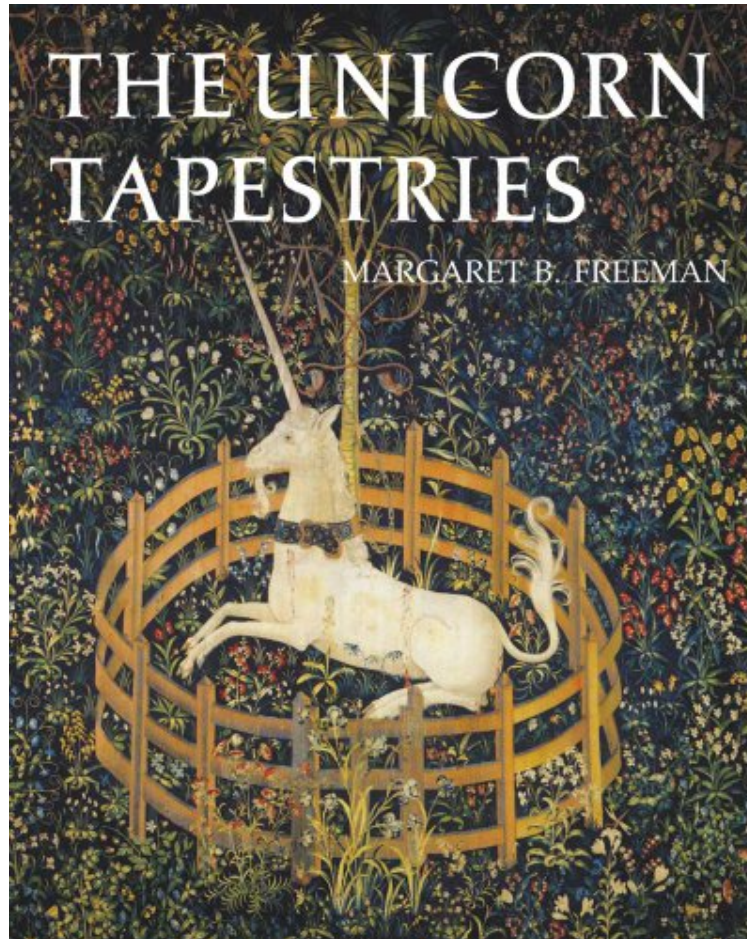


The Unicorn Tapestries

Margaret B. Freeman

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following review helpful. The Cloisters' Curator Emeritus knows these tapestries inside and outBy Jane in MilwaukeeAs the Curator Emeritus of The Cloisters of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Margaret B. Freeman is THE authority on the unicorn tapestries. That tapestries are similar in make and model to The Lady and The Unicorn Tapestries in the Cluny Museum in France. The author traveled the globe to museums and libraries and the great homes where these tapestries were commissioned or housed. In her research, she discovered the unpublished 1680 inventory of the Duke Francois VI de La Rochefoucauld in the National Archives in Paris, France. This large tome covers every aspect of the tapestries from their production, source models, imagery, symbolism, context, and even offers a scientific discussion of the materials used from minute testing of each of the tapestries. She describes the mysteries of the initials and all the other fantastic factoids in a conversational and appealing style. Yet she's also "all business" as this is a true catalogue of these important museum pieces. Highly recommended. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Cool BookBy ABThis is a beautiful book. The only problem I have with it is that I thought there would be more information on the tapestries of The Lady with the Unicorn in the Cluny Museum in Paris. Some of the pictures are in black and white and some are in color. The pictures are amazing. I like when they do a blow up of a certain area. You see so much detail. Overall a great book.

On permanent exhibition at The Cloisters, in New York, seven late Gothic tapestries portray the Hunter of the Unicorn. Like the unicorn himself, they are one of the marvels of the world, for in no other work of art anywhere is the pursuit and capture of this magical creature presented in such astonishing detail, with such command of pictorial verisimilitude and symbolic intention. In a duality not rare in the late Middle Ages, the imagery is both secular and religious. The references to love, matrimonial fidelity, and desire for progeny are understandable in an ensemble that might have celebrated a marriage. But the unicorn, at the same time, is Christ, and the compositions reflect the Incarnation, the Passion, and the Resurrection. Gabriel, the angel of the Annunciation, is one of the hunters: the unicorn loses his fierceness in the lap of the Virgin Mary; a thorny crown encircles his horn and neck when he is slain; and then the glorious creature is miraculously alive again and chained to a pomegranate tree, simultaneously an image of the risen Christ and of the lover-bridegroom secured by his adored lady. The author, who was a curator at The Cloisters, conveys in a pleasantly informative style all that is known or can be reasonably believed about the commissioning and the manufacture, all that can safely be conjectured about the original owners. Comprehensive color photography of the tapestries was done especially for this publication, and forty-four of the color images are of details essential to the author's discussion, ranging from dramatic figure compositions to studies of the rarer plants. This story of the Hunt for the Unicorn is certain to interest anyone who has visited the tapestries and been struck by their unique beauty. Equally, it should prompt others—unicorn-lovers generally and devotees of medieval art in particular—to look forward to this experience. [This book was originally published in 1976. This edition is a print-on-demand version of the original book.]