

THE *ONCE UPON A TIME* VISIT

Stories of princesses usually begin with “once upon a time” and end with “happily ever after,” with a few dragons, witches, and spells in between. Get a glimpse at both the fantastically real and really fantastic world of royal heiresses on this fairy-tale trip through the collection.



GALLERY 236

Armor for Man and Horse (1510/60), Germany

Now this is what we have in mind when we think of a “knight in shining armor,” arriving just in time to revive a princess from her spell-induced slumber and sweep her away into the land of happily ever after. This handsome hero wears a type of armor referred to as Maximilian style, named after the Holy Roman Emperor, who was known as “the last knight” due to his affinity for stockpiling the court armory and regularly suiting up for tournaments and hunts. Marked by the fluted treatment of the steel and a sharply waisted breastplate, this style imitated the fabric pleating and cut of clothing considered fashionable at the time. While this knight’s personal armor would have showed off his stylish sense, it was his horse’s armor that was the true status symbol, the mark of the rider’s prestige and power. Decked out in such finery, this knight and horse are ready to steal the scene, if not save the princess.



GALLERY 244

Le Grenouillard (Frog-Man) (1892) by Jean-Joseph Carriès

Several tales, most famously the Grimm Brothers’ “The Frog Prince,” tell of a prince, who, enchanted by an evil sorceress, is turned into a frog and then back again. Today’s versions often have the princely transformation ignited by a princess’s kiss, but in the original it was due to her throwing the poor toad against a wall in disgust. Whatever the necessary action for metamorphosis, Jean-Joseph Carriès’ *Le Grenouillard (Frog-Man)* appears to have needed more of it, caught in between amphibian and human states. While anatomically mostly man, the plaster figure seems quite at home with his amphibian companions, sharing their bulging eyes and splayed-leg squatting position. Though it is quite certain that Carriès’s sculpture was not intended to depict a fairy-tale character, it is not known what the inspiration was; speculations include the ascetics of Japanese art and a commentary on Social Darwinism.



REGENSTEIN HALL

Vessel for the Heart of Anne of Brittany (1514), Loire Valley or Paris

While the suitors of legends are always truly enamored with the heroine’s charms, the many suitors of Anne of Brittany were likely interested in one thing—the duchy of Brittany, which she inherited from her father. Anne was first married to Maximilian of Austria, but this union was quickly annulled to enable her to marry the French King Charles VIII, who wed the 14-year-old duchess in 1491. When Charles died seven years later, Queen Anne was sought by his successor, Louis XII (who had to divorce his wife to marry her). Though a proud queen throughout her two-king tenure, Anne’s heart belonged to Brittany—quite literally. After her death in 1514, her body was buried in the royal abbey of Saint-Denis, but her heart was laid to rest in Nantes in Brittany, beside her parents. This lustrous gold vessel, inscribed with poetic praises, was made to hold Anne’s royal heart, but it is the fine craftsmanship of the crown that is truly a piece fit for a queen.



GALLERY 161

***Elaine* (1874) by Toby Edward Rosenthal**

While stemming from the medieval legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, the story depicted in this painting by American expatriate Toby Edward Rosenthal is definitely not of the happily-ever-after variety. The titular Elaine dies of a broken heart, her love unrequited by Lancelot. In keeping with Alfred Tennyson's telling of her story in his epic poem *Idylls of the King*, the painting depicts a grim boatman ferrying Elaine's body to Camelot, a love letter to Lancelot clutched to her chest, a lily in her other hand. The work struck a chord with its viewers, creating a frenzy nationwide. In 1875, more than 1,000 people a day lined up in front of a San Francisco art gallery to pay a 25-cent admission charge to view the picture. Before long Elaine clubs had sprung up, an Elaine waltz was created, and even Elaine cigars were being sold.



GALLERY 177

***Door Lock Illustrating Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1911) by Frank Koralewsky**

This one-of-a-kind object brings to life the classic tale of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" in a way you've likely never seen before—an elaborate iron door lock. German-born and -trained Frank Koralewsky worked seven years on this masterpiece of wrought-iron design, combining intricate medieval craftsmanship with the most advanced turn-of-the-20th-century ironwork skills. The story's most pivotal scenes—the evil queen in front of her magic mirror, the old crone offering Snow White an apple, and the prince's arrival in the woods—are illustrated in three engraved plaques inlaid with gold, silver, bronze, and copper, while the main apparatus depicts Snow White preparing a meal and her friends operating the mechanisms of the lock. After trying to remember all the dwarfs' names, see if you can find six of the little fellows in this iron masterpiece. (One of them is featured on the key, not on display.)



GALLERY 177

***Furniture Leg with Princely Equestrian Figure* (17th century)**

A prince gallantly appearing on horseback—that's what we expect from our fairy-tale heroes. This elegant prince is, however, more likely engaged in the hunt, a pastime associated with royalty, rather than conquering an evil witch, battling a dragon, or saving a princess. The imagery depicted certainly evokes royalty—proportionately the noble figure and his rearing horse tower above the diminutive figures at the base. And it is quite possible that this intricately carved work actually served as part of a sovereign's seat; such pieces were termed "throne" legs for a reason. Only the period's most luxurious furniture was fashioned out of ivory, and the ivory carvers of Orissa, in particular, were marvelously skilled at working complex and crowded scenes on the natural shape of a tusk.

Looking for more lordly legends?

See the paintings, tapestries, altarpieces, sculpture, and precious goldsmithwork created for real-life royalty in the exhibition *Kings, Queens, and Courtiers: Art in Early Renaissance France*, on view February 27 through May 30, 2011.