

Symbol Sheet For French Tapestries

Portiere aux armes

- Head of Apollo:** Symbol of the sun god, King Louis XIV's personal symbol
- Fleur de Lys:** Symbol of French Kings and The Bourbon family (shown against a blue cartouche)
- The Crown:** Symbol of Kings
- Scepter:** Royal scepter with the fleur de lys
- Hand of Justice:**
- 2 Necklaces:** Collars of the orders of Saint-Michel and Saint-Espirit
- Helmet with feather:** Royal ceremonial helmet with pink ostrich plumes
- Bow, quiver of arrows, flags, Swords, spears cannons trumpets:** Military Symbols and trophies

Portiere du Char de Triomphe

- The Sun:** King Louis XIV' personal symbol and symbol of Greek Sun god, Apollo.
- Balance Scales:** Symbol of truth and justice
- Cornucopias:** Symbol of abundance
- Palm branches:** Symbol of Victory
- Armors:** Symbols of War
- Chariot:** Symbol of Triumph
- Snake:** Symbol of civil wars, rebellion against the King

Cartouche (blue) bearing the arms of France and Navarre (red)

Portiere aux armes



Woven at the Gobelins Tapestry Manufactory; woven after a cartoon by Pierre-Josse Perrot, designer; woven under the direction of Étienne-Claude Le Blond, workshop director

French, Gobelins, about 1730 - 1740

Silk and wool

H: 11 ft. 10 in.; W: 8 ft. 9 in.

85.DD.100

The arms of Louis XV, who came to the throne as a five-year-old in 1715, announce this tapestry's royal origin and purpose. Under the head of Apollo, from whom the sun's rays emanate, a large crown tops a simulated bronze cartouche. Within the cartouche, the three fleurs-de-lis symbolize the arms of France, hanging in the center of an ermine cloak flanked by two military trophies. Suspended medals hang below, in front of the crossed scepter and the "hand of justice," symbolizing the king's legal power. A royal ceremonial helmet at the bottom seems to rest upon another military trophy. The tapestry's color and design were new, but its celebratory purpose and the specific imagery harked back to the symbols of Louis XIV from the previous reign.

The Gobelins tapestry manufactory wove twenty-eight examples of this tapestry over a period of about fifteen years. One of these *portières* decorated the door of a salon at Versailles, others hung in several of the royal châteaux, and French ambassadors used several to decorate their embassies.

Portiere du Char de Triomphe



Woven at the Gobelins Tapestry Manufactory; after cartoon by Charles Le Brun, designer
French, Paris, 1715 - 1716
Silk and wool
H: 11 ft. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.; W: 8 ft. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.
83.DD.20

Charles Le Brun designed this tapestry, known as the *Char de Triomphe* (Chariot of Triumph), to hang across the door of a formal interior to keep out drafts. Its royal heraldic symbols—the crown, the scales of justice, the Sun King's symbol, a ribbon with his now-faded motto, and a cartouche with the king's arms—would have clearly announced to visitors the importance of its owner, Louis XIV. The triumphal cart rolls over a serpent representing the king's enemies and alluding to his victories in war. Numerous fleur-de-lis, the symbol of the French royal family, adorn the border.

Although woven for Louis XIV, this tapestry and others from the same series hung in the royal palaces year-round long after his reign ended. Twenty-four hangings of this design decorated the Palace of Versailles in 1789. Part of this tapestry's original lining has survived, with an inscription and the royal inventory number. The number corresponds to an entry in the journal of the *Garde Meuble de la Couronne* (Royal Furniture Warehouse), which records the tapestry as one of four delivered to Versailles on October 27, 1717.