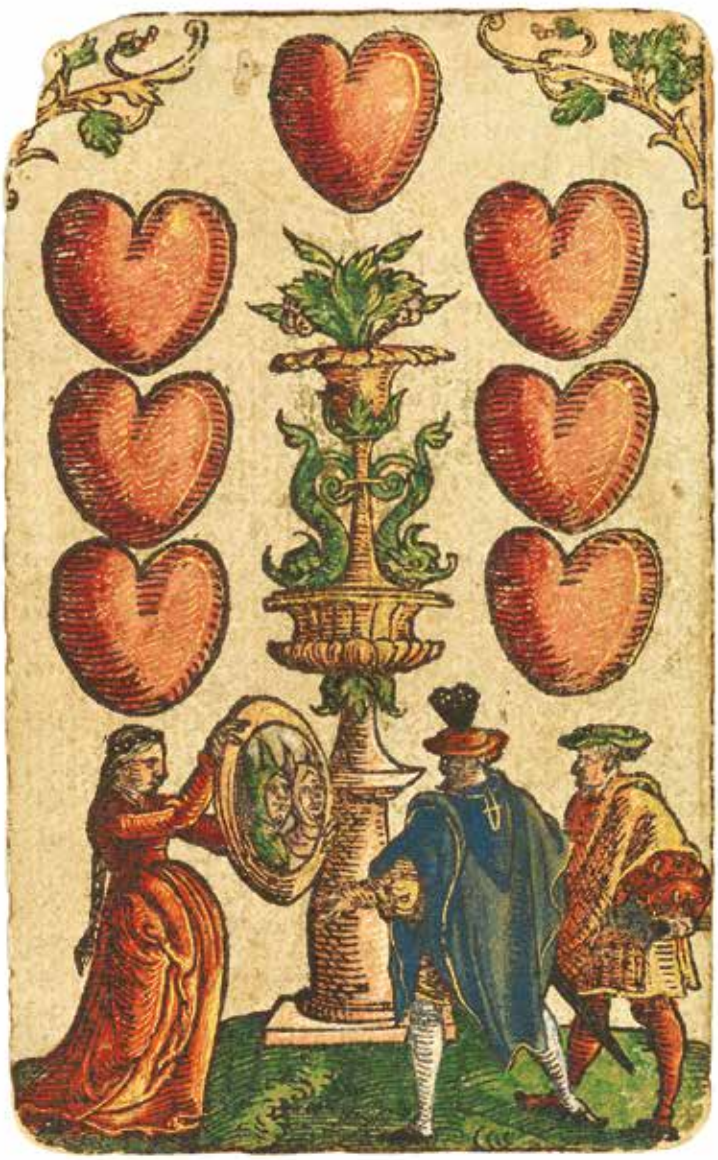


FIG. 154. 7 of Hearts, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

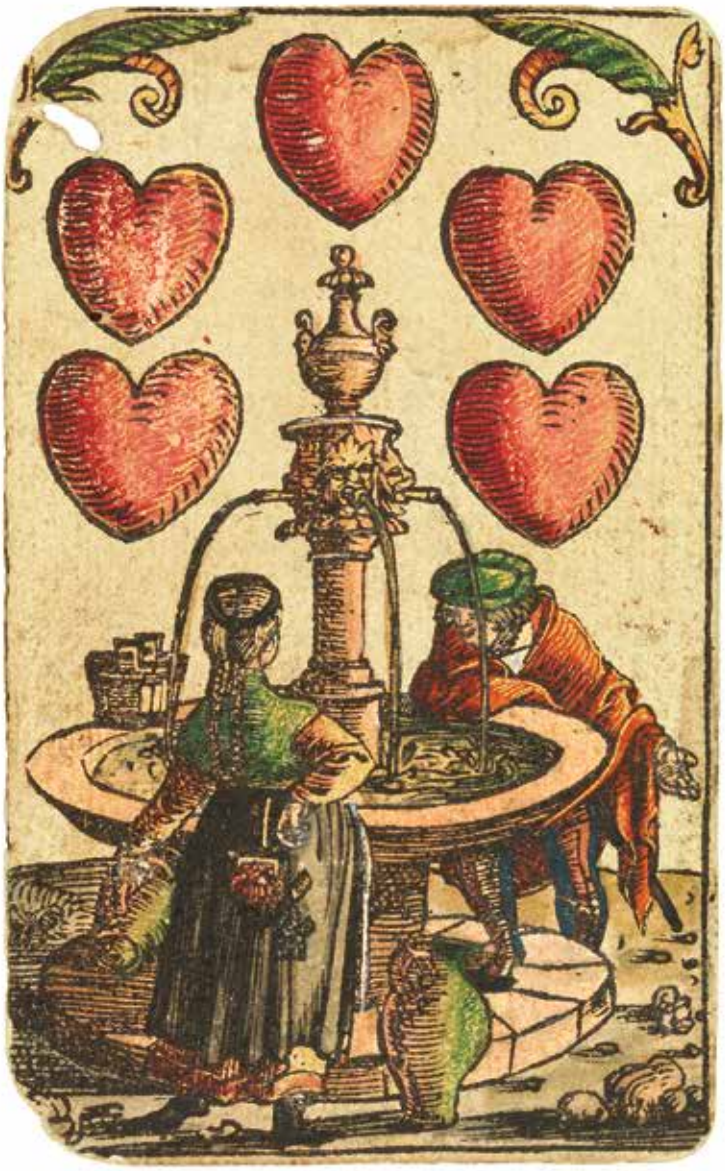


FIG. 155. 5 of Hearts, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

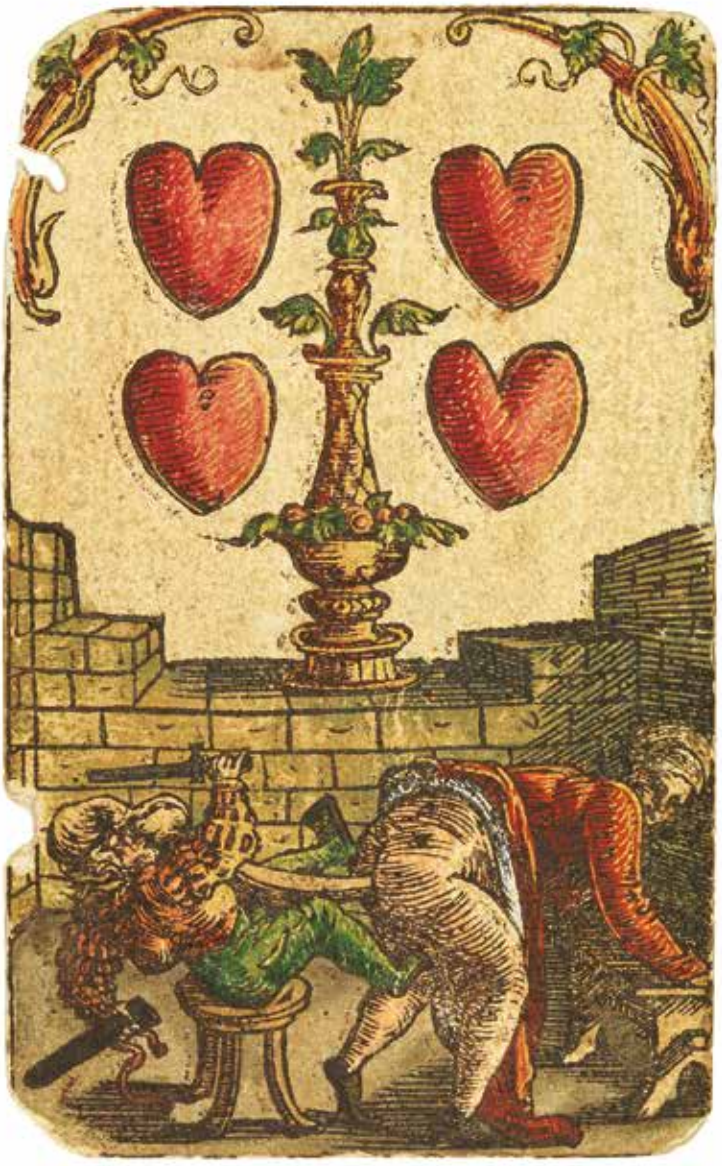


FIG. 156. 4 of Hearts, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

cavort, two wielding flyswatters, around a fifth on a pedestal. In the 4 of Bells, a man on all fours receives a thrashing on his bared behind with a faggot wielded by his wife (fig. 161): "You've played until your money's gone / My switch will put some nice stripes on." In the 3 of Bells, two women brawl, one wielding a basket (fig. 162): "The game gives life / To discord and strife."

Flötner drew much of his subject matter from the rich visual repertoire of graphic arts in Germany. The antics of peasants and farmers were a well-established theme in the fifteenth century, notably in the prints of the Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet and his copyist Master b x g (figs. 121 and 128). The farmers' purported penchant for public defecation, as depicted in both the 8 and the 4 of Leafs—a predilection then commonly linked to greed and immorality—had found visual expression several decades earlier.[83] The coprophagous pig, which figures prominently in the suit of Acorns, appears widely in German graphic works of the early sixteenth century as a companion to gluttons and drunks. Both Beham brothers produced a woodcut version of *Country Fair at Mögelsdorf*—Barthel in about 1527 and Sebald in about 1533. In both, a dung-eating pig faces a man straddling a bench at table while vomiting. In *Four Properties and Effects of Wine*, Erhard

FIG. 157. 3 of Hearts, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

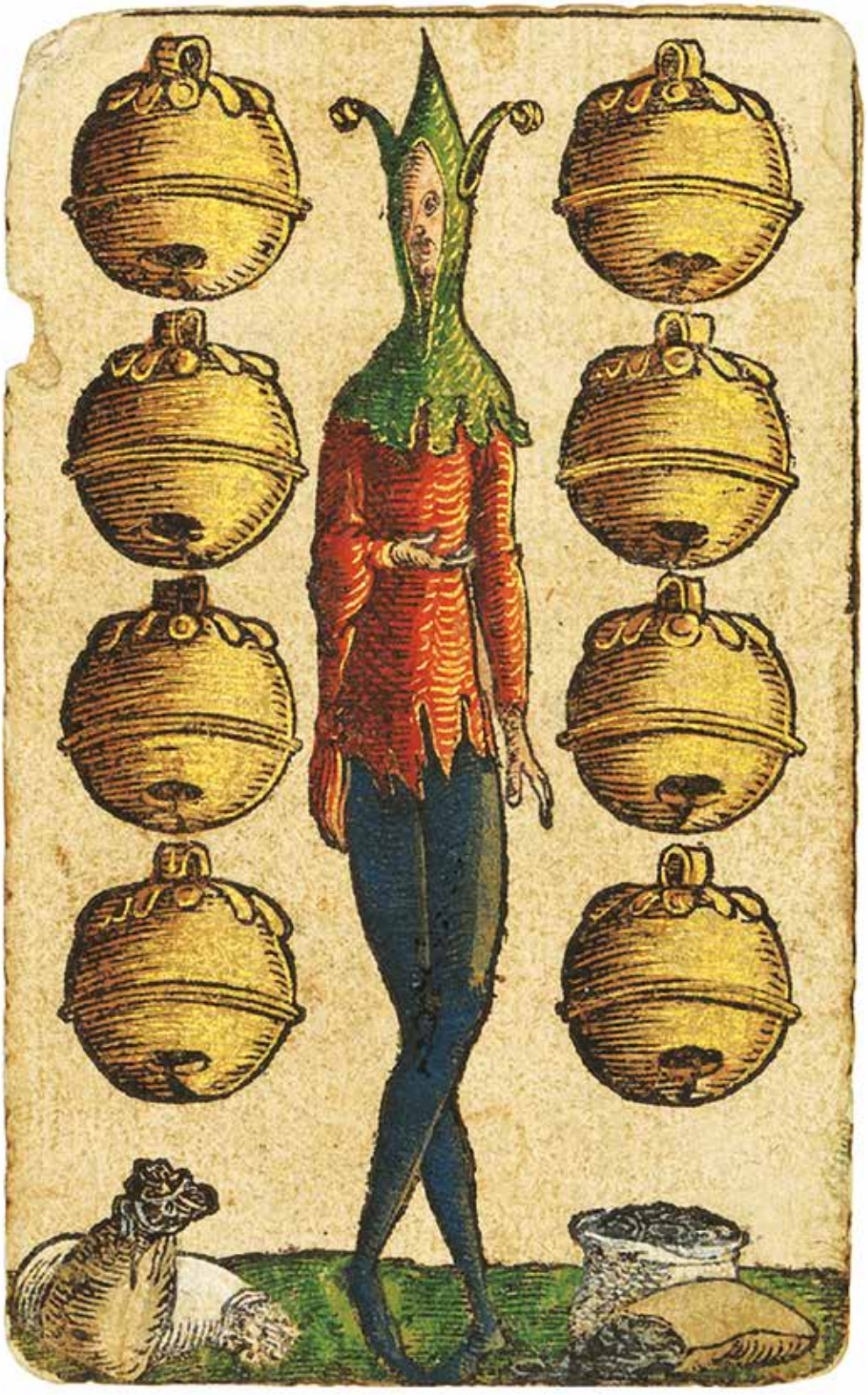


FIG. 158. 8 of Bells, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 159. 7 of Bells, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 160. 6 of Bells, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 161. 4 of Bells, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 162. 3 of Bells, *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

FIG. 163. Erhard Schön (1491–1542). *Four Properties and Effects of Wine*. German, Nuremberg, 1528. Woodcut, 9⅞ × 12¾ in. (25.1 x 32.5 cm). Kunst Sammlungen der Veste Coburg, Kupferstichkabinett, Coburg

FIG. 164. Sebald Beham (1500–1550). *Peasants behind a Hedge*, from A Country Wedding. German, Nuremberg, 1546. Engraving, 2 × 2⅞ in. (5 × 7.3 cm). British Museum, London

Schön's woodcut of 1528, a man defecates while slumped over a table and another vomits lying on the ground, providing a repast for two pigs (fig. 163). In Sebald Beham's engraving *Peasants behind a Hedge* from A Country Wedding series, 1546, a ready pig lurks behind a squatting and vomiting man (fig. 164). The association with gluttony is made explicit in Georg Pencz's engraving *Gluttony* (*Gula*) from his series The Seven Deadly Sins: the corpulent woman holds a vast jug as a pig eats a dung heap at her feet (fig. 165).

Flötner certainly had in mind the didactic function of playing cards. The droll lucidity of his images are pungent reminders that card playing spawns all types of sin: gluttony, drunkenness, lust, greed, and folly. His cards effectively justified the denunciations of the clergy and the proscriptions of the civil authorities (from which the nobility was exempt). Through the shock of images charged with biting social commentary, Flötner exhorted his audience to cleave to conventional moral dictates—a visual counterpart to Johannes von Rheinfelden's much earlier moralizing allegory. Flötner's emphasis on wanton behavior may also be a nod to Master Ingold's *Das Guldin Spil*, which likened each of the most common games with one of the deadly sins—card playing being equated with unchastity.

FIG. 165. Georg Pencz (1500–1550). *Gluttony*, from The Seven Deadly Sins. German, Nuremberg, ca. 1541. Engraving, 3¼ × 2⅛ in. (8.4 × 5.3 cm). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin

FIG. 166. Jean Pucelle (French, active Paris, 1319–34), The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, Queen of France, *Saint Louis Feeds the Leprous Monk*. f. 123v (detail of marginalia). French, Paris, ca. 1324–28. Grisaille, tempera, and ink on vellum. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Cloisters Collection, 1954 (54.1.2)

FIG. 167. Jean Pucelle (French, active Paris, 1319–34), The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, Queen of France, *Flight into Egypt*, f. 83 (detail of marginalia). French, Paris, ca. 1324–28. Grisaille, tempera, and ink on vellum. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Cloisters Collection, 1954 (54.1.2)

But in another sense, these scenes of scatological display and debased morality, as well as the more innocent scenes of pleasant pastimes, may be seen as the final flourish of imagery that developed out of the monstrous, bawdy, topsy-turvy drolleries that abound in the marginalia of fourteenth-century manuscripts (figs. 166 and 167). In the crude subject matter of the cards, based on a broad spectrum of popular culture as well as on literary and visual traditions, Flötner gave full release to his visual imagination, acknowledging man's baser instincts while, in fact, warning against them. The sublimation of immoral behavior through images found a parallel in the pre-Lent revelries of *Fastnacht* and the *Schembart* festival—a Shrovetide carnival in Nuremberg—which featured public dances, costumed processions, masquerades, and general carousing that often turned raucous and even violent. Behaviors behind a mask—middle-class folk often paraded as raucous farmers and peasants—were tolerated that would otherwise have drawn harsh opprobrium. The *Schembart* festival originated as a reward to the Butchers' Guild for its loyalty to the patrician council during a revolt of the city's artisans. Hans Sachs referred to the festival as a "mirror of bygone revolt, to remind the common people never to participate in such rebellious madness."[84] The festival gave vent not only to seditious inclinations but also, as in Flötner's cards, to debased proclivities. The crowds would attack a large float known as *Hölle* (Hell), viewed as a symbol of folly and evil rather than of hell itself, expelling grotesque fools from the castle-shaped structure (here a ship),

FIG. 168. Anonymous artist. *The Storming of Hölle* (detail), manuscript illumination from an account of the *Nuremberg Schembartlauf*, 1449–1539. German, Nuremberg, ca. 1539. Ink and watercolor on paper. Stadtbibliothek, Nuremberg. MS Nor. K. 444, fol. II

perhaps a reference to the demise of the old feudal order (fig. 168).[85]

Because much of Flötner's imagery came from single-leaf woodcuts, with their polemical texts, the educated audience for whom the cards were intended no doubt got the message. But he also seems to note a touch of smugness on the part of the bourgeoisie, who otherwise are let off rather lightly here. It is easy enough to mock the lower classes and decry their foul behavior, yet Flötner might well have intended his audience to see in themselves the same foibles being ridiculed.

The imagery of most of Flötner's cards is perfectly pleasant, even prosaic; only nine are overtly crude and are all the more arresting for being infrequent. The occasional coarseness of the subject matter and the strident moral messages carried by the imagery of the cards were mitigated, in the eyes of the intended audience, by the artistry of their execution. The lines of the woodcuts are as fine and modulated as deft pen strokes, while the compositions are remarkable for their narrative concision, clarity, and wit. Like their predecessors, Flötner's striking cards bring to life a microcosmic view of a world long gone, while animating social and moral themes that resonated then as they do to this day. More than any other artist, Flötner fully exploited the conceit of playing cards as a visual polemic to convey his worldview.

Metrym ~

The Courtly Household Cards

	Germany	Bohemia	Hungary	France
——	King	King	King	King
——	Queen	Queen	Queen	Queen
X	Master of the Household *Hofmeister*	Master of the Household *Hofmeister*	Master of the Household *Hofmeister*	Master of the Household *Hofmeister*
IX	Marshal *Marschalk*	Marshal *Marschalk*	Marshal *Marschalk*	Marshal *Marschalk*
VIII	Chaplain *Capplan*	Doctor *Artz*	Chancellor *Kantzler*	Mistress of the Household *Hofmeistryn*
VII	Steward *Truchseß*	Chamberlain *Kamer[mei]ster*	Master Chef *Kuchenmeist[er]*	Cupbearer *Schenk*
VI	Lady-in-Waiting *Junckfrawe*	Lady-in-Waiting *Junckfrawe*	Lady-in-Waiting *Junckfrawe*	Lady-in-Waiting *Junckfrawe*
V	Footman *Kellner*	Falconer *Valkner*	Crossbowman *Schütz*	Cook *Koch*
IIII	Barber *Barbier*	Trumpeter *Trometer*	Trumpeter *Trometer*	Groom *Marstaler*
III	Knight *Renner*	Herald *Herolt*	Fishmonger *Vischer*	Court Tailor *Hofsneider*
II	Messenger *Bote*	Potter *Hefneryn*	Baker *Pfister*	Hunter *Jeger*
I	Fool *Narr*	Fool *Narr*	Fool *N[er]ryn*	Fool *Nerryn*

Notes

1 Literature in English on early European playing cards is scarce and largely inadequate. A chapter devoted to the subject in Detlef Hoffmann, *The Playing Card: An Illustrated History* (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1973) is perhaps the best. David [Sidney] Parlett, *The Oxford Guide to Card Games* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) is an informative and engaging study of the social history of card games; chapter 4 is a useful, if brief, discussion of early European cards, though it does not address any of the cards under discussion here. In German, Detlef Hoffmann's "Frühe Holzschnitt-Spielkarten: Von den Anfängen bis ins 16. Jahrhundert," in *Altdeutsche Spielkarten,* 1500–1650, by Detlef Hoffmann, Ursula Timann, and Rainer Schoch, exh. cat., Spielkarten-Museum, Leinfelden-Echterdingen, and Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, 1993, esp. pp. 11–21, is concise but thorough and authoritative; as the title indicates, however, the discussion is limited to German woodcut cards. Detlef Hoffmann, Peter Kopp, and Fritz Koreny provide an informative overview of early playing cards and tarot in *Spielkarten: Ihre Kunst und Geschichte in Mitteleuropa*, exh. cat., Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna, 1974, esp. pp. 13–94.

2 Peter F. Kopp, "Die frühesten Spielkarten in der Schweiz," *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 30, no. 3–4 (1973), pp. 130–45.

3 These references are detailed in W[ilhelm] L[udwig] Schreiber, *Die ältesten Spielkarten und die auf das Kartenspiel Bezug habenden Urkunden des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts* (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1937), pp. 81–82, 139. For a more detailed discussion, see Gerhard Piccard and Hellmut Rosenfeld, "Neue Beiträge zum Alter der Spielkarten," *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 3 (1961), pp. 555–66; and Hellmut Rosenfeld, "Zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte und Morphogenese von Kartenspiel und Tarock," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 52 (1970), pp. 65–94.

4 Hellmut Rosenfeld claims the card "invasion" began in 1376, apparently not accepting Peter F. Kopp's reading of the Bern document of 1367 (Hellmut Rosenfeld, "Zu den frühesten Spielkarten in der Schweiz: Eine Entgegnung," *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 32, no. 2 [1975], pp. 179–80). Kopp argued that it began well before the Bern document, believing it would have taken a decade or more for cards to permeate popular culture (Kopp, "Die frühesten Spielkarten," pp. 130–45). For an overview, see Hoffmann, "Frühe Holzschnitt-Spielkarten," p. 14.

5 Johannes von Reinfelden, "Tractatus de moribus et disciplina humanae conversationis, id est ludum cartularium," 1429, MS F IV 43, Universitätsbibliothek, Basel. This is the earliest surviving manuscript of this text.

6 Hoffmann, "Frühe Holzschnitt-Spielkarten," p. 14, questions whether the author invented some of these variants to serve his allegory, or if he actually saw such games in play. As we will see, however, the structure cited here accords with that of *The Stuttgart Playing Cards*, made about 1430.

7 Schreiber, *Die ältesten Spielkarten*, pp. 139–40; and Hoffmann, "Frühe Holzschnitt-Spielkarten," p. 14.

8 Schreiber, *Die ältesten Spielkarten*, p. 132; and Hoffmann, "Frühe Holzschnitt-Spielkarten," p. 14.

9 Peter Schmidt, "The Multiple Image: The Beginnings of Printmaking, between Old Theories and New Approaches," in *Origins of European Printmaking: Fifteenth-Century Woodcuts and Their Public,* by Peter Parshall et al., exh. cat, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, 2005–6 (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), pp. 39–41.

10 The case, unfortunately, no longer exists. The German text reads: "Ein fueteral in buechsform mit schwarzem leder uberzogen, darauf gedruckthen und verguldthen mödelln, also auch am Schnitt, innwendig mit rotem carmesin gefuertert, darinnen liegt ein groß khartenspil von altfrenckischen gemäldt auf verguldtem grundt, anstatt der schellen, laub, herz und eichel sein hundt, vögel, hirsch und sparber gemahlt, die kartten sein span-

nenlang und halbspännig brait." See Heribert Meurer, *Das Stuttgarter Kartenspiel / The Stuttgart Playing Cards* (Stuttgart: Konrad Theiss, 1991), pp. 11, 49 for the texts; this is a concise, informative, and well-illustrated monograph with an English text.

11 For a more detailed provenance, see ibid., pp. 49–50.

12 Three cards are missing: 4 of Ducks, Under Knave of Falcons, and 9 of Hounds.

13 Meurer, *Das Stuttgarter Kartenspiel,* p. 55.

14 As suggested in ibid., p. 61.

15 For a complete technical study, see Ernst-Ludwig Richter and Heide Härlin, "The 'Stuttgarter Kartenspiel': Scientific Examination of the Pigments and Paint Layers of Medieval Playing Cards," *Studies in Conservation* 21, no. 1 (February 1976), pp. 18–24.

16 Ulrike Wörner, "Das Stuttgarter Spiel (um 1429) – ein Abbild der 'Jagd nach Liebe'; Ikonologische Betrachtungen zu einem Kartenspiel aus dem Hause Wittelsbach," *Bayerisches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* (2011), pp. 27–39, 283–84, esp. pp. 33–39, argues that the Queen of Stags is the ideal image of Frau Minne, the personification of courtly love, and the cards are a metaphor for the pursuit of love in the chivalric tradition.

17 For the Italian models and the relationship of Italian cards to German cards, see Meurer, *Das Stuttgarter Kartenspiel*, pp. 58–59.

18 For a summary of attributions, see ibid., pp. 35–39.

19 Ibid., p. 63.

20 Most recently, Philippe Lorentz in Philippe Lorentz et al., *Strasbourg 1400: Un foyer d'art dans l'Europe gothique*, exh. cat., Musée de l'Oeuvre Notre-Dame, Strasbourg, 2008, p. 178, nos. 33, 34. Lorentz suggests not only the Upper Rhineland but specifically Strasbourg, noting that there was no shortage of card makers there, mentioning a Hans Seeman who was documented in 1444.

21 See Fritz Koreny in Hoffmann, Kopp, and Koreny, *Spielkarten*, p. 38, no. 10.

22 "Mer in ainem hülzen trühel, so grau angestrichen, darinnen ein kartenspill von hunden, lueder, kranich und mannen, so zu rosz siczen." Herwarth Röttgen, *Das Ambraser Hofjagdspiel / The Pack of Princely Hunting Cards of Ambras*, facsimile ed., commentary vol. (Munich: Heimeran, 1971), p. 8.

23 The 8 of Falcons and 2 of Hounds are missing.

24 See Bodo Brinkmann et al., *Konrad Witz*, exh. cat., Kunstmuseum, Basel, 2011, p. 197, fig. 103.

25 The attribution was first made by Herwarth Röttgen in Röttgen, *Das Ambraser Hofjagdspiel*, pp. 15–22. It was most recently reaffirmed by Bodo Brinkmann in Bodo Brinkmann et al., *Konrad Witz*, pp. 191–97, no. 6. Röttgen's observation that three hands were at work in the cards is also generally accepted.

26 "hoc opus pinxit magister conradus · sapientis · de basilea · m · cccc xliiii."

27 These comparisons have been made most recently by Bodo Brinkmann in Brinkmann et al., *Konrad Witz*, pp. 195–97.

28 The construction of space here would seem to owe a debt to Witz's *Saint Christopher*, Basel, Kunstmuseum, inv. no. 646.

29 Fritz Koreny in Hoffmann, Kopp, and Koreny, *Spielkarten*, p. 43, no. 12.

30 The title card bears the arms of the city of Cologne and an image of the Three Kings venerated there with the inscription SALVE FELIX COLONIA (Greetings Fair Cologne), while the concluding one has a *vanitas* image with Death, a naked woman, and an hourglass. For a discussion of this pack, see Detlef Hoffmann, *Kartenspiel des Meisters PW / A Pack of Cards by Master PW*, facsimile ed., commentary vol. (Leipzig: Edition Leipzig, 1974), p. 58.

31 "Aber in ainem grau hülzenen trühe, darinnen ain ganz kartenspil, darauf etliche figurn gemalt sein und alle ämter, so zu ainen fürstenhof gehörn, darzu geschriben." Michael Dummett et al., *Hofämterspiel*, Berümte Kartenspiele, facsimile ed., commentary vol. (Vienna: Piatnik, 1976), p. 16.

32 Georg Kugler, "Was ist ein Hofamt?" in ibid., pp. 12–13.

33 *Twelfth Night*, act 3, scene 1.

34 Kugler, "Was ist ein Hofamt?" p. 14.

35 Ibid., p. 58.

36 Ibid., pp. 58–61.

37 Fritz Koreny, "Das Hofämterspiel," in Dummett et al., *Hofämterspiel*, pp. 41–42. Günther Hödl, "Hofämterspiel," in *Schauplatz Mittelalter Friesach: Kärntner Landesausstellung 2001*, edited by Barbara Maier, exh. cat., Kärntner Landesaustellung, Klagenfurt, 2001, vol. 2, p. 247.

38 Fritz Koreny pointed out these similarities and those that follow in Koreny, "Das Hofämterspiel," in Dummett et al., *Hofämterspiel*, pp. 22–33.

39 Ibid., p. 32.

40 Ibid., pp. 36–37.

41 Ibid., pp. 37–42.

42 *Das Buch, das man nennt das Guldin Spil.* The text is taken from an edition printed in Augsburg in 1472, now in the

Deutsches Spielkartenmuseum, Württembergisches Landesmuseum, Leinfelden-Echterdingen, Germany, inv. no. X 1992-70 II A. See also Detlef Hoffmann, *Kultur- und Kunstgeschichte der Spielkarte* (Marburg: Jonas, 1995), p. 42.

43 "…dem edelman der wůchrer, dem wůchrer der pfaff, dem pfaffen das täppelweib, dem täppelweib der riffian, dem riffian der wirt, dem wirt der weinman…" Hoffmann, *Kultur- und Kunstgeschichte*, p. 42.

44 Koreny, "Das Hofämterspiel," p. 22.

45 The word *tarot* derives from the French word *tarau*, which in turn comes from the Italian *tarocco*. The term, for which there is no known etymology, did not come into use until the sixteenth century. Throughout the fifteenth century, tarot cards were referred to as *carte da trionfi* (cards with trumps). See Michael Dummett, *The Visconti-Sforza Tarot Cards* (New York: George Braziller, 1986), pp. 1–2.

46 Ibid., p. 5.

47 Ibid., pp. 3–4.

48 Michael Dummett, "Kartenspiel des 15. Jahrhunderts und das Hofämterspiel," in Dummet et al., *Hofämterspiel*, pp. 70–71.

49 Michael Dummett, "Tarot Triumphant," *FMR: The Magazine of Franco Maria Ricci,* no. 8 (January/February 1985), p. 8.

50 Sforza had hoped that the duke would nominate him as his successor. However, no such nomination was made upon Visconti's death, and Milan declared itself a republic. Sforza then began a military campaign, conquering Lombardy city by city until Milan surrendered in 1450 and he proclaimed himself duke. To promote continuity and his own legitimacy, he adopted the Visconti motto, "A Bon Droit" (with good right), and devices, adding them to his own three rings, which appear along with a ducal crown and other Visconti devices on the cards.

51 Another thirteen are owned by the Colleoni family of Bergamo; four have been lost.

52 The attribution is widely accepted. See most recently, Emanuela Daffra and Francesca Tasso, "Filippo Maria Visconti e il corso ininterrotto del gotico in Lombardia," in *Arte lombarda dai Visconti agli Sforza: Milano al centro dell'Europa*, edited by Mauro Natale and Serena Romano, exh. cat., Palazzo Reale, Milan, 2015 (Milan: Skira, 2015), pp. 173–81; no. III.27, pp. 208–9 and 233; no. III.35, pp. 218 and 236-37.

53 The Devil, Fire, Knight of Coins, and 3 of Swords are missing from *The Visconti-Sforza Tarot*. The World, Sun, Moon, Star, Temperance, and Fortitude were painted by a later artist.

54 Previously unrecorded, *The Cloisters Playing Cards* appeared at auction in Paris in 1978, catalogued as an incomplete tarot deck and were bought by a Dutch collector, who subsequently consigned them to Sotheby's, London, where they were acquired by The Cloisters in 1983. The cards were published by Hans Janssen, *de geschiedenis van de Speelkaart*, Rijswijk, 1985, in a chapter entitled "De ontdekking van de eeuw" (The discovery of the century), pp. 150–57.

55 Detlef Hoffmann concurred with the attribution and dating, see Detlef Hoffmann, *Gemalte Spielkarten: Eine kleine Geschichte der Spielkarten anhand gemalter Unikate* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1985), pp. 40–42.

56 See Timothy B. Husband, *The Cloisters' Playing Cards: And Other Hand-Painted Packs of the Fifteenth Century / Die Cloisters-Spielkarten: Und andere handgemalte Kartenspiele des 15. Jahrhunderts*, facsimile ed., commentary vol. (Vienna: Piatnik, 1994), p. 6–7, figs. 2, 3.

57 See Gerhard Piccard, ed., *Die Wasserzeichenkartei Piccard im Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart,* vol. 4, *Wasserzeichen Buchstabe P* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1977), nos. 328, 322, 134, 141–43, 487, 422, 419, pts. 2, 3.

58 Husband, *The Cloisters' Playing Cards*, p. 8, fig. 4.

59 Pigment analyses were conducted by the Centraal Laboratorium voor Onderzoek van Voorwerpen van Kunst en Wetenschap, Amsterdam, in 1983, under the direction of J. H. Hofenk de Graaff, head of the Department of Natural Polymers.

60 As observed by Christopher de Hamel, in *Medieval Illuminated Playing Cards,* separately bound extract from *Western Illuminated Manuscripts*, sale cat. (Sotheby's, London, December 6, 1983), lot 70. And more recently, Alexandra Sinclair, ed., *The Beauchamp Pageant* (Donington: Richard III and Yorkist History Trust in association with Paul Watkins, 2003), pp. 3–5, figs. 4a, b, c. Sinclair notes that the attribution to the Caxton Master has been questioned and prefers to give the drawing to the "Master of the Beauchamp Pageants."

61 Anne van Buren with Roger Wieck, *Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands,* 1325–1515, exh. cat., Morgan Library & Museum, New York, 2011, p. 208.

62 Fritz Koreny, "Die Nürnberger Künstlerkarten des 16. Jahrhunderts," in Hoffmann, Kopp, and Koreny, *Spielkarten*, p. 83; also Rainer Schoch, "Aller Laster Anfang," in Hoffmann, Timann, and Schoch, *Altdeutsche Spielkarten*, p. 55.

63 Schoch, "Aller Laster Anfang," pp. 56–59; and Hoffmann, Timann, and Schoch, *Altdeutsche Spielkarten,* p. 181, no. 54.

64 Roses and Pomegranates were used as suits in some decks of Upper Rhenish origin that may have been known to Beham. Schoch, "Aller Laster Anfang," p. 56.

65 Two smaller woodblock cards, 10 of Acorns and 10 of Leafs, in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, are different in design and belong to a second deck designed by Beham about 1535. See Hoffmann, Kopp, and Koreny, *Spielkarten*, pp. 85–86, no. 31a. That complete deck is preserved in the Douce collection of the Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

66 Schoch, "Aller Laster Anfang," pp. 59–65.

67 Ibid., pp. 65–69; and Hoffmann, Timann, and Schoch, *Altdeutsche Spielkarten,* pp. 182-84, no. 55.

68 Schoch, "Aller Laster Anfang," p. 67.

69 Although production of woodcut religious images and playing cards were closely related, there is less indication that the plethora of single-sheet Reformation prints had any significant bearing on the imagery of playing cards. See Laura A. Smoller, "Playing Cards and Popular Culture in Sixteenth-Century Nuremberg," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1986), pp. 183–214.

70 Giulia Bartrum, *German Renaissance Prints, 1490–1550* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), p. 88.

71 Thomas Schauerte, *Peter Flötner: Renaissance in Nürnberg*, exh. cat., Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, 2005, pp. 80–81, no. 4.

72 Schoch, "Aller Laster Anfang," pp. 70–77; and Hoffmann, Timann, and Schoch, *Altdeutsche Spielkarten,* pp. 185–87, no. 56.

73 The 2 of Acorns is missing. Two other complete or near-complete but uncolored sets are in the Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin, and the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris; the deck was published in two variations, one with forty-eight and another with thirty-six cards.

74 Fritz Koreny in Hoffmann, Kopp, and Koreny, *Spielkarten*, p. 94, no. 34.

75 "*Eine ganze gereimpte Karten aller pletter*," 1557. See Schoch, "Aller Laster Anfang," p. 70, n. 59.

76 Ibid., p. 70; and Rainer Schoch, *Das Flötner'sche Kartenspiel: Nr.* 2879*,* facsimile ed., commentary vol. (Vienna: Piatnik Edition, 1993), p. 13.

77 Heinrich Röttinger, *Peter Flettners Holzschnitte,* Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte, 186 (Strasbourg: Heitz & Mündel, 1916), p. 84. That the arms are those of Francesco d'Este is only an assumption. See Schoch, *Das Flötner'sche Kartenspiel*, p. 29, n. 3.

78 Hoffmann, Timann, and Schoch, *Altdeutsche Spielkarten*, p. 185.

79 See Schoch, *Das Flötner'sche Kartenspiel*, p. 27.

80 Thomas Schauerte (Schauerte, *Peter Flötner*, p. 147), suggests it represents Charles V's brother, Ferdinand.

81 "Ich pin der suedelkoch / Plas mir ins offenloch." For the German text of all the Hans Sachs couplets, see Schoch, *Das Flötner'sche Kartenspiel*, pp. 13–18. All translations are by Damion Searls.

82 Schoch, "Aller Laster Anfang," pp. 71–74.

83 See the woodcut attributed to Hans Weiditz, *On Gorging*, ca. 1520. Hans-Joachim Raupp, *Bauernsatiren: Entstehung und Entwicklung des bäuerlichen Genres in der deutschen und niederländischen Kunst ca.* 1470–1570 (Niederzier: Lukassen, 1986), pp. 148–49, fig. 125.

84 Sachs, quoted in Samuel Leslie Sumberg, *The Nuremberg Schembart Carnival,* edited by Robert Herndon Fife, Columbia University Germanic Studies, 12 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 31, n. 26.

85 The scene here refers to the *Schembart* festival of 1539, in which the Protestant zealot Dr. Andreas Osiander—to whom both festivals and game playing were anathema—was impersonated (the man in black holding a large key and a backgammon board) and subjected to public mockery. For a discussion of the *Schembart* festival, see Timothy Husband, *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1980, pp. 150–53, no. 40.

Checklist of the Exhibition

1. *The Stuttgart Playing Cards* (*Das Stuttgarter Kartenspiel*)

GERMAN, UPPER RHINELAND, CA. 1430

Paper (six layers in pasteboard) with gold ground and opaque paint over pen and ink, 7½ × 4¾ in. (19.1 × 12.1 cm)

SUITS: Falcons, Ducks, Hounds, and Stags

13 cards in each suit: Falcons and Ducks: King, Upper Knave, Under Knave, Banner (10), 9 through 1. Hounds and Stags: Queen, Upper Dame, Under Dame, Banner (10), 9 through 1

52 cards, of which 49 survive

Landesmuseum Württemberg, Stuttgart (KK grau 15–63)

EXHIBITED: King, Upper Knave, and 9 of Falcons (KK grau 52, 53, and 62); Upper Knave, Under Knave, and 5 of Ducks (KK grau 41, 42, and 46); Queen, Banner, and 4 of Hounds (KK grau 28, 39, and 34); Queen, 8, and 5 of Stags (KK grau 15, 25, and 22)

2. *The Courtly Hunt Cards* (*Das Hofjagdspiel*)

Workshop of Konrad Witz (active in Basel, 1434–44)

GERMAN, UPPER RHINELAND, CA. 1440–45

Paper (pasteboard) with watercolor, opaque paint, and gold over pen and ink, 6¼ × 3⅜ in. (15.9 × 9.8 cm)

SUITS: Falcons, Herons, Hounds, and Lures

14 cards in each suit: King, Queen, Upper Knave, Under Knave, Banner (10), 9 through 1

56 cards, of which 54 survive

Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer (KK 5018–5071)

EXHIBITED: Upper Knave of Falcons (KK 5069); Upper Knave, 5, and 1 of Herons (KK 5068, 5053, and 5026); 9 and 5 of Hounds (KK 5032 and 5036)

3. *The Playing Cards by the Master of the Playing Cards*

Master of the Playing Cards (German, active ca. 1425–50)

GERMAN, UPPER RHINELAND, CA. 1435–40

Copperplate engraving on paper (suits signs printed from a separate plate), approx. 5⅛ × 3½ in. (13 × 9 cm)

SUITS: Stags, Birds, Beasts of Prey (Bears and Lions), Wild Men, and Flowers (Roses, Cyclamen, and Pinks)

12 (?) cards in each suit: King, Queen, Upper Knave, Under Knave, 9 through 2; apparently no Banner (10) or 1

Original number of cards is uncertain, possibly 48

EXHIBITED: Queen of Stags, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Stephen Bullard Memorial Fund (32.482); Queen of Flowers, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Janet Lee Kadesky Ruttenberg Fund, in honor of Colta Ives, and Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 2006 (2006.429); 5 of Flowers, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Katherine E. Bullard Fund in memory of Francis Bullard (1981.80)

4. *The Small Playing Cards of Master ES*

Master ES (German, active ca. 1450–67)

GERMAN, UPPER RHINELAND, CA. 1460

Copperplate engraving on paper, approx. 3¾ × 2½ in. (9.5 × 6.5 cm)

SUITS: Animals, Shields, Helmets, and Flowers

13 cards in each suit: King, Queen, Upper Knave, Under Knave, 9 through 1

52 cards, of which about 15 survive

EXHIBITED: King of Helmets, Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund (1949.564)

5. *The Large Playing Cards of Master ES*

Master ES (German, active ca. 1450–67)

GERMAN, UPPER RHINELAND, 1463

Copperplate engraving on paper, approx. 5⅛ × 3½ in. (13 × 9 cm)

SUITS: Men, Hounds, Birds, and Shields

12 cards in each suit: King, Queen, Upper Knave, Under Knave, 9 through 2

48 cards, of which about 41 survive

EXHIBITED: Knave of Men, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Rosenwald Collection (1961.17.58); 6 of Birds, Cincinnati Art Museum, Bequest of Herbert Greer French (1943.68)

6. *The Round Playing Cards of Master PW of Cologne*

Master PW of Cologne (active in Cologne, ca. 1490–1515)

GERMAN, LOWER RHINELAND, COLOGNE, CA. 1500

Copperplate engraving on paper, diam. approx. 2¾ in. (7 cm)

SUITS: Pinks, Roses, Columbines, Rabbits, and Parrots

14 cards in each suit: King, Queen, Upper Knave, Under Knave, 10 through 1 plus one card with an inscription honoring Cologne and another with the image of Death

72 cards, of which 72 survive

EXHIBITED: Under Knave of Pinks, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Harvey D. Parker Collection-Harvey Drury Parker Fund (P18239); 6 of Roses, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Anonymous gift in memory of FitzRoy Carrington (55.135); Upper Knave of Parrots, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Rosenwald Collection (1948.11.138)

7. *Four Woodcut Cards*

GERMAN, UPPER RHINELAND, BASEL, CA. 1480–1520

Woodcut on paper with coloring, approx. 2¼ × 1⅔ in. (5.7 × 4.2 cm)

SUITS: Acorns, Flowers, Bells, Shields, and possibly others unknown

Structure of deck unknown

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. , Rosenwald Collection (1943.3.711, 1943.3.1759–.1782)

EXHIBITED: Upper Knave and 8 of Acorns (1943.3.1778 and .1776); Under Knave and 9 of Flowers (1943.3.1763 and .1762)

8. *The Courtly Household Cards* (*Das Hofämterspiel*)

GERMAN, UPPER RHINELAND, CA. 1450

Woodcut on paper (pasteboard) with watercolor, opaque paint, pen and ink, and tooled gold and silver, 5½ × 3 15⁄16 in. (14 × 10 cm)

SUITS: Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, and France

12 cards in each suit: King, Queen, Master of the Household (10), Marshal (9), 8 and 7 (all different figures), Lady-in-Waiting (6), 5 through 2 (all different figures), and Fool (1). See chart on p. 127.

48 cards, of which 48 survive

Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer (KK 5077–5124)

EXHIBITED: King of Germany (KK 5079); 7 (Chamberlain) and 1 (Fool) of Bohemia (KK 5082 and 5106); 4 (Trumpeter) of Hungary (KK 5088); 9 (Marshal) and 6 (Lady-in-Waiting) of France (KK 5115 and 5118)

9. *Tarot*

NORTH ITALIAN, 15TH CENTURY

Woodcut on paper (uncut sheet), 11¼–11¾ × 17⅛–17⅜ in. (28.7–29.8 × 43.4–44 cm)

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Rosenwald Collection (1951.16.6)

10. *The Visconti-Sforza Tarot*

Workshop of Bonifacio Bembo (Italian, active ca. 1442–77; d. before 1482)

ITALIAN, MILAN, CA. 1450

Paper (pasteboard) with opaque paint on tooled gold ground, 6¾ × 3⅜ in. (17.3 × 8.7 cm)

SUITS: Cups, Swords, Batons, and Coins

14 cards in each suit: King, Queen, Knight, Knave, 10 through 1 plus 21 trump cards and 1 Fool

78 cards, of which 74 survive (6 by a different artist, ca. 1480)

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York (MS M.630.1–.35)

EXHIBITED: Knight, Knave, and 5 of Cups (MS M.630.17, .18, and .26); Queen and 10 of Swords (MS M.630.23 and .35); King of Batons (MS M.630.19); Mountebank, Pope, Wheel of Fortune, and Traitor (MS M.630.1, .4, .9, and .11)

11. *The Visconti Tarot*

Workshop of Bonifacio Bembo (Italian, active ca. 1442–77; d. before 1482)

ITALIAN, MILAN, CA. 1450

Paper (pasteboard) with opaque paint on tooled gold ground, 7⅜ × 3½ in. (18.9 × 9 cm)

SUITS: Cups, Swords, Batons, and Coins

14 cards in each suit: King, Queen, Knight, Knave, 10 through 1 plus 21 trump cards and 1 Fool

78 cards, of which 67 survive

Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut (ITA 109)

EXHIBITED: Knave of Cups; 10; Knight (female) of Swords; World, Death, and Love

12. *The Cloisters Playing Cards*

SOUTH NETHERLANDISH, BURGUNDIAN TERRITORIES, CA. 1475–80

Paper (four layers in pasteboard) with pen and ink, opaque paint, glazes, and applied silver and gold, approx. 5 3/16 × 2¾ in. (13.2 × 7 cm)

SUITS: Collars, Tethers, Horns, and Nooses

13 cards in each suit: King, Queen, Knave, 10 through 1

52 cards, of which 52 survive

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Cloisters Collection, 1983 (1983.515.1–.52)

EXHIBITED: All 52 cards

13. *The Playing Cards of Hans Schäufelein*

Hans Schäufelein (German, Nuremberg ca. 1480–ca. 1540 Nördlingen)

Published by Wolfgang Rösch

GERMAN, NUREMBERG, CA. 1535

Woodcut on paper colored with stencil, 3¾ × 2⅜ in. (9.5 × 6 cm)

SUITS: Acorns, Leafs, Hearts, and Bells

13 cards in each suit: King, Upper Knave, Under Knave, 10 through 1

52 cards, of which 48 survive (in this deck)

Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (GNM Sp 7074–7120 Kapsel 516)

EXHIBITED: The suit of Bells (Under Knave is missing) (GNM Sp 7109–7120 Kapsel 516)

14. *The Playing Cards of Peter Flötner*

Peter Flötner (German, Thurgau 1485–1546 Nuremberg), Published by Hans Christoph Zell

GERMAN, NUREMBERG, CA. 1540

Woodcut on paper with watercolor, opaque paint, and gold; the d'Este arms are hand drawn in pen and ink on the 2 of every suit, 4⅛ × 2⅜ in. (10.5 × 5.9 cm)

SUITS: Acorns, Leafs, Hearts, and Bells

12 cards in each suit: King, Upper Knave, Under Knave, Banner (10), 9 through 2

48 cards, of which 47 survive (in this deck)

Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (GMN Sp 7418 1–47 Kapsel 516)

EXHIBITED: All 47 cards

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Acknowledgments

Many contributed in important ways to the production of this publication and to the organization of the exhibition it accompanies. Here, I am singling out those who have worked directly with me and without whose support and efforts neither would have been accomplished. A debt of gratitude is owed to colleagues at lending institutions, without whose generous participation, the exhibition would not have been possible—abroad: Yasmin Doosry, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg; Ingrid-Sibylle Hoffmann, Landesmuseum Württemberg, Stuttgart; Franz Kirchweger, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer, Vienna—and domestically: Jonathan Bober and Gregory Jecmen, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Helen Burnham, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Jane Glaubinger, The Cleveland Museum of Art; Kristin Spangenberg, Cincinnati Art Museum; Roger Wieck and William M. Voelkle, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York; and Timothy Young, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven. Many colleagues throughout The Metropolitan Museum of Art provided essential assistance yet must go unnamed, but vital support was provided by Martha Deese, Maria E. Fillas, Patricia Gilkison, Jennifer Russell, and Linda Sylling in the Exhibitions Department; Peter Antony, Paul Booth, Barbara Cavaliere, Nancy Grubb, Ellen Hurst, Mark Polizzotti, Josephine Rodriguez-Massop, Gwen Roginsky, Carl W. Scarbrough, Michael Sittenfeld, and Jane S. Tai in the Editorial Department; Chelsea Amato, Michael Langley, Emile Molin, and Susan Sellers in the Design Department; Barbara J. Bridgers and Karin L. Willis in The Photograph Studio; Allison E. Barone, Sarah Boyd, and Aileen Chuk in the Registrar's Office; David del Gaizo and Nadine M. Orenstein, Drue Heinz Curator in Charge in the Department of Drawings and Prints; Christine E. Brennan, Michael K. Carter, Jeri Garbaccio, C. Griffith Mann, Michel David-Weill Curator in Charge of Medieval Art and The Cloisters, Christine D. McDermott, Thomas C. Vinton, Andrew Winslow, and Nancy Wu in the Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters; and Martin Bansbach, Marjorie Shelley, Sherman Fairchild Conservator in Charge, and Yana van Dyke in the Sherman Fairchild Center for Works on Paper. And, finally, special thanks go to Nicholas.

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ISBN 978-1-58839-608-2
9 781588 396082
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES