

## **FOUR MONUMENTAL 15TH-CENTURY TAPESTRIES TO BE EXHIBITED AT MEADOWS MUSEUM**

### *Masterfully Woven Tapestries Restored and Brought to U.S. for the First Time*

Beginning February 5, 2012, a set of four recently restored 15th-century tapestries, known as the Pastrana tapestries, will be on view at the Meadows Museum at Southern Methodist University. Created in the Tournai workshops in Belgium in the late 1400s, the masterfully woven and monumentally scaled textiles are among the finest surviving Gothic tapestries in existence. The tapestries commemorate the conquest of the North African cities of Asilah and Tangier by King Afonso V of Portugal—rare subject matter for the time, as most contemporaneous tapestries featured biblical or mythological subjects. On view through May 13, *The Invention of Glory: Afonso V and the Pastrana Tapestries* will shed unprecedented insight into the tapestries' rich history and provide a rare opportunity for U.S. visitors to see these artful textiles.

Commissioned by Afonso V, the Pastrana tapestries were created following the victorious Portuguese expeditions into North Africa. A visual compendium of the weaponry utilized, the tapestries display in detail soldiers, carracks, armor, cannon, and firearms, and were likely created based on oral and written descriptions of the battle. Featured exclusively at the Meadows Museum will be the armor of Duarte de Almeida, the standard-bearer for Afonso V, depicted prominently in one of the tapestries. Now housed at the Cathedral of Toledo in Spain, Duarte de Almeida's armor is the only relatively complete example of period armor that can be directly related to Portugal.

Also included in the exhibition's installation in Dallas will be 15th- and 16th-century maps lent by SMU's DeGolyer Library. Together these historical documents not only relate the idea of how the geography of the world was understood around the time of the tapestries' creations, but also establish a context for understanding the feats of exploration led by the Portuguese well before Columbus set sail.

"It is with the greatest pleasure that we bring these masterpieces to Dallas," says Mark A. Roglán, director of the Meadows Museum. "When seen alongside our renowned collection of Spanish art, the tapestries add a valuable dimension to one's understanding of the art and culture of the Iberian peninsula, offering an in-depth look at one of the earliest episodes in the age of discovery."

Woven in brightly colored silk and wool threads, the tapestries were created by Flemish masters, and show the heroic nature of Afonso's court and the chivalry of war, rather than the misery of battle. The tapestries have been preserved since the 17th century at the Collegiate Church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in Pastrana, Spain and likely made their way to Pastrana from Belgium as a gift from to King Philip II of Spain by Rui Gomes da Silva, prince of Éboli. The tapestries were preserved during the Spanish Civil War due to their status as cultural patrimony, and have recently been returned to their original

splendor following a two-year restoration. Their exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC last fall marked the first time that the four tapestries have ever been shown together in the U.S.

*The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the Fundación Carlos de Amberes, Madrid, in association with the Embassy of Spain, the Spain-USA Foundation, and the Embassy of Portugal and with the cooperation of the Embassy of Belgium and the Embassy of Morocco in Washington, D.C. Generous financial support from The Meadows Foundation has helped to make the Dallas venue possible.*

*The conservation of the tapestries was undertaken at the initiative of the Fundación Carlos de Amberes, with support from the Belgian Inbev-Baillet Latour Fund, the Spanish Fundación Caja Madrid, the Region of Castilla-La Mancha, the Provinc -Guadalajara / Church of Our Lady of the Assumption.*

This exhibition is also on display at the following venues:  
September 18, 2011–January 8, 2012 - National Gallery of Art  
June 10–September 9, 2012 - San Diego Museum of Art  
October 5, 2012–January 6, 2013 - Indianapolis Museum of Art.

### **Meadows Museum**

The Meadows Museum is the leading U.S. institution focused on the study and presentation of the art of Spain. In 1962, Dallas businessman and philanthropist Algur H. Meadows donated his private collection of Spanish paintings, as well as funds to start a museum, to Southern Methodist University. The museum opened to the public in 1965, marking the first step in fulfilling Meadows' vision to create a "Prado on the Prairie."

Today, the Meadows collection of Spanish art—one of the largest and most comprehensive outside of Spain—comprises more than 125 paintings and sculptures and approximately 450 works on paper. The collection spans from the 10th to the 21st century, and includes medieval objects, Renaissance and Baroque sculptures, and major paintings by Golden Age and modern masters.

The conservation of the tapestries received the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/Europa Nostra Awards 2011 <http://www.europanostra.org/projects/65/>.

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