



OPW

Oifig na
nOibreacha Poiblí
Office of Public Works

Kilkenny Castle Tapestries

The Decius Mus suite of Tapestries at Kilkenny Castle

The Decius Mus series of tapestries has been in the ownership of the Ormonde family since they were recorded on an inventory of goods in 1675.

The fortunes of the Ormonde family ebbed and flowed over the following centuries and their furnishings, paintings, and tapestries were almost all dispersed.

In the twentieth century when Kilkenny Castle came into State care, the remaining collection on loan from the Ormonde estates was carefully minded.

The Irish Government purchased these remaining paintings and tapestries in 1995, and forever ensured their home in Kilkenny Castle.

Decius Mus dismisses the Lictors



Who was “Decius Mus”

Roman Consuls, Publius Decius Mus and Titus Manlius Torquatus were to lead the Roman army into battle near Vesuvius in the Second Latin War in 340 BC.

The night before the battle both consuls had the same dream, one of them would have to sacrifice himself to gain victory. The oracle confirmed the truth of their vision and Decius Mus immediately offered himself to the gods, along with the enemy army. Victory was won for the Romans through the consul's death.

Peter Paul Rubens (Flemish, 1577–1640) uses the story for the first time in cycle form and recounts the story through a series of paintings that are in Lichtenstein. Rubens admired the story of Decius Mus whose sacrifice was worthy of a hero. Several suites of this cycle were woven by skilled artisans in Europe.

Decius Mus relates his dream to his officers



Tapestries

Three hundred years ago tapestries were an important decoration in grand palaces, castles and stately homes.

Royalty, court society, religious prelates, and the aristocracy dined, danced, and carried out political intrigue surrounded by tapestries.

Splendid hangings were designed by leading artists such as Rubens, Raphael and Le Brun and woven by skilled artisans in Europe

Decius and Manlius present the Roman Senators with plunder



What were tapestries and what was their purpose?

Tapestries were complex and absorbing works vast in scale, dramatic in effect, and portrayed historical panoramas of courage and virtue.

They were practical furnishings for their time; they hid damp walls, retained the heat of fireplaces, and blocked the gusts of air that found their way through windows.

However they were also vulnerable to dirt, damp, and their own weight, they had to be stored with care and needed repairs by each successive generation.

Marcus Valerius Consecrates Decius Mus



Art or Household Chattel?

Tapestries were both a luxury and a necessity, high art and costly craft, tapestries covered, if not the whole world, at least the world of court society.

Their robust quality meant that they could be transported between the many residences of the owner.

The Ormonde's made extensive use of their tapestries in their various residences in Ireland, England and France.

The battle of Veseris and the Death of Decius Mus



Conservation 2012-2015

The Tapestries are among the great glories of the wonderful historic Ormonde Collection at Kilkenny Castle.

The centuries took a toll on the delicate fabrics and major conservation was needed. This intricate work was entrusted to Real Fabrica de Tapices in Madrid, one of the leading international conservation specialists in this medium.

After three years of painstaking work the Tapestries were returned to their 'rightful home' at Kilkenny Castle and again form a highlight of the Ormonde Collection in the Tapestry Room and fabulous Picture Gallery

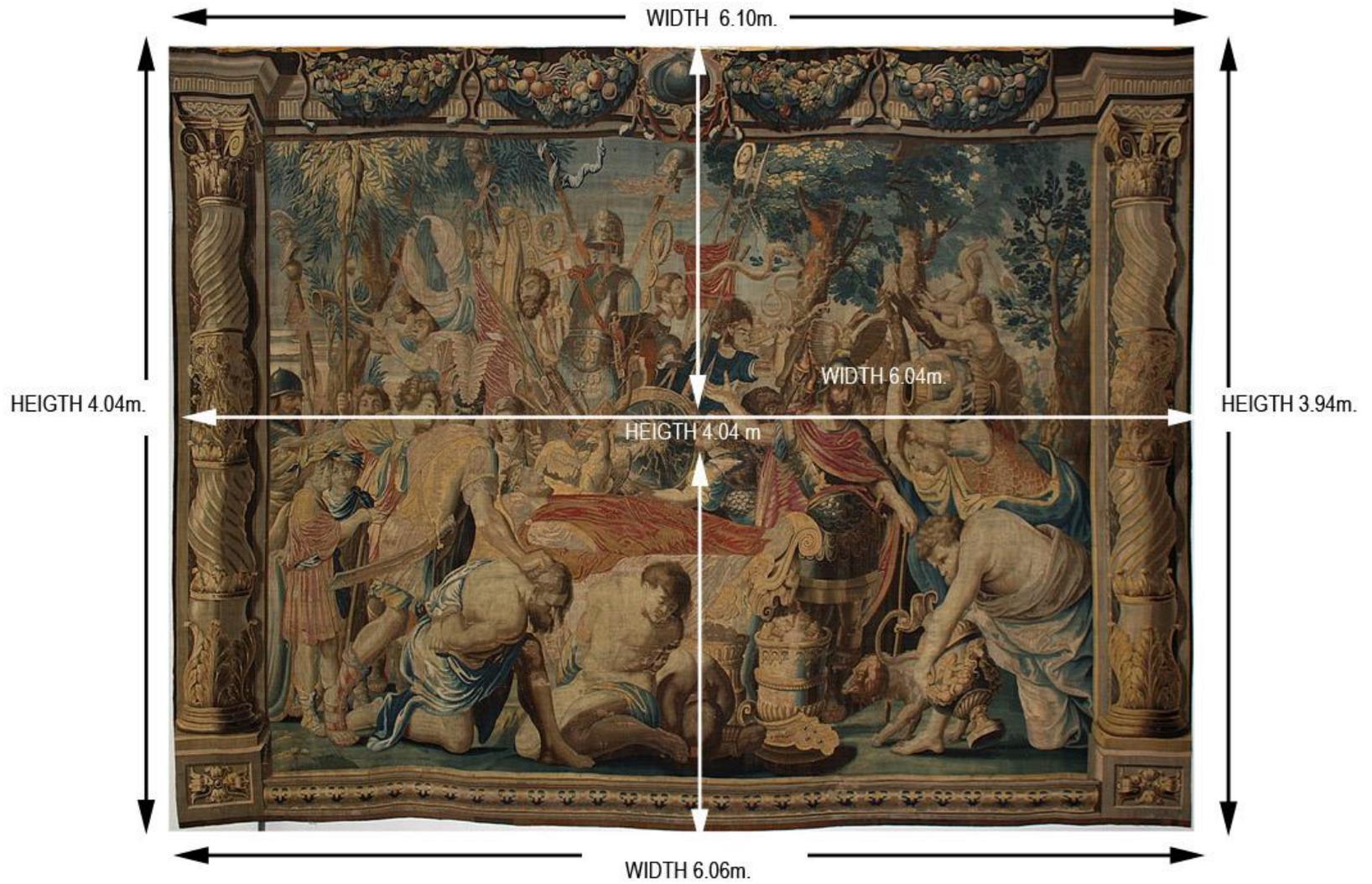
Funeral obsequies of Decius Mus



The conservation treatment of the tapestries

- **Object:** Tapestry
- **Title/ theme:** *Funeral obsequies of Decius Mus.*
- **Inventory N^o:** KKC. 00216.4
- **Inscriptions:** Not found.
- **Owner:** Kilkenny Castle. OPW of Ireland
- **Location:** Kilkenny Castle.
- **Measurements:** 6.10m. x 4.04m.
- **Materials:**
- **Warp:** Linen
- **Weft:** Wool and silk.
- **Technical Data:**
- **Density:** warps/ dm. 70/dm.
- **Date of intervention:** 2011-2013
- **Treatment by:** Fundacion Real Fabrica de Tapices.
- **Funeral obsequies of Decius Mus**

PREVIOUS MEASUREMENTS



General condition before treatment





Verso of the tapestry



Details of the backing removal process

Protection of weakened areas before washing



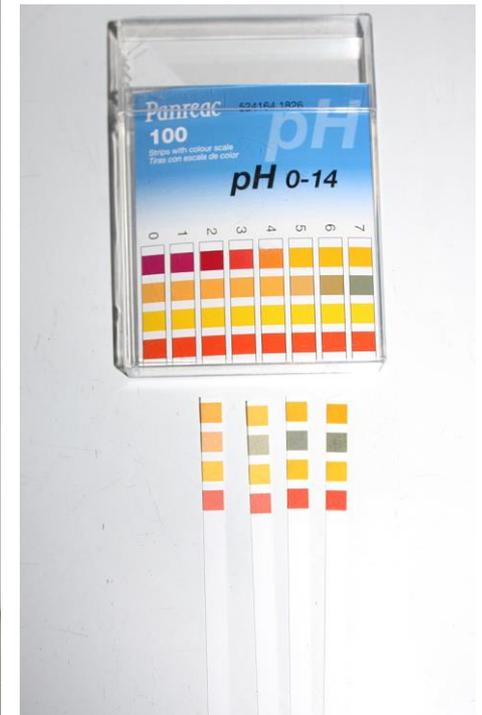
Testing colour stability



Wet cleaning



pH testing and water control



STABILIZATION



MOUNTING ON THE LOOM



Visual infilling of missing warps

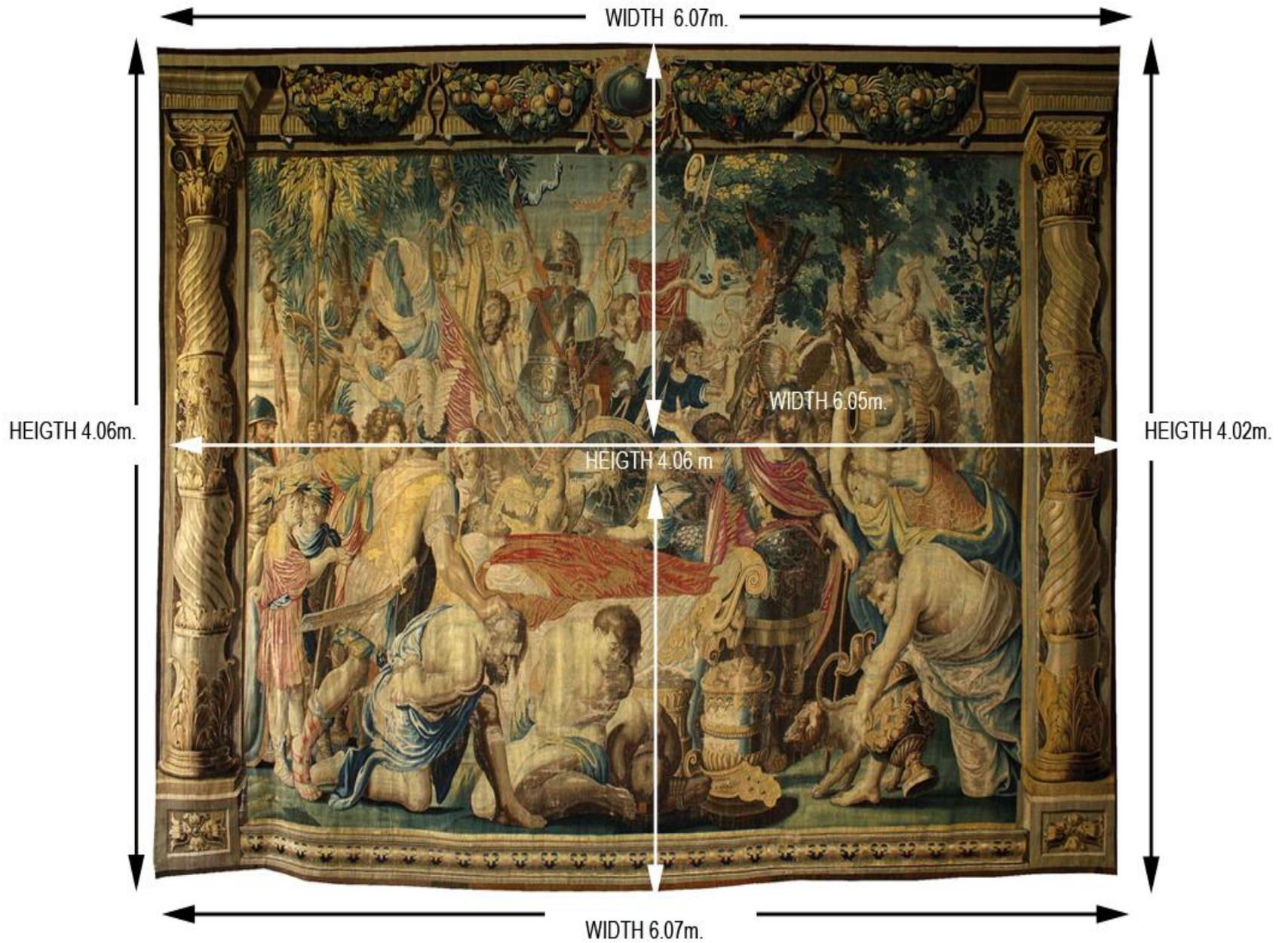


Lining of the tapestry after stabilization





FINAL MEASUREMENTS



OPW

Oifig na
nOibreacha Poiblí
Office of Public Works

We would like to acknowledge Izabel Fernandez and the staff of
Real Fábrica de Tapices (Royal Tapestry Factory) Madrid