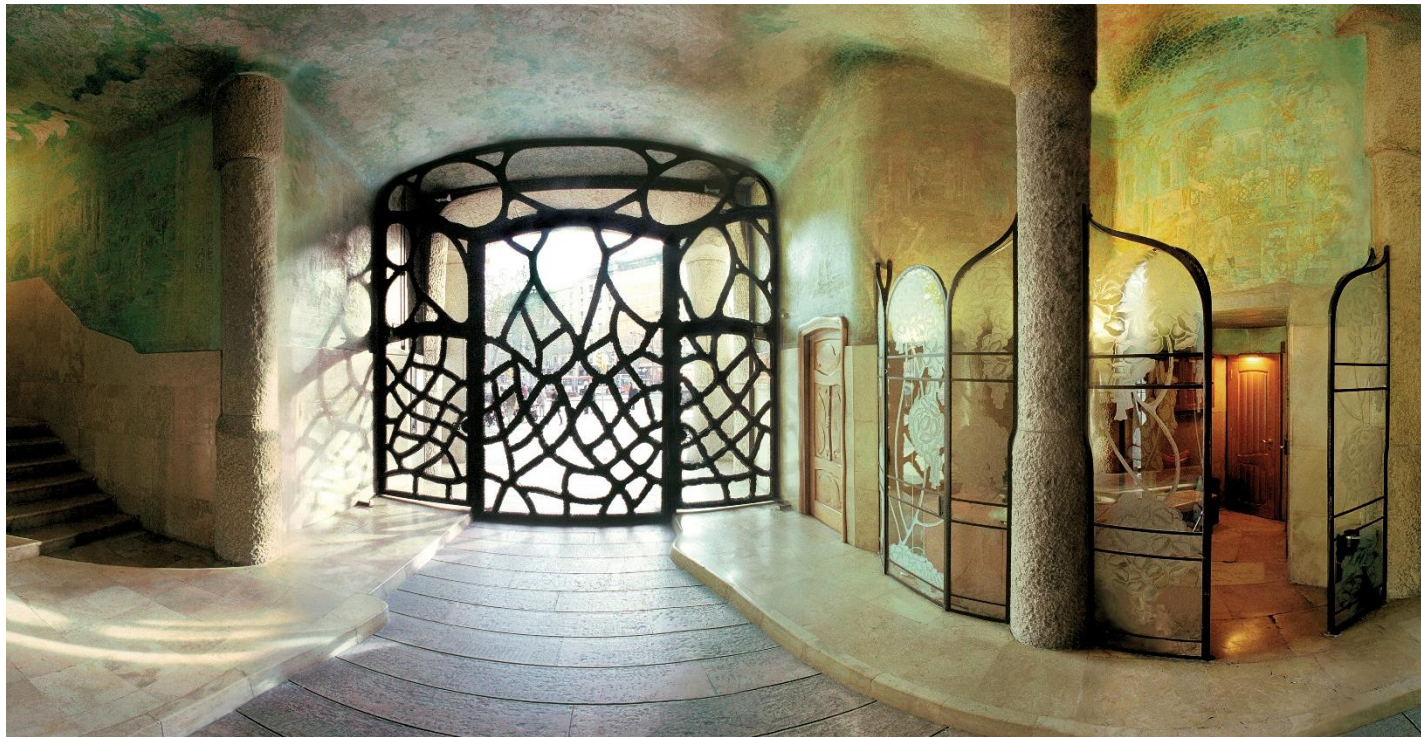


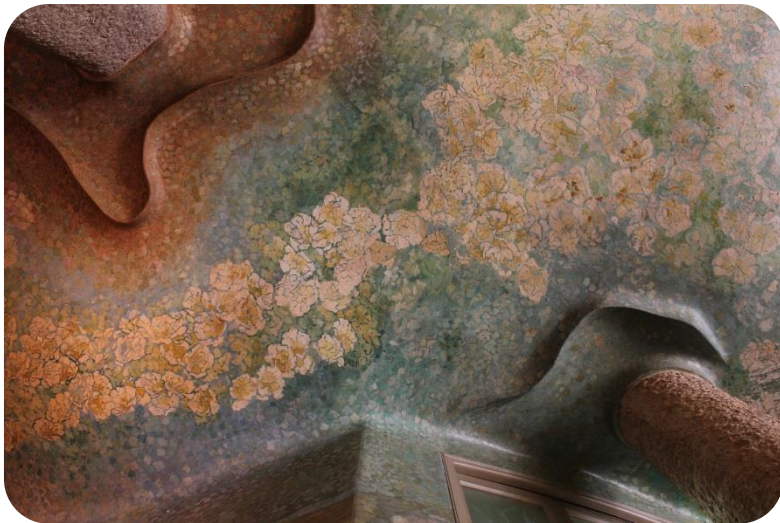
The mural paintings in the vestibules of La Pedrera



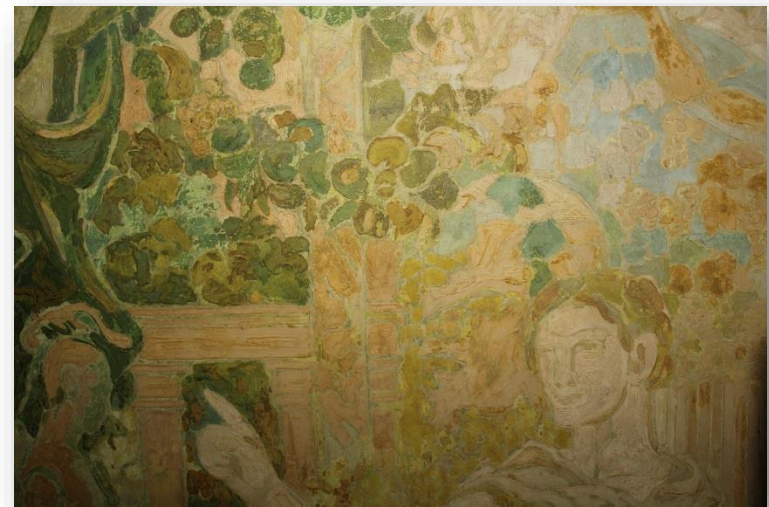
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The god Pan playing the panpipe, a garden, the Deadly Sins, bouquets of flowers, the god Vertumnus disguised in an attempt to seduce the goddess Pomona, a feast, a sun, an eagle, and even a shipwreck – these are just some of the scenes featured in the mural paintings in the vestibules of La Pedrera.

When the wrought iron door of the building opens before us, we are awed by the paintings on the walls and the ceilings of the vestibules. Visitors, who photograph every detail of the murals, seem less amazed by their iconographic meaning, which is difficult to discern at first sight, as by the exuberant use of colour.



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Little has been written about these murals. Some authors have even remarked that the paintings are out of keeping with the modernity that La Pedrera represents. Nevertheless, the pictorial decoration of the vestibules is an essential part of the building's decoration, as was the sadly lost decorative artwork of the dwellings.

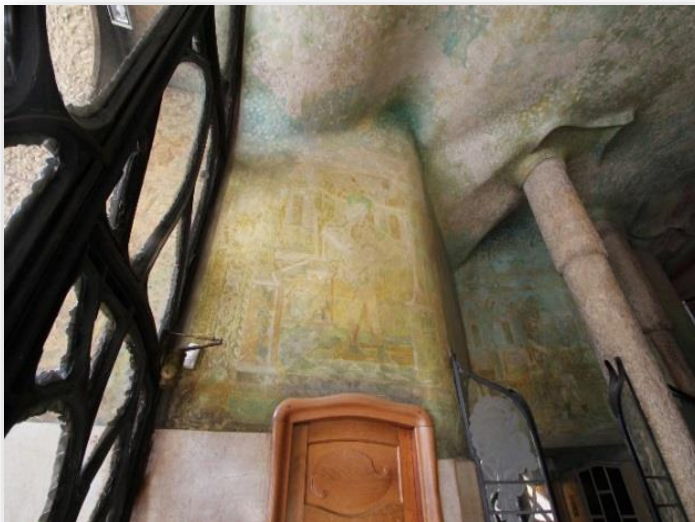
The latest research by Dr Carlos Alejandro Lupercio has accredited the authorship of the mural paintings, and has identified the scenes depicted in the vestibules. The painting decoration of the vestibules consisted of mimicking tapestries of mythological motifs held in the National Heritage collection.

The Symbolist painter Aleix Clapés (1850 – 1920) was entrusted, between 1909 and 1911, to oversee the pictorial decoration of La Pedrera. Clapés was aided by his assistants, the well-known painters Iu Pascual, Xavier Nogués and Teresa Lostau, who were just starting out.

Subject

The murals in the Passeig de Gràcia vestibule depict the loves of Vertumnus, god of the seasons, and Pomona, goddess of the fruit trees and gardens, as told by Ovid in the XIV book of *Metamorphoses*.

In the Carrer de Provença vestibule, several tapestry reproductions, executed with more interpretative freedom, converge in one space without any apparent delimitation between them. On the one side, the Deadly Sins and on the other, the series of the Heroes of the Trojan War and Les Aventures de Télémaque, inspired by passages from *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* respectively.



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The technique

Clapés used from black and white photographs or etchings of the original tapestries to make the copies with the *Diapré* technique. This method was originally employed to shade the colours forming the foliage in heraldic shields. The technique creates stunningly bright colours effects, but demands great discipline and dedication.

Clapés traced a grid over the “cartoons” that he then transferred, section by section, on to the walls. The different scenes were subsequently painted in oil.



Cartoon with grid
© Archivo Clapés

Passeig de Gràcia-Main Staircase

In the Passeig de Gràcia vestibule the artist purposely creates the illusion of a flower garden. This almost certainly led Clapés to propose the reproduction of the series of tapestries of Vertumnus and Pomona, with their plethora of floral and fruit motifs so crucial to the narration of the loves of these deities.

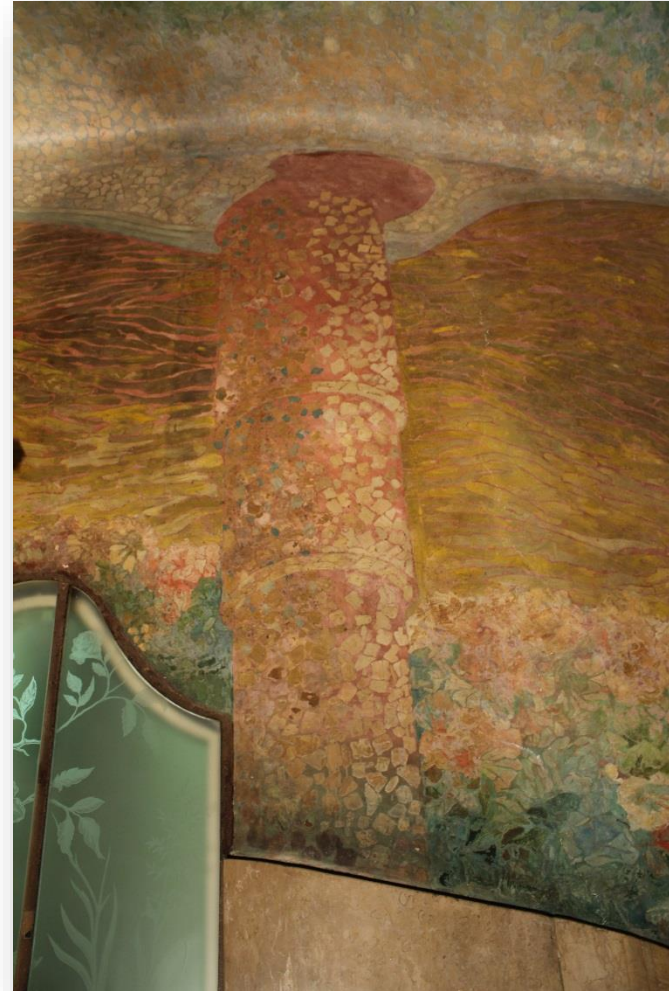


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Passeig de Gràcia-Main Staircase

A major element, a **variation on the tapestry reproduction**, is the *trompe-l'oeil* painted on the wall next to the main floor staircase and the ceiling above it. The pictorial work creates the **illusion of a garden next a “floating” staircase** that appears to be supported by columns on either side.

To achieve this effect, Clapés had copies of the **real columns painted on the wall opposite them**. Along the same wall and above the sinuous dado, the artist also ordered the painting of bouquets of flowers in full bloom. Grass lawns were painted in the impressionist style in order to achieve an effect of perspective.



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Passeig de Gràcia- Porter's lodge

The murals in the Passeig de Gràcia vestibule depict the loves of Vertumnus, god of the seasons, and **Pomona**, goddess of the fruit trees and gardens, as told by **Ovid in the XIV book of *Metamorphoses***.

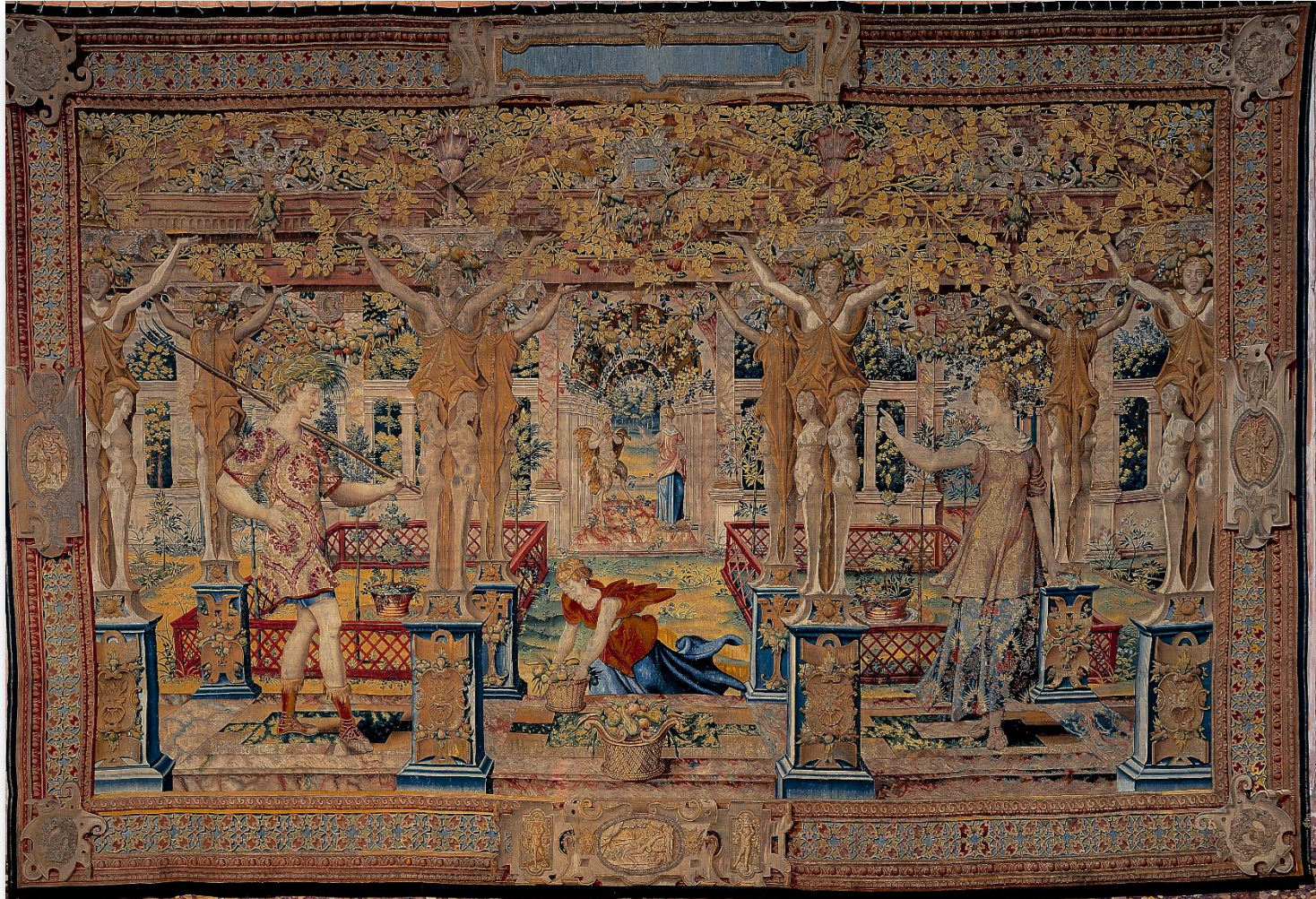
According to the story, **Vertumnus**, in a bid to woo Pomona, **assumed multiple guises**: harvester, labourer, pruner, gardener, soldier and fisherman. The vestibule murals show three of these transformations: **farmer, and fisherman**.



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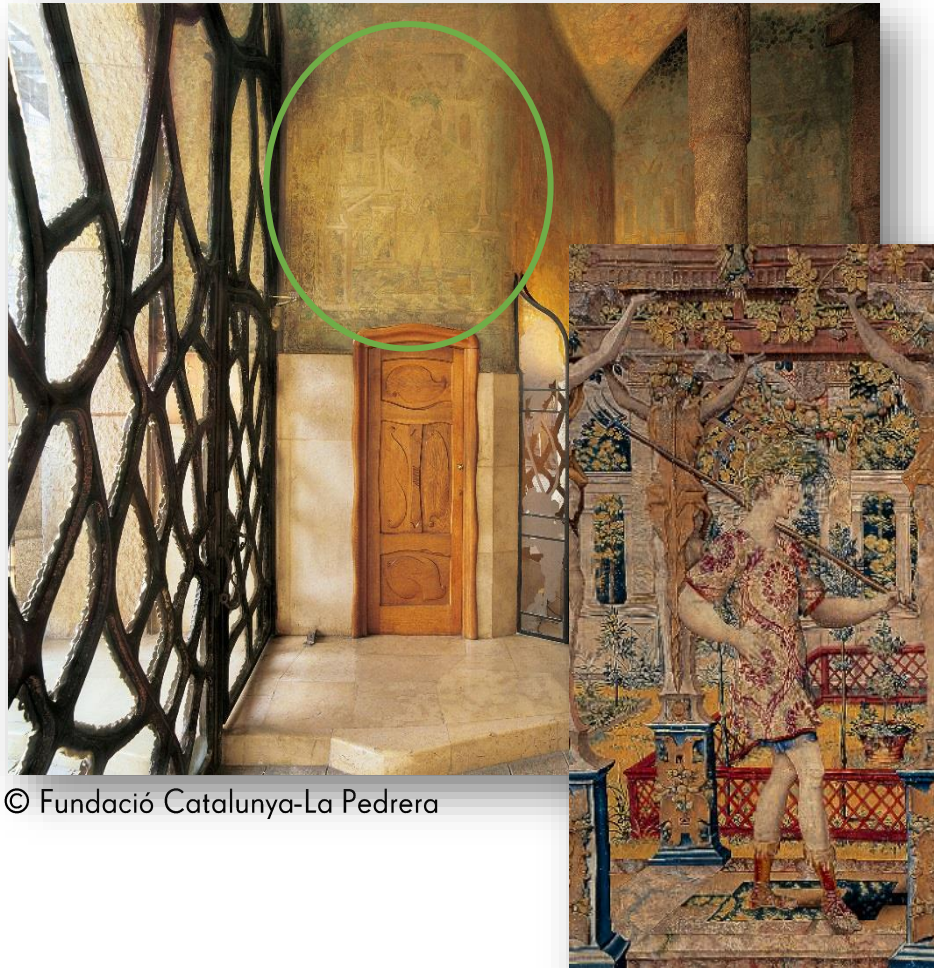
Passeig de Gràcia- Porter's lodge and main entrance door

Vertumnus transformed into a labourer



Passeig de Gràcia- Porter's lodge and main entrance door

Vertumnus transformed into a farmer



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Here **Vertumnus** approaches the goddess, with a spade (or pitchfork) resting on his shoulder, pretending to be a labourer.

The tapestry depicts the second appearance of the god before Pomona, which, according to the tale as recounted by **Ovid** in *Metamorphoses* (XIV, 641), is related to these lines: *Often he came, his temples wreathed with hay, as if he had been tossing new mown grass.*

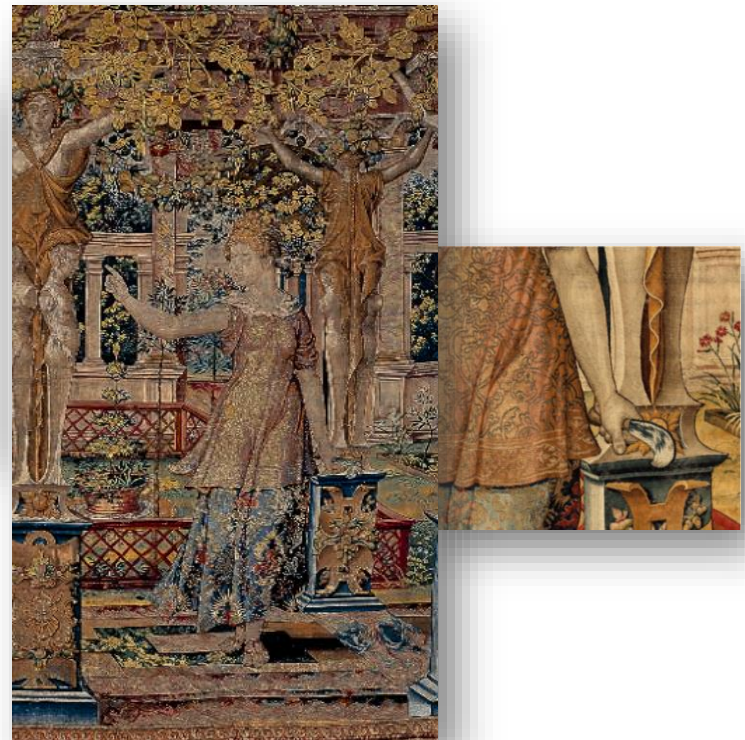
Passeig de Gràcia- Porter's lodge and main entrance door

Vertumnus transformed into a farmer

On the other side of the door is represented the right scene of the tapestry. Pomona rejects Vertumnus with a gesture and in her other hand carries her pruning knife.



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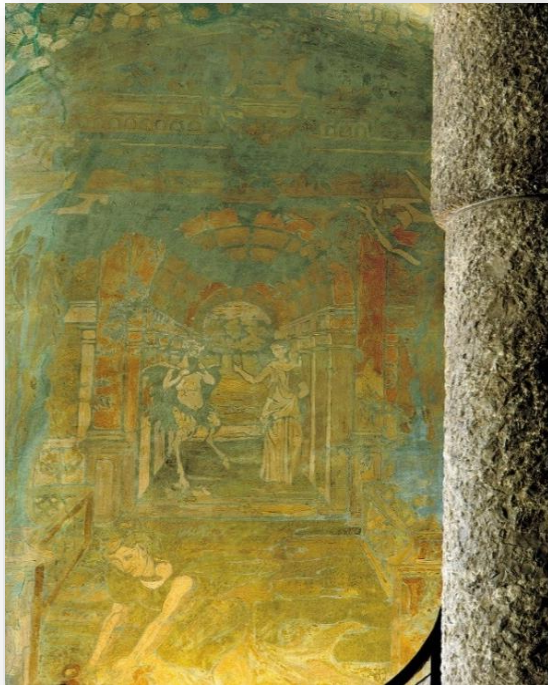


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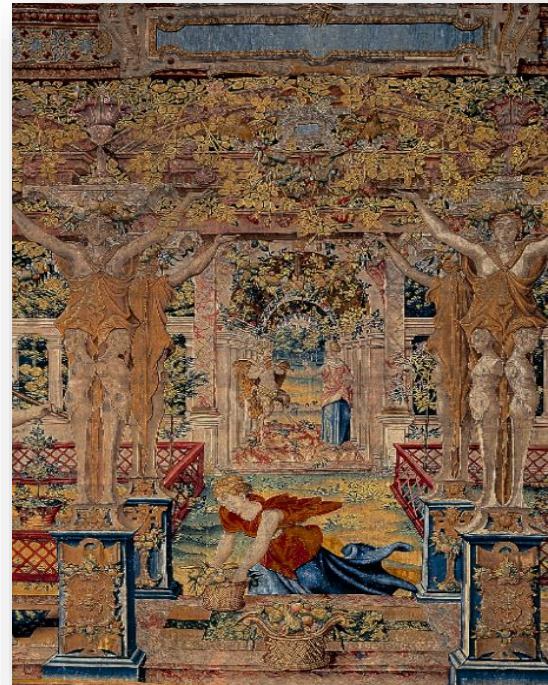
Passeig de Gràcia- Porter's lodge and main entrance door

Vertumnus transformed into a farmer

Above the porter's lodge, the central part of the tapestry shows Pan and Syrinx in the Roman legend of the gods Vertumnus and Pomona. The scene takes place in a splendid garden, represented in perspective. The gods are located in the foreground inside a gallery formed of a double portico. In the bottom, a young woman leaves a basket of fruits down on the marble step.



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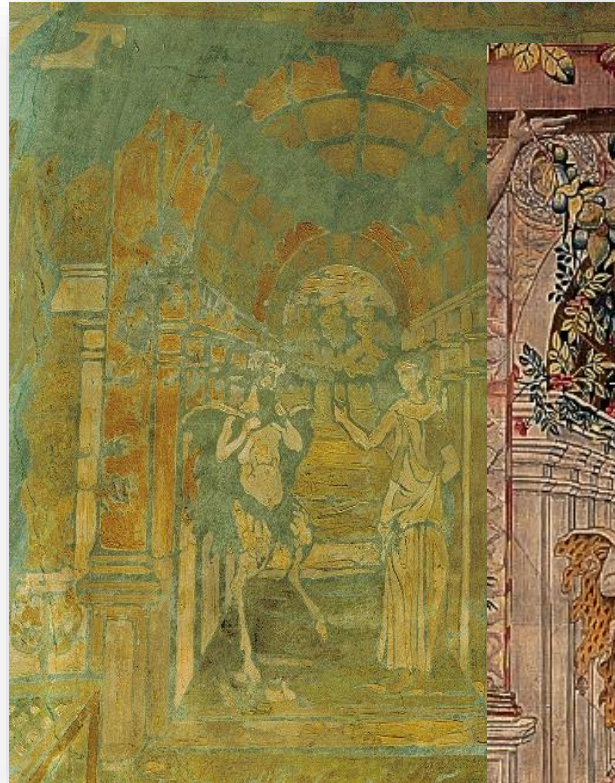


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Passeig de Gràcia- Porter's lodge and main entrance door

Vertumnus transformed into a farmer

In Greek mythology, **Syrinx** was a **nymph** who liked hunting with a bow. **Pan fell in love with the nymph** the moment he set eyes on her. But Syrinx, in attempt to **escape from Pan**, leapt into the **river**, where she called for help from her sister nymphs, who **turned her into a reed** to prevent her capture. When **Pan** got to the river he could only embrace the **reeds swaying in the breeze**, which produced a sound he loved so much that he decided to make a **musical instrument** out of them. Thus he created the **panpipes** (also called syrinx).



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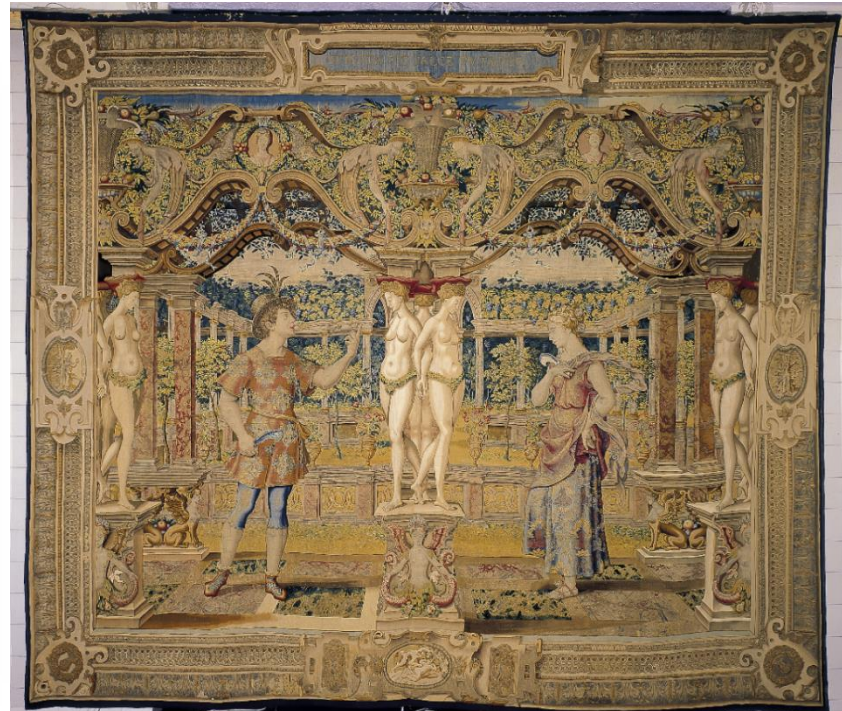
Passeig de Gràcia Vestibule- service steps (courtyard)

Vertumnus transformed into a pruner

This tapestry shows Vertumnus' fourth appearance. According to Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (XIV, 647), Vertumnus transformed himself into a pruner after his transformation into a labourer. Here Vertumnus holds a sickle opposite Pomona. In the foreground, the scene is dominated by the statues of the Three Graces. To fit the space, the scene is separated by the lift cage and the windows.



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Repertoire

Passeig de Gràcia Vestibule- service steps (courtyard)

Vertumnus transformed into a pruner

Beneath the grille of the elevator, it is represented only the lower part of the tapestry.



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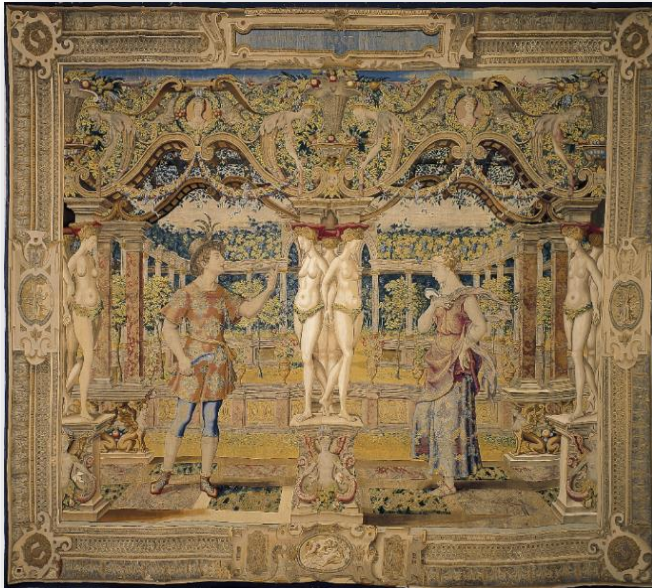


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Passeig de Gràcia Vestibule- service steps (courtyard)

Vertumnus transformed into a pruner

In the foreground, the scene is dominated by the statues of the Three Graces, reproduced here between two windows mezzanine.



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Passeig de Gràcia Vestibule- service stair

Vertumnus transformed into a fisherman

This tapestry shows Vertumnus transformed into a fisherman, holding a fishing rod, in front of Pomona, as told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (XIV, 649). This time the mural painting also adapts to the space available, silhouetted by the marble wainscot.



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Repertoire

Passeig de Gràcia Vestibule- service stair

Vertumnus transformed into a fisherman

Pomona right of the scene. The reproductions of the tapestries were copied with considerable fidelity, and even included their friezes.



© Fundació Institut Amatller d'Art Hispànic. Arxiu Mas, 1914



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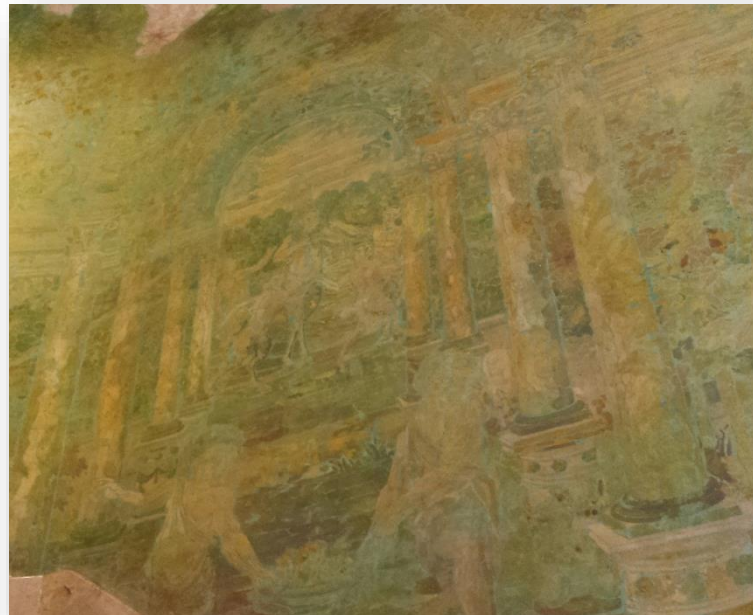
Passeig de Gràcia Vestibule- service stair

Vertumnus transformed into a fisherman

In the centre of the tapestry, Pomona's garden forms the setting for Vertumnus' transformation into a fisherman. The gods appear in a space formed by two covered galleries. In the centre, an exquisitely carved arch opens up to the garden, which is emphasised by a double row of Corinthian columns. These columns mark out a central pathway, which leads towards a meadow. Some children are putting down a basket of fruit and, in the background, we see a group of satyrs and silvani dancing around Pan and Dionysus.



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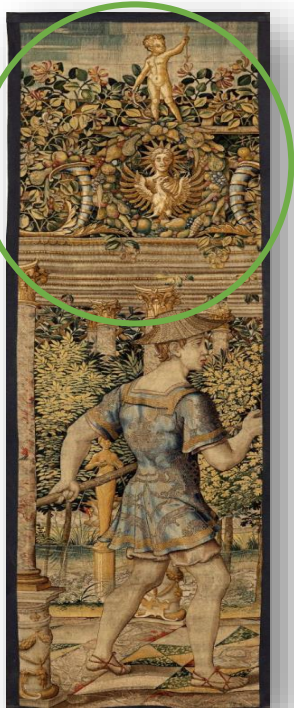
Detail of the satyrs and silvani dancing around Pan and Dionysus.

© Fundació Catalunya-La Pedrera

Passeig de Gràcia - courtyard

Vertumnus transformed into a fisherman

Clapés uses the ornamental resources of tapestries to adapt them to a corner of the courtyard mural. This time it is about reproducing the sun and the eagle present in the tapestry Vertumno transformed into a fisherman.



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Carrer de Provença Vestibule



© Triangle Postals. Pere Vivas

In the Carrer de Provença vestibule, several tapestry reproductions, executed with more interpretative freedom, converge in one space without any apparent delimitation between them.

On the one side, the **Deadly Sins**: the wrath and the gluttony. On the other, the series of the **Heroes of the Trojan War** and **Les Aventures de Télémaque**, inspired by passages from **The Iliad** and **The Odyssey** respectively.

Carrer de Provença Vestibule

The prophetess Cassandra from the series Heroes of the Trojan War

At the entrance the prophetess Cassandra, who predicted the fall of Troy and endured the curse of not being believed by anyone. The creator of the cartoons for the series of Heroes of the Trojan War was the French painter Jean-Baptiste Deshayes (1729-1765), a Rococo painter. The same painting was also reproduced in the interior decoration, now disappeared, of the first floor of La Pedrera, which contained the splendid Gaudinian dwelling of the Argentine consul Alberto Gache.



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Carrer de Provença Vestibule

The prophetess Casandra from the series Heroes of the Trojan War



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Carrer de Provença Vestibule

The prophetess Casandra from the series Heroes of the Trojan War

Set together with an emblem: the shields of France and Navarre topped with a closed royal crown. This emblem is also found in the Passeig de Gràcia vestibule, in the form of the central lamp.



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Carrer de Provença Vestibule

Fragment of the Shipwreck of Telemachus tapestry

The Télémaque tapestries comprise two tapestries woven in Spain, from the cartoons of the court painter to Felipe V, Michel-Ange Houasse (1680-1730). This scene probably featured also in the pictorial decoration of the apartment of the Argentine consul Alberto Gache. We have reached this conclusion on account of Gache's description, suggesting that Rubén Darío especially admired the "Neptune shipwrecks Ulysses".



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Carrer de Provença Vestibule

Deadly sin: Wrath

In the mural next to the staircase leading to the mezzanine, the artist ignored the configuration of the original tapestry, preferring to **include only some of the characters**.



Carrer de Provença Vestibule- Entrance and stairs to the mezzanine

Deadly sin: Wrath

From the wrath tapestry, Clapés chooses only a few characters to portray them on the wall next to the ladder that leads to the mezzanine, without attending to the strict order of the mural.



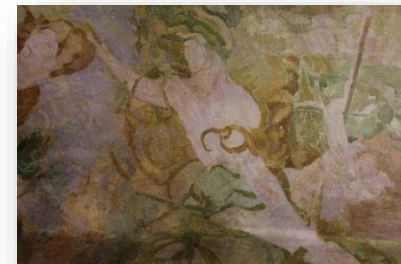
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Carrer de Provença Vestibule- Entrance and stairs to the mezzanine

Deadly sin: Wrath

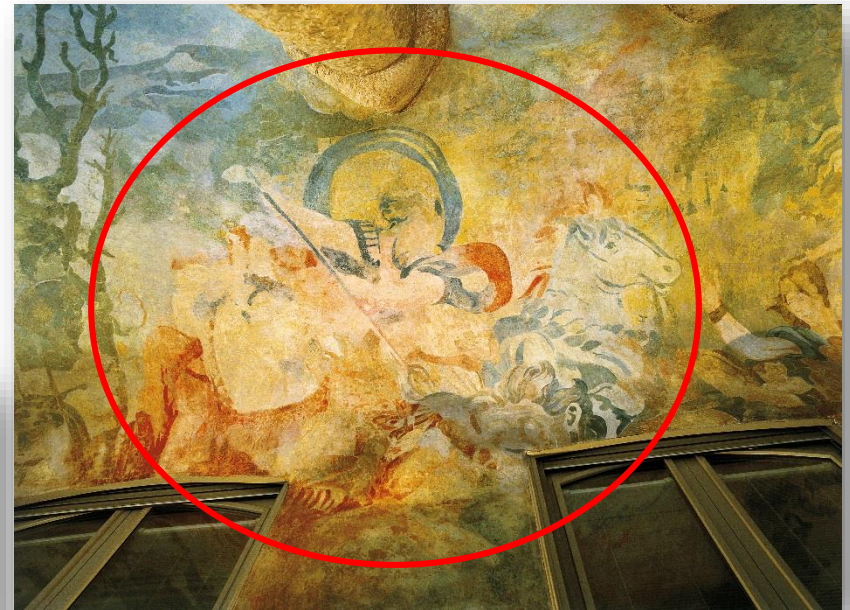
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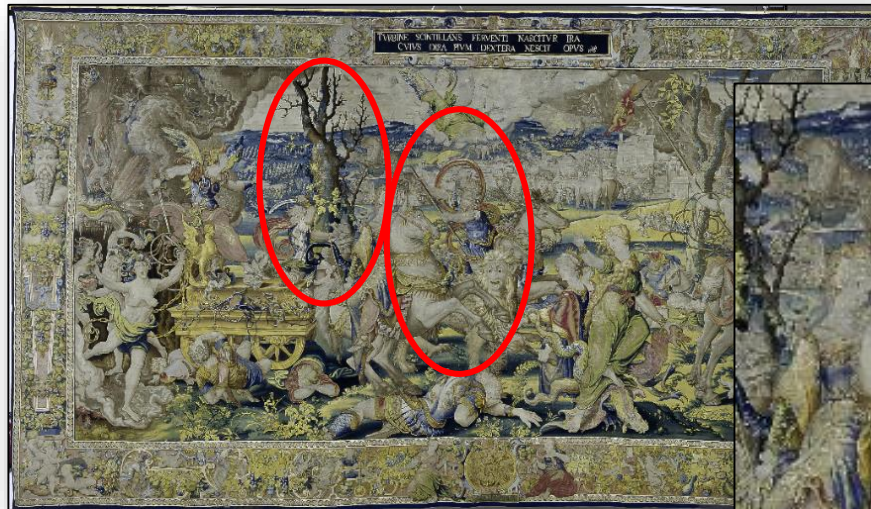


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Carrer de Provença Vestibule- Entrance

Deadly sin: Wrath

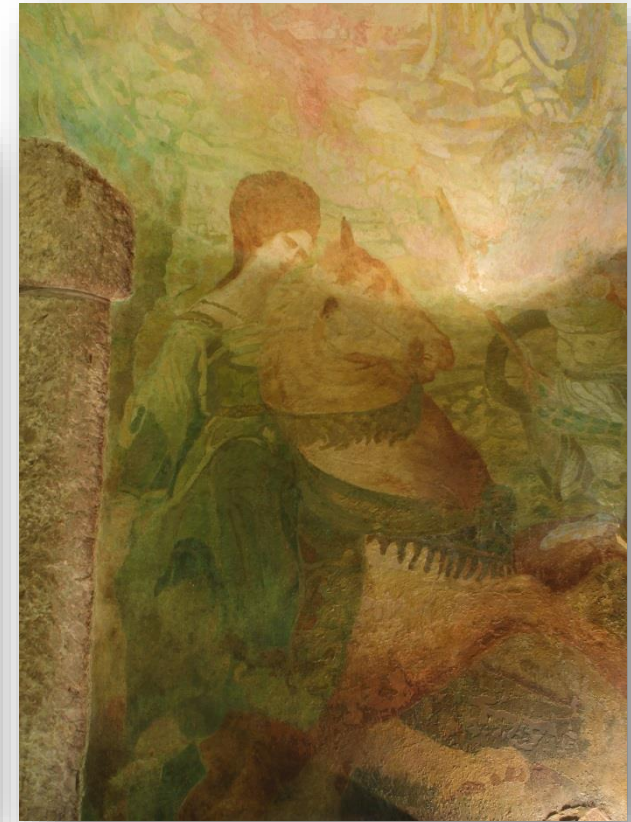
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Carrer de Provença Vestibule- Main Staircase

Deadly Sins: Gluttony

Just as with the tapestry of Wrath, Clapés choose only a few characters, placing them in the section corresponding to the start of the staircase wall.



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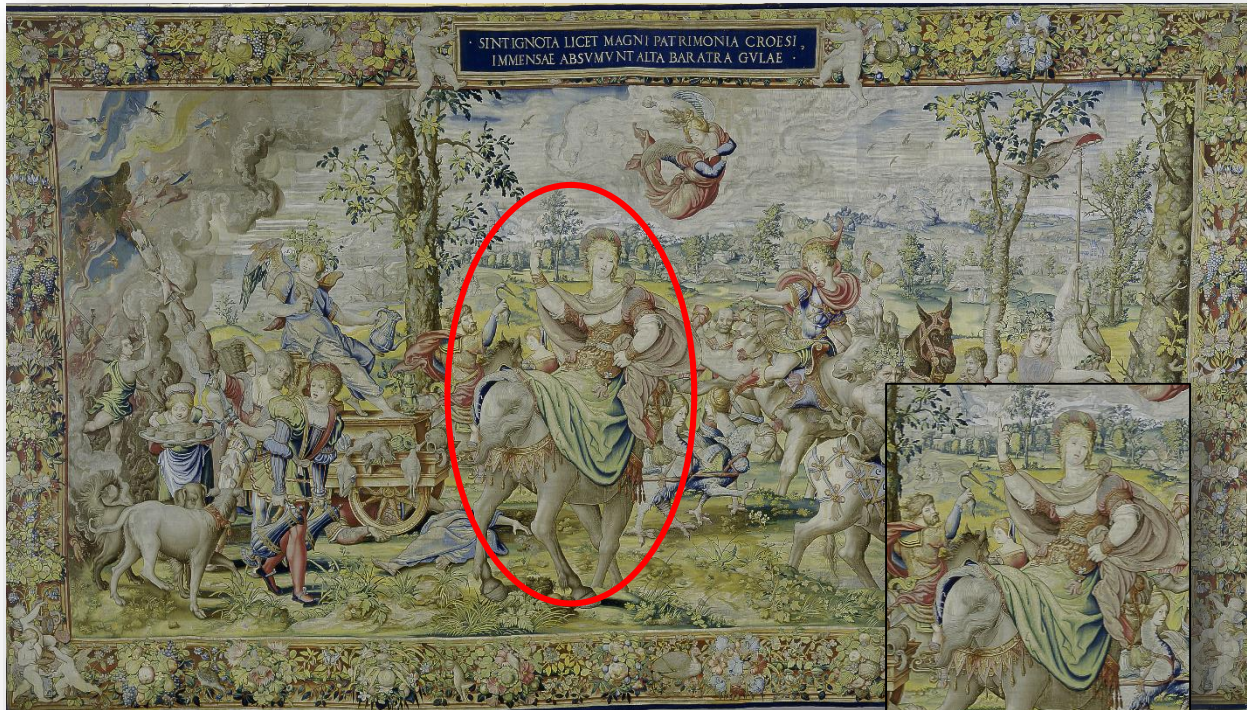


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Carrer de Provença Vestibule- Main Staircase

Deadly Sins: Gluttony

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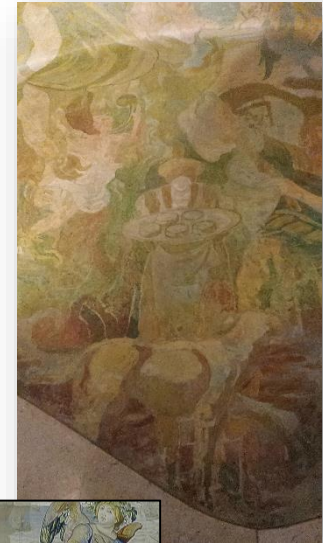
Carrer de Provença Vestibule- Main Staircase

Deadly Sins: Gluttony

Just as with the tapestry of Wrath, Clapés choose only a few characters, placing them in the section corresponding to the start of the staircase wall.



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Carrer de Provença Vestibule- Entrance ceiling

The enthronement of Romulus

In this case it's reproduced a small piece of of the tapestry *The enthronement of Romulus*. Below the canopy, the *two women hold the crown*, but Romulus seated on the throne and the rest of the tapestry do not appear.



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Carrer de Provença Vestibule- Entrance ceiling

The enthronement of Romulus

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[http://tapestries.flandesehispania.org/index.php/Vertumnus_transformed_into_a_pruner_\(Aranjuez\)](http://tapestries.flandesehispania.org/index.php/Vertumnus_transformed_into_a_pruner_(Aranjuez))

[http://tapestries.flandesehispania.org/index.php/Vertumnus_transformed_into_a_fisherman_\(central_part\)](http://tapestries.flandesehispania.org/index.php/Vertumnus_transformed_into_a_fisherman_(central_part))

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Fundació

Catalunya

La Pedrera

Our commitment to society.

We are committed to building a better future for more people, studying and conserving our cultural and architectural heritage.

Barcelona, 2017