

“Foliage and the Horn of Healing Found in *The Unicorn Tapestries*”

Kailey Franks; Art, Art History & Design
Dr. Lillian Joyce; Art, Art History & Design

The Unicorn Tapestries are part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s collection displayed at The Cloisters in New York City. The seven tapestries made in the late Medieval Period depict the hunt, capture, and killing of a unicorn. Most scholars have focused on the unicorn story. My research examines how Medieval viewers would have understood the unicorn with the multitude of plants and flowers around it as symbols of healing.

The unicorn horn was believed to be a powerful medicine, able to treat poisons, fevers, bites, wounds, and the plague. The cherry tree, rosebush, orange, holly, and pomegranate foliage in the tapestries also had medicinal properties. The plants’ meanings derived from secular and sacred sources.

Previous research within *The Unicorn Tapestries* primarily focused on the unicorn as a symbol of purity and Christ’s sacrifice. My research differs, exploring a new approach in which the foliage and unicorn narrative symbolize healing according to medicinal beliefs of the Medieval Era.

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