

Basic Detail Report



Embroidered Picture - Belshazzar's Feast

Primary Maker

Catherine L. Schanck

Medium

Plied wool thread, graphite, watercolor and gouache on heavy paper, oil on linen

Description

A rectangular mixed media needlework piece, consisting of a medium weight ungessoed linen ground tacked to a rough pine strainer assembly. The scene depicts Belshazzar's feast from the Bible in the Book of Daniel, Chapter Five. Richly dressed Babylonian king Belshazzar, wearing a large turban, sits on a four-legged stool with his left arm bent towards his chest and his right arm outflung. Immediately to his right, a female figure with carefully coiffed hair and elaborate robes clutches a small child in her arms. Behind her, two standing figures appearing to be advisors or courtiers are dressed in elegant robes and elaborate headgear, pointing towards the upper right corner of the scene. At the right end of the banquet table, a bare-headed and bearded male figure, possibly Daniel himself, gazes calmly at the panicked courtiers. In the lower right corner crouches a seventh figure, bareheaded and in simple robes, most likely a servant. In the upper right corner are ominous clouds, from which luminous rays descend. A disembodied hand floats in the sky, depicted in the act of writing what is meant to suggest Hebrew lettering. Atop the banquet table is a large steaming urn, two covered urns, a goblet, and a platter of grapes. Near Belshazzar's feet two large covered urns lean and tip in the commotion. In the background, large columns suggest a palace interior. The clouds, light rays, and glimpses of sky behind the columns are rendered in oil. Plied wool threads in red, maroon, tan, blue, brown, and off white are used to depict all fabric, including garments, robes, banquet table cloth, and the large draperies at the left of the scene. The stitching itself is quite simple, with virtually all spaces filled with surface satin stitch and long and short stitch. Some areas, such as neckline borders, use split and stem stitches. In many instances, shadows are emphasized with watercolor overpainting atop the wool embroidery. All faces, arms, and legs are worked in cut heavy paper, with features and details delicately added in graphite and watercolor with some gouache highlighting. The paper pieces are applied over, and in some cases tucked under, areas of wool embroidery and held in place by tiny tack stitches. In some instances, such as the depiction of Balshazzar's hands and along the neckline of the figures' garments, the paper pieces were sewn atop partially finished areas of embroidery, then additional embroidery was added over the paper pieces to create a striking layered effect. The urns, goblets, and platter are also of paper, and sewn atop embroidered areas with tiny tack stitches. The entire panel is elaborately framed, with a small reverse-painted glass rectangular panel measuring 3/4 x 3 1/2 inches and painted in black and gold

that reads "C. SCHANCK" nestled into the extreme lower left front corner, held in place by the thick white mat edged in gilt. The scene, mat, and small signature panel are set within an elaborate original gilded and gessoed wood frame, picked out in black banding.

Dimensions

Sight: 22.25 × 32 in. (56.5 × 81.3 cm)