

TAPESTRY ROOM • NORTH END

203 Resembling a European great hall, this gallery features ten monumental tapestries from two different series: *Scenes from the Life of Cyrus the Great* and *Scenes from the Life of Abraham*. The subjects of the two tapestry cycles—one from the Bible, one from ancient history—reflect the dual interests of the Renaissance, Isabella Gardner’s favorite time period. Along with the tapestries, Gardner installed paintings, sculpture, furniture and decorative arts from the middle ages up to her own time; her installations present a personal approach to art’s rich and varied history.

The Tapestry Room was created when Gardner remodeled the museum’s eastern side in 1914–15. A comprehensive restoration project completed in 2011 has returned this gallery to its original appearance.



Tapestry: Abraham Receives Rebecca
Flemish (Brussels), mid-16th century. Flemish Silk and wool

Based on the story of Abraham as told in the *Book of Genesis*, this tapestry shows Abraham (at right) extending his hand to welcome Rebecca, the young woman chosen to be his son Isaac’s wife. Isaac, wearing armor, stands behind his father. Look for the next part of this story behind Isaac, where the couple’s wedding feast is taking place in a grand palace.

The figures are set in a verdant landscape surrounded by a border of fruits, flowers, and vegetables. An avid gardener herself, Isabella Gardner may have enjoyed the connections between these woven landscapes, the plants in the museum’s courtyard, and the parkland of the Emerald Necklace just outside.

In her typical eclectic fashion, Gardner intermingled the two tapestry cycles and hung them in seemingly random order. You can tell the two cycles apart by looking at the top of each scene: the *Abraham* tapestries have a Latin inscription, while the *Cyrus* tapestries do not.



Armchair (twelve in this room)
North Italian, mid-18th century
Walnut, with poplar and pine

This chair shows the exuberant curves and delicate ornamentation of the 18th century Rococo style. The undulating lines of the oval back give the piece a particularly sculptural appearance. Continuing the floral motif of the tapestry above, carved foliage sprouts along the arms and legs. Notice the small carved armrests that playfully mimic upholstered pads.

Isabella Gardner was unusual among American collectors in preferring Italian furniture over French, English, or American. While she worked with advisors in forming her painting collection, Gardner seems to have made decisions about purchasing furniture on her own. Her use of furniture helps create the Gardner’s intimate atmosphere, and chairs like these seem to have their own personality.

TAPESTRY ROOM • EAST WALL

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Tapestry: A Messenger from Harpagos Brings Cyrus a Letter Concealed in a Hare
about 1535–50
Flemish (Brussels)
Silk and wool

The five episodes in this set are based on the ancient Greek writer Herodotus’s account of the life of the founder of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great. In this tapestry we see Cyrus as a young man (at right), receiving a letter hidden inside a rabbit. This secret message launched his empire building, telling him the time was right to unseat his grandfather and claim his kingdom. The background for this drama is a bucolic landscape, with couples strolling and a hunt taking place. All of the figures wear fashionable clothing of the mid-16th century, making connections between political scheming of the past and present.

Flanders was the most important center for tapestry manufacture, the costliest of art forms. Because of their size and complexity, tapestries involved large amounts of skilled labor and expensive materials to produce. Often commissioned as a series, tapestries offered storytelling on a grand scale.

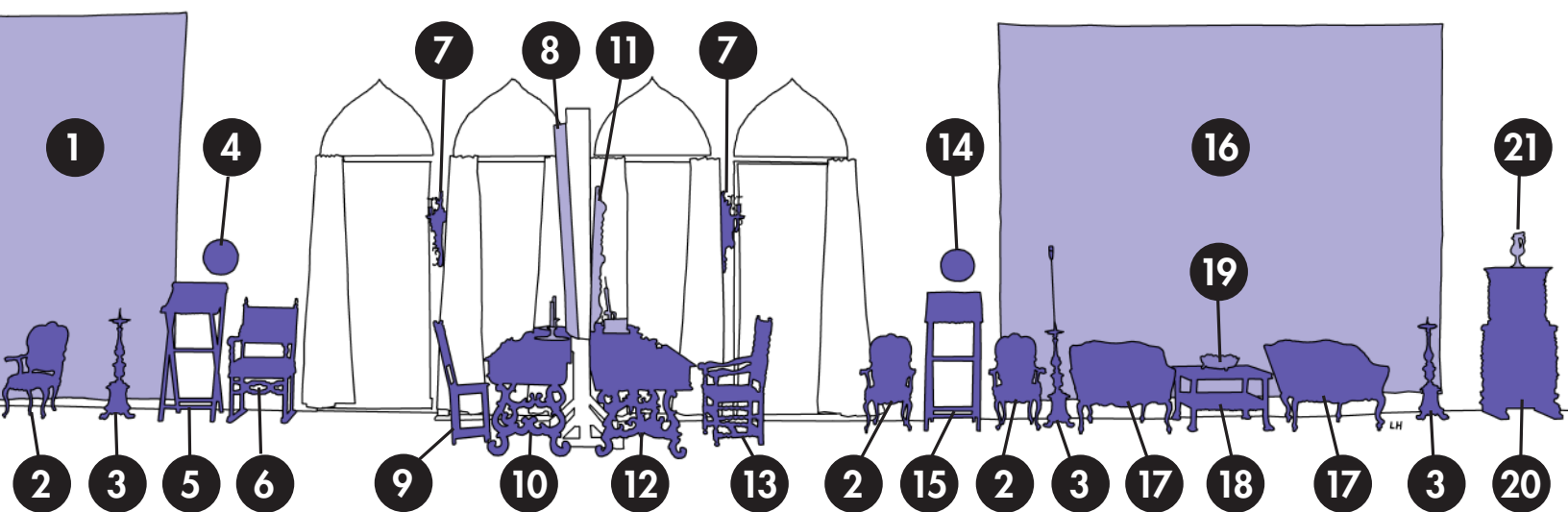


Saint Engracia, about 1474
Bartolomé Bermejo (Spanish, about 1436–about 1498)
Oil, tempera, and gold on wood

Richly dressed in gold brocade and with a cloak trimmed in ermine, Saint Engracia stands before a throne. According to legend, Engracia was a 4th century Portuguese princess who was brutally tortured by Roman officials in the city of Zaragoza for her Christian beliefs. The artist shows her with the typical attribute of a martyr saint: a palm frond. In her left hand she holds a nail, one of the instruments of her torture.

This painting was the central panel of an altarpiece commissioned by a wealthy merchant for a chapel in northern Spain. Bermejo was profoundly influenced by Netherlandish painters and their use of oil painting; he was instrumental in transmitting the richly realistic style made possible by the new technique to other Spanish artists.

TAPESTRY ROOM • EAST WALL



1. Tapestry: A Messenger Brings Cyrus a Letter Concealed in a Hare. Flemish (Brussels), about 1535–50. Silk and wool

2. Armchair (twelve in this room). North Italian, mid-18th century. Walnut, with poplar and pine

3. Torchère (six in this room). Italian (?), 16th century. Copper alloy

4. Plate depicting grapes. German (Nuremberg), 17th century. Brass

5. Lectern with arms of Pope Clement IX (reigned 1667–69). Italian. Wood with embroidered velvet

6. Armchair (five in this room). Italian (?), late 19th century. Painted and gilded walnut and chestnut, gilded brass

7. Candle bracket (two). Italian, 16th century. Painted wrought iron

8. Saint Engracia, about 1474. Bartolomé Bermejo (Spanish, about 1436–about 1498). Oil, tempera, and gold on wood

9. Chair. Northern Italian, 17th century. Walnut

10. Writing Table. Central Italian, 17th–18th century. Walnut and iron

On the table (left to right): pewter **Candleholders**, about 1909, Ignaz Marcel Gaugengigl (German, 1855–1932); brass **Seal** with wooden handle, Italian; lacquered **Box** with mother-of-pearl, Japanese; silver **Reading Glass**, English, late 19th century; five-piece silver **Desk Set**, Italian (Venetian), 18th century; silver **Box with Virgin and Child**, Russian (?); **Sealing Wax**; leather **Pen Holder**; tooled leather **Binding** with arms of a cardinal; silver **Tray**, Portuguese, 18th century; two **Quill Pens** (one feather, the other silver) with a coat of arms; silver **Box**, Indian, late 19th century; silver **Cup**, probably Swedish, early 19th century; tooled leather **Binding** with the arms of Pope Clement XII; tooled leather **Binding**; ivory **Paper Cutter** with initials of John Lowell Gardner, late 19th century; **Fan**,

Japanese; wrought iron **Candle bracket**

11. Pope Innocent X, about 1650. Studio of Diego Velázquez (Spanish, 1599–1660). Oil on canvas

12. Writing table. Central Italian, about 1700. Walnut with bronze fittings

On the table (left to right): wood **Box** containing incense, late 19th century; tooled **Leather Binding** with the arms of a prelate of the Cavazzi family; iron **Lock with key**; wood **Box** with Chinese poem on sliding cover, mid-19th century; soapstone **Snake**; tooled **Leather Portfolio**; Album with Chinese characters; round lacquered wood **Box**, late 19th century; round jade **Box**, late 19th century; brass **Candle Stand**

13. Armchair. English or Welsh, late 17th century. Wood

14. Plate depicting the Annunciation. German (Nuremberg), 17th century. Brass

15. Lectern with the arms of the Colonna family. Italian. Wood with embroidered velvet

16. Tapestry: Queen Tomyris Learns that her Son Spargapises has been Taken Captive by Cyrus. Workshop of Jan van der Moyer, Flemish (Brussels), about 1535–50. Silk and wool

17. Wide Armchair. Italian, late 19th century. Poplar with velvet

18. Table. Italian, 19th century. Wood with silk damask

19. Dish. Japanese, 19th century. Copper stained to resemble bronze

20. Cabinet. Italian (Liguria), late 16th century. Walnut on a 19th-century stand

21. Ewer. South German, 15th century. Brass

Isabella Gardner commissioned the **floor tiles** in this room from Henry Mercer's Moravian Pottery and Tile Works in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Look for more Mercer tiles on the floors of the Dutch and Gothic Rooms.



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TAPESTRY ROOM • SOUTH END

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21 **Archangel Michael**, about 1470
Pedro García de Benabarre
(Spanish, active 1445–96)
Tempera and gold on wood

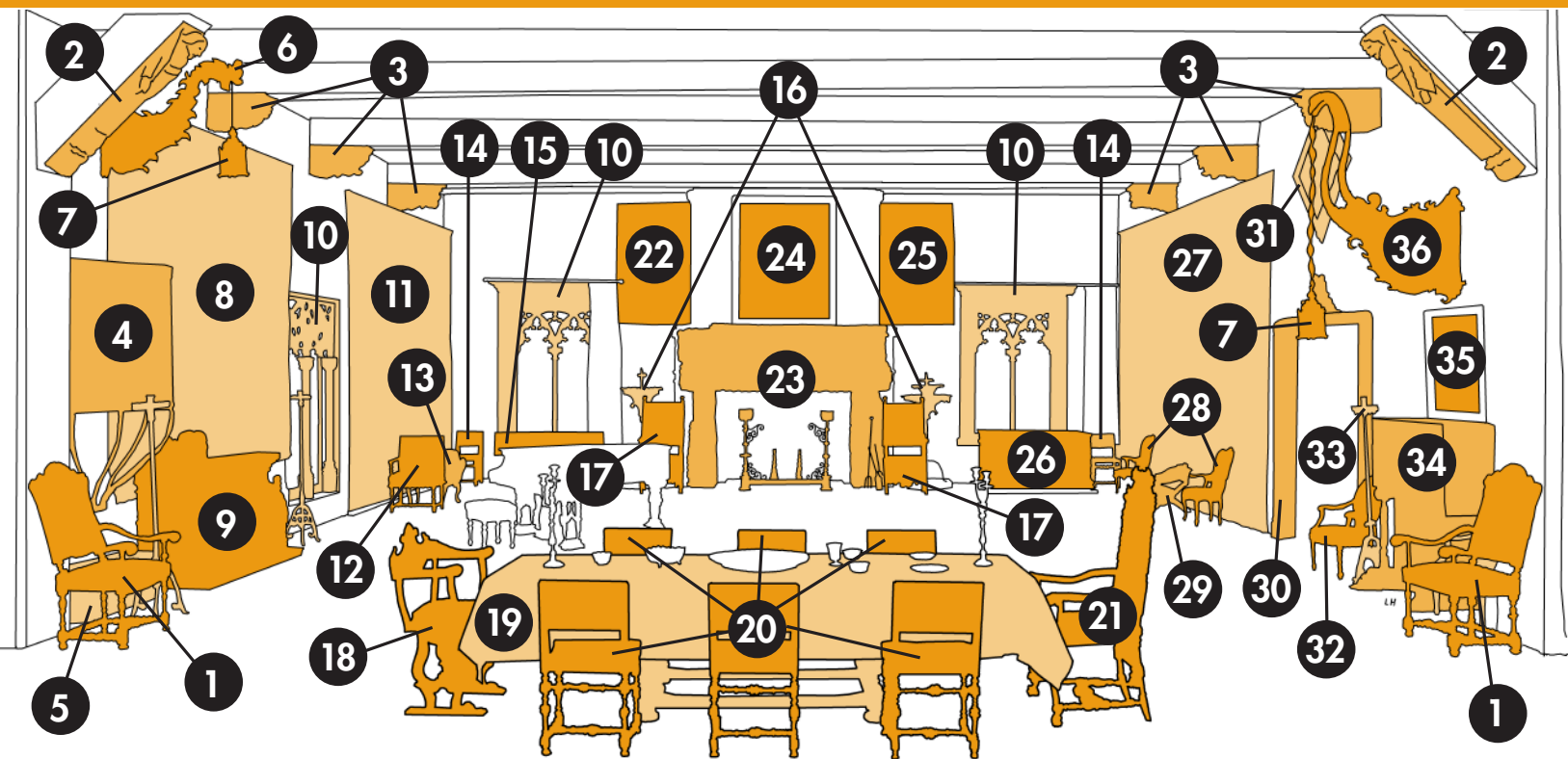
This painting shows the Archangel Michael in his two principle roles: weigher of souls on Judgment Day and destroyer of Satan. On the left an angel embraces a soul, while on the right, Satan appears as a fantastic two-faced monster ready to capture another soul. Michael positions his lance over the monster, wearing a suit of studded armor (notice how the raised studs reinforce the sense of his power).

Side chair with original upholstery (four in this room, and six with reproduction upholstery)
Netherlandish, 1750–65.
Metal-leafed and painted leather

These side chairs were created in the 19th century—possibly at the direction of Isabella Gardner—in a style popular in 17th century Holland. Museum staff speculate that Mrs. Gardner may have acquired more leather panels than she needed to cover the walls of the Veronese Room (on the next floor), and rather than letting such beautifully decorative panels go to waste decided to use the extra panels to create these chairs.

The six chairs around the table at the fireplace end of the room were reupholstered in 2011 with reproduction leather that closely matched the original; four other chairs that occupy less prominent positions at the ends of the room have been left unrestored so that visitors can compare the two versions.

TAPESTRY ROOM • SOUTH END



1. **Armchair** (two in this room). Italian, 19th century. Walnut
2. **Clerical Figure**. English, 17th century (?). Walnut
3. **Corbel carved in human and animal grotesque forms** (six). French (Norman), 14th century. Pine
4. **Pulpit**. Spanish or French, 14th or 15th century. Wrought iron and paint
5. **Chest**. Spanish, 16th century. Walnut
6. **Bracket**. German (?), 17th century. Wrought iron.
7. **Lantern**. Italian (?). Brass and glass
8. **Tapestry: Abraham's Servant Presents Jewels and Raiment to Rebecca**. Flemish (Brussels), mid 16th century. Silk and wool
9. **Choir Stalls**. French, 14th–15th century and later. Oak
10. **Window**. Spanish (?), 15th–16th century. Stone
11. **Tapestry: Queen Tomyris Receives the Messenger who Brings from Cyrus a Proposal of Marriage**. Flemish (Brussels), about 1535–50. Silk and wool
12. **Armchair**. French (?), 19th century. Walnut
13. **Armchair**. Italian (Venice), late 19th century. Walnut
14. **Side Chair** with original upholstery (four in this room). Netherlandish, 1750–65. Metal-leafed and painted leather
15. **Sacristy bench**. Spanish. Pine
16. **Candelabra**. Flemish, late 15th century. Iron
17. **Armchair**. Italian (Milan), late 19th century. Walnut and bronze
18. **Armchair**. Italian, about 1900. Walnut
19. **Table**. Dutch, 17th century. Oak

On the table (left to right): two silver-plated copper **Candelabra**, once the property of Isabella Gardner's grandmother, Isabella Tod Stewart, English, 19th century; two porcelain **Saucers** and **Bowl**, Japanese, 19th century; copper alloy **Bowl**, Japanese, 19th century; Majolica **Plate**, modern; glass **Goblet**, Bohemian, 19th century; two sets of lacquered **Bowls with Plates**, Japanese, 20th century

20. **Side Chair** with reproduction 18th-century Netherlandish upholstery (six in this room). Metal-leafed and painted leather

21. **Armchair**. English, 17th century. Wood

On the chair: Cushion. Italian, 17th century. Velvet with gold embroidery

22. **Trumpeters**. Flemish (probably Brussels), 1510–25. Silk and wool

23. **Fireplace**. French, around 1500. Painted limestone

In the fireplace: Wrought iron **Fire Screen**; **Andirons**; recast iron **Fire Back** by Henry Mercer (American, 1856–1930)

24. **Archangel Michael**, about 1470. Pedro García de Benabarre (Spanish, active 1445–96). Tempera and gold on wood

25. **Ladies Conversing with a Gentleman**. Flemish (probably Brussels), 1510–25. Silk and wool

26. **Carved Chest**. North European, 17th century. Oak

27. **Tapestry: King Astyages Commands Harpagos to Do Away With the Infant Cyrus**. Workshop of Jan van der Moyen (?), Flemish (Brussels), about 1535–50. Silk and wool

28. **Armchair** (twelve in this room). North Italian, mid-18th century. Walnut, with poplar and pine

29. **Low Armchair**. Italian, late 19th century. Walnut

30. **Doorway**. French or Flemish, partly modern in the style of the 15th century. Wood

31. **Funeral coat of arms of Mary Queen of Scots**, 1915. Made for Mrs. Gardner by Pierre de Chaignon la Rose (American, 1871–1940). Paint, gold, and silver on wood

32. **Armchair**. Central Italian, last quarter of the 18th century. Painted and gilded walnut

33. **Torchère** (four in this room). Iron

34. **Barqueño (writing desk and cabinet)**. Spanish, 17th century. Painted and gilded walnut, ivory, and iron

35. **La Gitana**, 1920. Louis Kronberg (American, 1872–1965). Oil on canvas


36. **Bracket**. German (?), 17th century. Iron

The **piano** is a New York Steinway & Sons model B made in 1903. Morris Carter, the museum's first director, gave the piano to the museum in 1936.



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TAPESTRY ROOM • WEST WALL

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Leaves from a Missal of Pope Clement VII, about 1523–27

Follower of Matteo da Milano (Italian, active about 1492–1523)
Paint and gold on vellum

This large manuscript, written and illustrated by hand for Pope Clement VII, shows the pope himself celebrating mass in the Vatican Palace’s Sistine Chapel. Deeply religious, Isabella Gardner combined this book with two other objects to form an enigmatic installation that might be interpreted as a meditation on central tenets of the Catholic faith. The brass plate depicts the origin of sin with the **Temptation of Adam and Eve**; the wooden **head of Christ** alludes to redemption through his death, while the book shows the way to salvation through the ritual of the Mass.



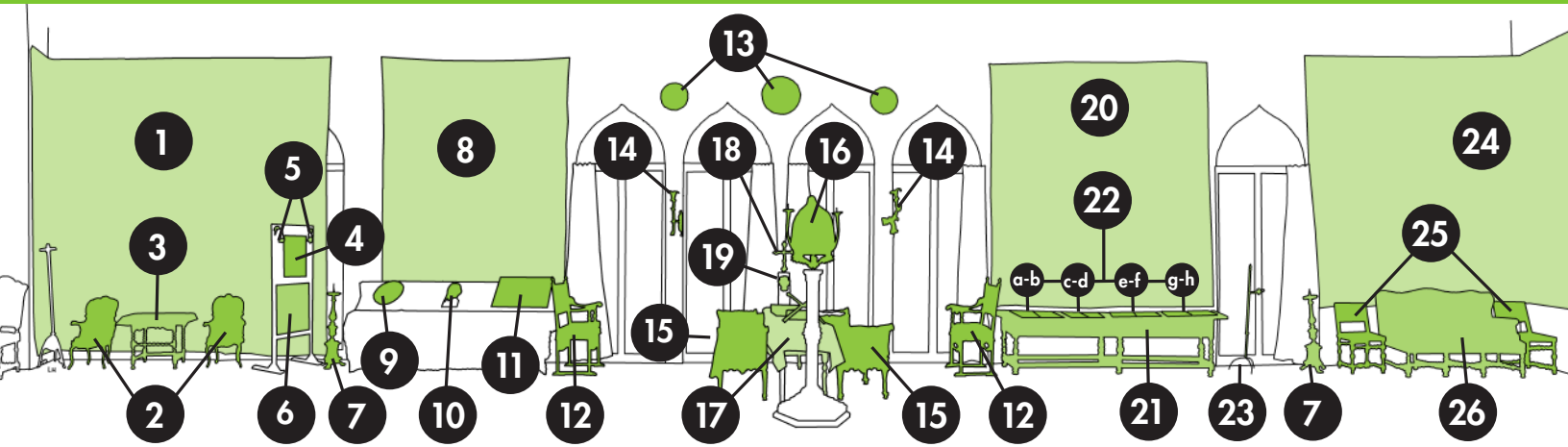
Candle Clock, leaf from the *Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices* of al-Jazari, 1354

Egypt (Cairo?)
Paint and gold on paper

This page is from an Egyptian version of a treatise on fantastic devices written in 1204 by the famous Arab inventor al-Jazari. The burning yellow candle releases metal balls into the red sling attached to the swordsman’s arm, causing him to drop the sword to trim the wick. The ball then falls into the falcon at the base, indicating that an hour has passed.

Why include manuscript paintings from the Islamic world in this gallery? With her love of Venice, a city that maintained vibrant ties with the Middle East, Gardner may have created this installation as a reminder of the importance of Islamic art and culture in the Renaissance.

TAPESTRY ROOM • WEST WALL



1. Tapestry: King Astyages Places Harpagos in Command of His Army. Workshop of Jan van der Moeyen, Flemish (Brussels), about 1535–50. Silk and wool

2. Armchair (twelve in this room). North Italian, mid-18th century. Walnut, with poplar and pine

3. Table. English, late 17th century. Wood

4. Assumption of the Virgin. Russian (Novgorod?), 15th century (?). Tempera and gold on wood

5. Holy Water Stoup. 19th century. Silver

6. Silk Panel, early 20th century. Raymond Duncan (American, 1875–1966). Painted silk

7. Torchère (six in this room). Italian (?), 16th century. Copper alloy

8. Tapestry: Abraham dismisses Hagar and Ishmael. Flemish (Brussels), mid 16th century. Silk and wool

9. Plate depicting the Temptation of Adam and Eve. German (Nuremberg), 15th century (?). Brass

10. Head of Christ. South German, second half of the 15th century. Painted lindenwood

11. Leaves from a Missal of Pope Clement VII, about 1523–27. Follower of Matteo da Milano (Italian, active about 1492–1523). Paint and gold on vellum

12. Armchair (five in this room). Italian (?), late 19th century. Painted and gilded walnut and chestnut, gilded brass

13. Three Plates depicting (from left to right): **Adam and Eve, Stags, and the Annunciation.** German, 15th–17th centuries. Brass

14. Candle Bracket. Wrought iron

15. Bench. Italian, late 19th century. Walnut

16. Candelabrum representing the Madonna della Misericordia. Central Italian, 1582. Painted and gilded wood on a later wood pedestal

17. Dresser. English, late 17th century. Oak and walnut veneer

Covering the dresser: Two Men Handling Cargo. Flemish (Brussels?), 1750–75. Wool and silk

On the dresser (front to back): Inlaid Book Stand, Indian, probably 18th century; *Manuscript of The Divan of Hafiz,* Persian, 1489–90, in a 19th

century binding; **Book of autographs,** with a silver-set emerald, given to Isabella Gardner on her 69th birthday (1909); lacquered wood **Box in the shape of a book,** Persian (?)

18. Processional Cross. Italian, about 1450. Partly gilded silver on wood core

19. Holy Water Stoup. Spanish (?), 17th or 18th century. Silver

20. Tapestry. Flemish (Brussels), mid 16th century. Silk and wool. *Currently off view for conservation.*

21. Table. Modern, in Spanish style. Oak

22. On the table: Leaves from al-Jazari's *Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices* (Egyptian, 1354): **The Candle Clock (a), A Water Clock (c), An Hydraulic Device (d)**

Leaf from an Arabic translation of *De Materia Medica (b)* by Dioscurides (Baghdad, 1224)

Two leaves from a manuscript of the *Book of Kings* of Ferdowsi (Persian, mid-15th century): **Kay Kaus Captured by the Divs (e)** and **Rustam Fighting with Suhrab (f)**

Two photographs (g) of leaves from the *Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices* of al-Jazari in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: **The Reckoner's Bloodletting Basin and Device for Display at a Drinking Party**

Catalogue of these miniatures handwritten by Isabella Gardner, 1915 (h)

23. Candlestick. 17th century. Iron

24. Tapestry: Abimelech Restores Sarah to Abraham. Flemish (Brussels), mid 16th century. Silk and wool

25. Side Chair with original upholstery (four in this room). Netherlandish, 1750–65. Metal-leafed and painted leather

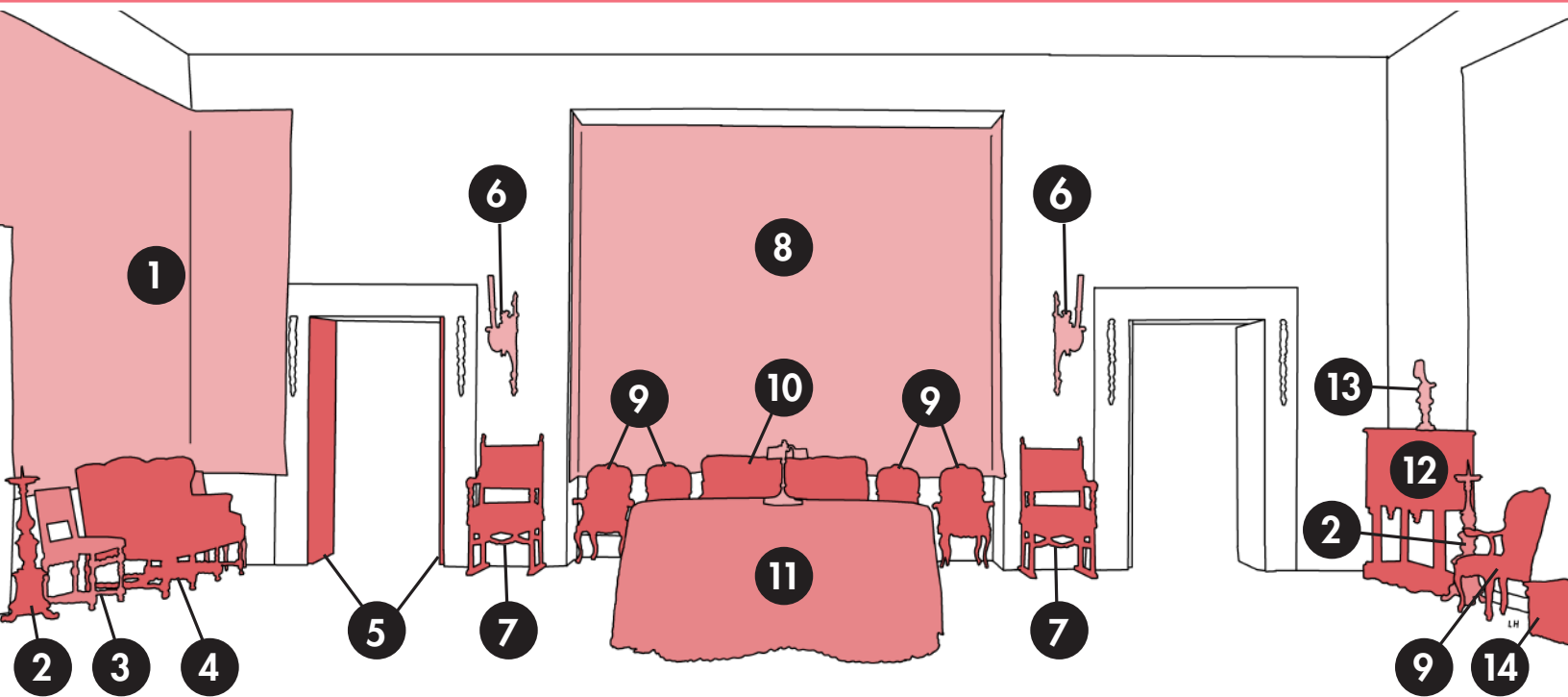
26. Sofa. English, early 19th century. Wood covered with wool and silk needlework (French or Netherlandish, 1675–1725)

Isabella Gardner commissioned the **floor tiles** in this room from Henry Mercer's Moravian Pottery and Tile Works in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Look for more Mercer tiles on the floors of the Dutch and Gothic Rooms.



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TAPESTRY ROOM • NORTH END



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2. Torchère (six in this room). Italian (?), 16th century. Copper alloy

3. Side Chair with original upholstery (four in this room). Netherlandish, 1750–65. Metal-leafed and painted leather

4. Sofa. English, early 19th century. Wood covered with wool and silk needlework (French or Netherlandish, 1675–1725)

5. Doors. Italian, 16th century. Wood

6. Candle Bracket. Iron and copper

7. Armchair (five in this room). Italian (?), late 19th century. Painted and gilded walnut and chestnut, gilded brass

8. Tapestry: Abraham Receives Rebecca. Flemish (Brussels), mid 16th century. Silk and wool

9. Armchairs (twelve in this room). Northern Italian, mid-18th century. Walnut, with poplar and pine

10. Sofa. American, 19th century. Wood with modern interpretation of original 17th-century Persian embroidery and velvet upholstery.

11. Oval Table. Italian, late 19th century with 17th century legs. Walnut

On the table: Oil Lamp with implements for smoking. Italian (Venice), 19th century. Silver

12. Credence. French, about 1500. Walnut

13. Ewer. Flemish, 19th century (?). Yellow bronze

14. Strongbox. Dutch or Spanish, 16th century. Iron

Isabella Gardner commissioned the **floor tiles** in this room from Henry Mercer's Moravian Pottery and Tile Works in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Inspired by medieval craft, Mercer's handmade, slightly irregular tiles were unlike any others made in the United States. Look for more Mercer tiles on the floors of the Dutch and Gothic Rooms.