



Needlework picture, 'Flight Into Egypt'

Not on display

Title/Description: Needlework picture, 'Flight Into Egypt'

Object Type: Textile

Materials: Linen, Metal, Silk

Technique: Tent stitch

Measurements: h. 210 x w. 250 mm

Accession Number: 1248

Historic Period: Late 17th - early 18th century

Production Place: England (possibly), Europe

This small needlework picture depicts the biblical 'Flight into Egypt'. In it, Joseph leads the donkey on which Mary is seated, cradling a swaddled Jesus in her arms. Mary and Jesus' heads are surrounded by glowing halos. Mary wears a red cloak draped over a blue bodice, while Joseph, who does not have a halo, wears a hat, a long, light red jacket (or a jerkin with loose-fitting breeches), blue hose, and a blue cloak. The trio walk through a lush landscape with rolling hills and leafy trees. A bird flies through a sky dotted with clouds.

The picture, which was wrought entirely in tent stitch, is very small, which may indicate that it was stitched as a sampler or that it was originally part of a larger work. The subject matter is relatively rare in early modern English embroidery. The vast majority of biblical English tent stitch pictures made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries depicted stories from the Old Testament rather than the New Testament. The print source from which this scene derives may have been European and adapted for needlework by someone in the British Isles.

Isabella Rosner, February 2022

Further Reading

Melinda Watt, 'Textile Production in Europe: Embroidery, 1600-1800.' In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000)
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/txt_e/hd_txt_e.htm.
