









**G**old – the word instantly suggests thoughts of glitter and dazzle, of the touch of King Midas or the mines of Solomon. But is this really what the precious metal is all about? To point out that gold is far more than “the supreme of lordly wealth,” as Pindar described it, the Metropolitan is presenting an exhibition of several hundred golden objects. The show focuses on their beauty and craftsmanship; the indisputable luxury of the element itself is secondary to how it was used.

The range and diversity of material in the exhibition is astounding: the story of gold is told not only through the jewels and frivolities that you would expect, but also through oddly imaginative pieces like a golden rattle for a colonial baby or a Chinese rank badge in which peacock feathers are as important as the golden threads. Special sections of the show explain the geology, with samples of nuggets as they appear when extracted from river beds or alluvial deposits, and survey the use of gold in modern science.

The Herculean task of selecting and interpreting the pieces in the exhibition – most drawn from the Metropolitan’s collections – is the work of Carmen Gómez-Moreno, Curator of Medieval Art and The Cloisters. For years she has been examining and winnowing out golden candidates, and the show’s excellence is a tribute to her imagination and scholarship. The exhibition was made possible, in part, by the assistance of Engelhard Minerals and Chemicals Corporation, for whose cooperation we are deeply grateful. We hope you will find *Gold* informative and enjoyable, and that you will visit it often during the five months it will be on view.

Thomas Hoving  
*Director*

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**A**n effect of extraordinary richness is achieved by the play of light and shadow on the varied surface of this Langobardic disc fibula, or brooch, with its bosses, ridges, and twisted, plaited, and filigree gold wire. The pin to fasten it is missing. The Langobards became prominent in the second half of the sixth century when they invaded Italy; they were annihilated by Charlemagne in 774. Mid-6th–7th century. D. 3 in. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 52.30







**G**old was supposedly discovered during the sixth millennium B.C. in nuggets carried by rivers, but it was too soft and unsuitable for the type of instruments neolithic man needed in his fight for survival.

The first goldminers in ancient times were the Egyptians, who regarded gold as solidified fire, like the sun, and the precious metal became the symbol of their sun-god Ra. The same connection between the sun, the divinity, and gold was made by the Incas of Peru.

Gold is easy to work. It is extremely malleable, and can be beaten very thin. It is also ductile and to make a long, fine wire only a very small grain is necessary. By hammering after heating and mixing it with other metals, it becomes harder. All these qualities were put into practice by the goldsmiths of the past, and many of the same techniques are still in use.

What makes gold most important, however, is its rarity, the main reason for its ever-increasing value. To find and possess gold has always been a powerful incentive. One after another, the gold mines of the past have been exhausted, and new ones had to be found. The history of humankind – sometimes not so human – would have been different without the wars and invasions that had, as a basic aim, the pursuit of power by the possession of gold.



# GOLD





**S**ome of the most impressive work of the ancient American goldsmith is that done by the Tairona, a tribe that lived on the Atlantic coast of Colombia at the time of the Spanish Conquest. This figure with its enormous headdress is of an extraordinary virtuosity. As in many other pre-Columbian cultures, the Tairona alloyed much of their gold with copper; works cast in that alloy (known as tumbaga) are often very fragile, since copper deteriorates rapidly. Sierra Nevada area, 12th–16th centuries. H. 5¼ in. Gift of the H. L. Bache Foundation, 69.7.10



**F**ront cover: For a long time the “Rospigliosi cup” had been attributed to Benvenuto Cellini because of its artistic and technical excellence. Now, however, the cup is thought to be the work of Jacopo Bilivert, a goldsmith from Delft who came to Florence in 1573 (Cellini died in 1571) at the invitation of Grand Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici. The cup’s design owes much to the inventions of Cornelis Floris of Antwerp: both Bilivert and Floris treat imaginary form with the astounding realism that is typical of Netherlandish masters. The name “Rospigliosi cup” is derived from its former owners, the Rospigliosi family of Rome. H. 7¾ in. Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 14.40.667

**I**nside front cover: Gold, often of two shades, and blue were usually the main colors used by Islamic illuminators in the title and dedicatory pages of manuscripts. This magnificent rosette contains the name and titles of Shah Jahan (1628-1668) and also symbolizes the sun, the center of power in the universe as the ruler was of his kingdom. The rest of the page is enhanced by delicate gold birds, plants, and insects. India, Mughal period. 15 3/16 x 10 7/16 in. Rogers Fund and Purchase, Kevorkian Foundation Gift, 55.121.10.39

**B**ack cover: English embroidery (*opus anglicanum*) was renowned in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It combines delicacy of drawing with mastery of technique, and one of the best examples is the chasuble from which this detail comes, embroidered in gold on red velvet. The figures in this Adoration of the Magi epitomize the vivacity and imagination characteristic of English drawings of the period. London, 1330-1350. Fletcher Fund, 27.162.1





**B**elow: Phialai were the drinking cups of the gods, used by mortals for pouring liquid offerings; ancient works of art, notably Greek vases, illustrate how and when they were used. While many actual examples made of silver and bronze survive from ancient Greek times, those of gold are rare.

This golden phiale is decorated in repoussé with a row of beechnuts and three rows of acorns. The acorns of the outer row alternate with bees, suggesting the good life that awaits honorable men, for whom, Hesiod says, “the earth brings forth livelihood aplenty, and the oak in the mountains bears acorns on top, and in the middle, bees.” Greek, 4th century B.C. Carthaginian inscription giving weight. D. 9¼ in. Rogers Fund, 62.11.1



Gold has been used for thousands of years to make precious jewels, ornaments, coins, vessels, and many other objects both for religious or secular use. Even if these treasures lay buried for centuries, when they were unearthed they were still as beautiful and shiny as the day they were made. Gold can be melted down and reused—and often has been—but not destroyed: a jewel made today could have gold from Solomon’s temple or from the Athena of the Parthenon. It is eternal.

With its almost mythic qualities of beauty and eternity, gold has been, more often than not, the cause of avarice and corruption, but it also has been the subject of one of the most fascinating dreams of man: alchemy started in Egypt, was a main endeavor of the Arabs, and lasted, on and off, in Europe through the eighteenth century. Philosophers, visionaries, kings, and rascals were involved in it. The basic principle of alchemy was to find the “philosopher’s stone” with which a mixture of inferior metals, submitted to certain conditions, would become gold. Many alchemists were guided only by greed; others had higher aims, philosophical and even mystical.

**T**hinking of all that struggle of mankind to find gold, to worship it, to use it for its beauty, to try to create it, brings us to meditate on what has become of gold today. With incredible effort it is extracted from the depths of the earth and much of it is buried again in bank vaults as bullion. We only see paper, never gold coins. We know the gold is there, and tragic will be the day when it is no more.

Aside from the applied arts (which account for a relatively small percentage of gold), the other principal modern use of the metal is in science and industry. That same man who wanted to become like God by creating gold, wants now to discover the secrets of the universe—to be like God. He uses gold in the space programs, in electronics, in technology, but not because it is beautiful, precious, eternal, or divine but because it is an excellent conductor and reflector of heat.

Carmen Gómez-Moreno  
*Curator of Medieval Art and The Cloisters*



**M**arked by the harmony of its design and by the delicacy of its technique, this Achaemenid work possesses the consistent discipline that is characteristic of the best specimens of ancient Near Eastern art. It is a rhyton, or drinking cup ending in an animal's head—in this case a winged lion monster, a masterpiece of restrained ferocity. The rhyton consists basically of two pieces, the cup and the animal, both raised from a sheet of gold and put together in a practically invisible join. The legs, tongue, teeth, and roof of the mouth were separately added, and the vessel is encircled by a band of forty-four double-twisted wires, each  $\frac{7}{1000}$ ths of an inch thick, totaling  $136\frac{1}{2}$  feet in length. About 6th-5th century B.C. H. 7 in. Fletcher Fund, 54.3.3





**D**epicting Christ supported by Mary and John, the medallion below suggests the exquisite delicacy of Parisian gold production around 1400. The figures are fashioned in gold in high relief, and then decorated with opaque enamel, resulting in an extremely rich and brilliant surface. Perhaps originally part of a pax or a reliquary, in the sixteenth century it was set in a jeweled frame to be worn as a hat ornament. D. 2½ in. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.913.

The Byzantine chain shown on this page was probably worn around the shoulders, secured to the garment so the pendants would have been displayed

on the chest, as in the painting at the right. First half of the 7th century. L. 30⅛ in. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.150.

Right: Jan, first Count of Egmond (1438-1516), is depicted wearing the knightly Order of the Golden Fleece that was granted to him in 1491 by Philip the Fair of Burgundy. The order, created in 1430, was originally limited to only twenty-four knights, and twenty-four collars like the one in this picture were made by the Bruges goldsmith Jean Peutin. Painting by the Master of Alkmaar, Dutch, early 16th century. 16⅞ x 10¼ in. The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 32.100.122







**T**he two creatures on the unique ornament shown below (perhaps a decoration for clothing) are horned, winged lions with horses' ears. They represent one of many fantastic creatures appearing in Achaemenid art, and in this case are possibly intended to ward off evil. Their rather rigid stance is softened by the curving wings, with feathers elaborately chased onto the cast surface of the gold. 6th-5th centuries B.C. H. 5¼ in. Rogers Fund, 54.3.2.

Right: This is the badge of the second military rank in the official hierarchy of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, and would have been sewn on formal robes to indicate the wearer's rank. The Lion of India is poised over a wave-and-rock border, against a golden sky full of clouds, and is surrounded by symbols of wealth and good fortune. Superbly worked in threads made of gold, silk, and filaments of peacock feathers, it was embroidered in a professional workshop, probably by men. Chinese, Ming dynasty (1368-1644). 12⅞ x 13¼ in. Fletcher Fund, 36.65.4











**A**bove: Vessels decorated with animals in relief, heads facing outward, are known from stone examples dating from the fourth and third millennia B.C. None are so superbly and skillfully worked as this example of the goldsmith's craft from northwest Iran. The animals' horns, now crushed into the heads, must originally have curved upward, rising delicately above the cup's rim. About 1000 B.C. H. 2½ in. Rogers Fund, 62.84.

Right: This headdress from Egypt is unique, and raises problems of dating and style. Antlered stags such as those shown here are quite characteristic of the art of the ancient Near East, where they seem to symbolize protection by a divinity, but are comparatively rarely shown by Egyptian artists. Other features suggestive of Near Eastern influence are the eight-petaled blossoms and the details of the stags' eyes. The circlet is said to have been part of a treasure found at the eastern edge of the Delta near the town of Avaris, which the Hyksos conquerors, who had invaded Egypt from the east, founded in 1720 B.C. Since its style is neither purely Near Eastern nor purely Egyptian, perhaps it represents a mingling of the local style with that of the invaders.

We know nothing about its owner, but she must have been highly placed—possibly a member of a Hyksos prince's harim. She was careless with her circlet, broke off the tip of one antler (it probably got tangled in her hair) and lost it, but she had it repaired by a local jeweler; the ancient restorer has been labeled “only an artisan” by our own Conservation Department, whereas the original maker was a “master craftsman.” Electrum (a combination of gold and silver). About 1675-1575 B.C. H. 3¾ in. Lila Acheson Wallace Fund, Inc., Gift, 68.136.1











**A**t the left is a Celtic torque, or collar, probably made in the third or second century B.C. Ancient writers mention the torque as the distinctive ornament of Gaulish warriors. While this is confirmed by contemporary monuments, the fact remains that the majority of those torques now extant were found in the graves of women, and their average diameter—5½ inches—would fit a slim woman's neck. This elaborate one, with its scroll and lyre motifs, is larger, with a diameter of 7¾ inches. Found in the province of Hainaut, Belgium, in 1862. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Alastair B. Martin, The Guennol Collection, L.53.43.1.

Open bracelets with animal-head finials occur in Greece from the archaic period on; they were generally made in

pairs. The three Greek examples below date between the fourth and third centuries B.C., when jewelry was becoming more colorful. The one at the lower right is all gold, while the two others incorporate rare and precious materials: rock crystal and blue glass, now gray through age. The smallest bracelet, at top center, is a barbaric imitation of the third or fourth century A.D. The lions' eyes are inlaid in blue—just like those of the Greek prototype beside it. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.192.259; Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 57.11.9, 37.11.11; Fletcher Fund, 24.97.121







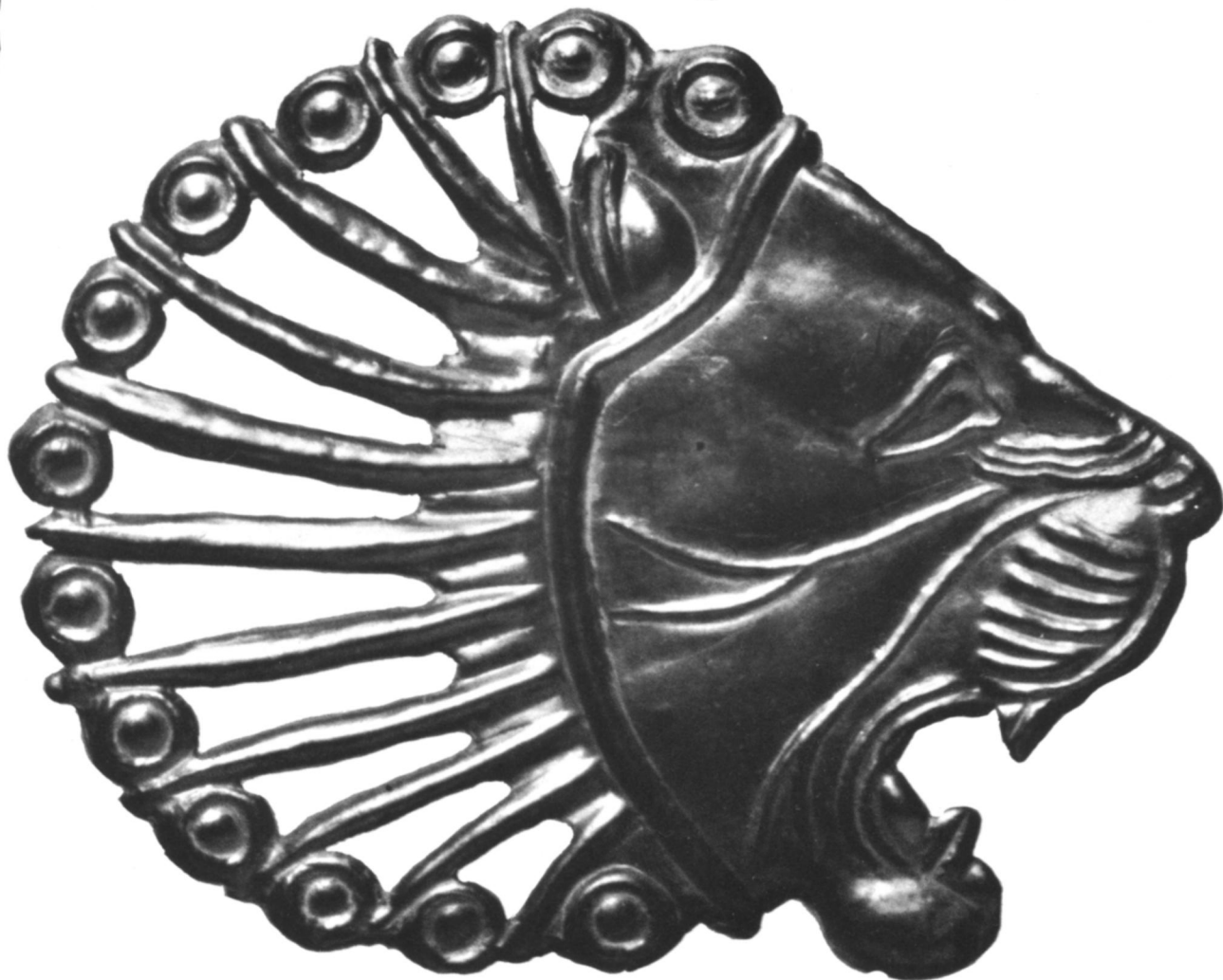




**L**eft: Etruscan jewelry is often distinguished by its ornateness in decoration and technique, yet a piece like this breastplate was probably intended for a burial rather than for wear; it is less than three-tenths of a millimeter thick. The gold sheet was laboriously stamped from behind with six motifs: a chevron, palmette, goat, horse, lion, and possibly a dog.

In the ancient Mediterranean world, funerary pectorals occur more rarely than in prehistoric northern Europe, where they have been found in tombs ranging from Ireland to the Balkans. Early 6th century B.C. H. 13 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. Fletcher Fund, 65.11.10.

The snarling lion shown below is a bracteate, or ornament intended to be sewn onto a garment. On the Achaemenid stone reliefs decorating the palace walls at Persepolis, figures wear clothing on which designs are often traced. These may be woven or embroidered patterns, but in some cases they must also be representations of such gold ornaments attached to the fabric. Achaemenid, 5th-4th century B.C. H. 17 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. Gift of Khalil Rabenou, 56.154.1



**O**verleaf: In an exquisite miniature from a Book of Hours made for Charles of France in 1465, the Virgin of the Annunciation is shown seated within the Holy of Holies, a golden ciborium constructed like a precious shrine. Such a visionary and symbolic setting for the Annunciation frequently appeared in fifteenth-century painting: here it is linked not only with the consecration of the Eucharist at the altar in the back, but is also a symbol of Mary's perfection and a reference to heaven – the New Jerusalem composed of “pure gold, transparent as glass” (Revelation 21:21). The gold is employed both to enhance the sumptuous quality of the manuscript and to serve as an elaborate visual metaphor. School of Tours. 6 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 4 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. The Cloisters Collection, 58.71b.

Right: Produced in the goldsmith atelier of Toledo in the fifteenth century, this cover of a Eucharistic vessel shows a craftsmanship and exuberance typical of Spanish liturgical objects of the period. It is made of heavily gilded silver studded with crystal and paste jewels. Its architectural structure, with turrets decorated with busts of apostles within niches, makes this piece as grandiose as a cathedral dome designed to enshrine the Holy Eucharist. H. of cover 7 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. The Cloisters Collection, 58.39







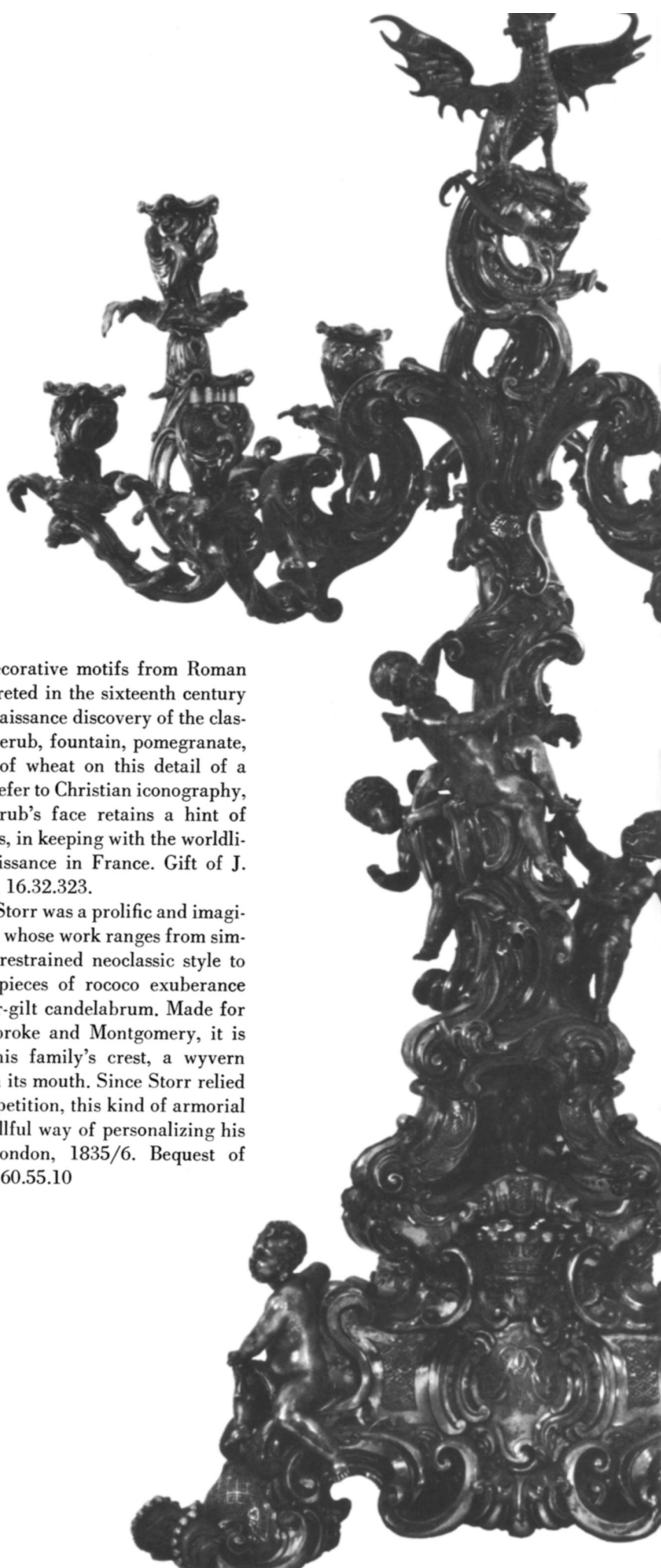






**L**eft: Decorative motifs from Roman art were reinterpreted in the sixteenth century as part of the Renaissance discovery of the classical past. The cherub, fountain, pomegranate, palms, and ears of wheat on this detail of a French vestment refer to Christian iconography, although the cherub's face retains a hint of pagan naughtiness, in keeping with the worldliness of the Renaissance in France. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 16.32.323.

Right: Paul Storr was a prolific and imaginative silversmith whose work ranges from simple tableware in restrained neoclassic style to large sculptural pieces of rococo exuberance such as this silver-gilt candelabrum. Made for the Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, it is surmounted by his family's crest, a wyvern holding a glove in its mouth. Since Storr relied a good deal on repetition, this kind of armorial allusion was a skillful way of personalizing his basic designs. London, 1835/6. Bequest of Rupert L. Joseph, 60.55.10





**T**he angel shown at the right is a detail of a silver-gilt monstrance made by a Florentine goldsmith toward the end of the seventeenth century. In realizing the design, he has employed virtually every technique of his art, from fully sculptural cast figures to repoussé ornament to chased and incised designs. The figures themselves reflect Giovanni Bologna's influence, which was sustained in Florence throughout the seventeenth century. Fletcher Fund, 49.60.12







**L**eft to right: The long spout that would have risen at an oblique angle from the neck of this ewer has been cut away, but the vessel's form can be reconstructed from the many surviving pottery examples. The elaborate geometric decoration hammered in repoussé is characteristic of Anatolian art of this period. About 2100 B.C. H. 7 in. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 57.67.

Fashioned with consummate skill, the cosmetic jar in front is flawless obsidian-volcanic glass-mounted in heavy gold, burnished in place to fit the edges of jar and lid snugly. It still contains traces of a mixture of red iron oxide and grease, which had obviously been used as rouge. Egyptian, XII Dynasty, about 1880-1840 B.C. Rogers Fund and Purchase, Henry Walters Gift, 16.1.35.

Part of a gold treasure found in 1902 in Albania, the goblet in back, decorated with a repoussé fish-scale pattern, might have belonged to the nomadic tribes that occupied the Balkans. Both its date and place of origin are uncertain. Cyprus (?), second half of the 6th-early 7th century. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.1712.

Below: In the Near East, many more silver vessels survive than gold ones, which were usually melted down. The large size of this beautiful bowl indicates that it was part of a royal treasure-according to the trilingual inscription, that of "Darius the great king." This is the king who launched the famous attack on Greece at Marathon in 490 B.C. Achaemenid, 6th-5th century B.C. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 54.3.1







**A**bove: This is one of the first metal nails ever used to hold wood together. From a sumptuous coffin, it is of solid gold, so soft and blunt that it was probably fitted into a hole cut to receive it. Egyptian, XVIII Dynasty (1567-1320 B.C.). L.  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. Gift of Howard Carter, 26.241.2.

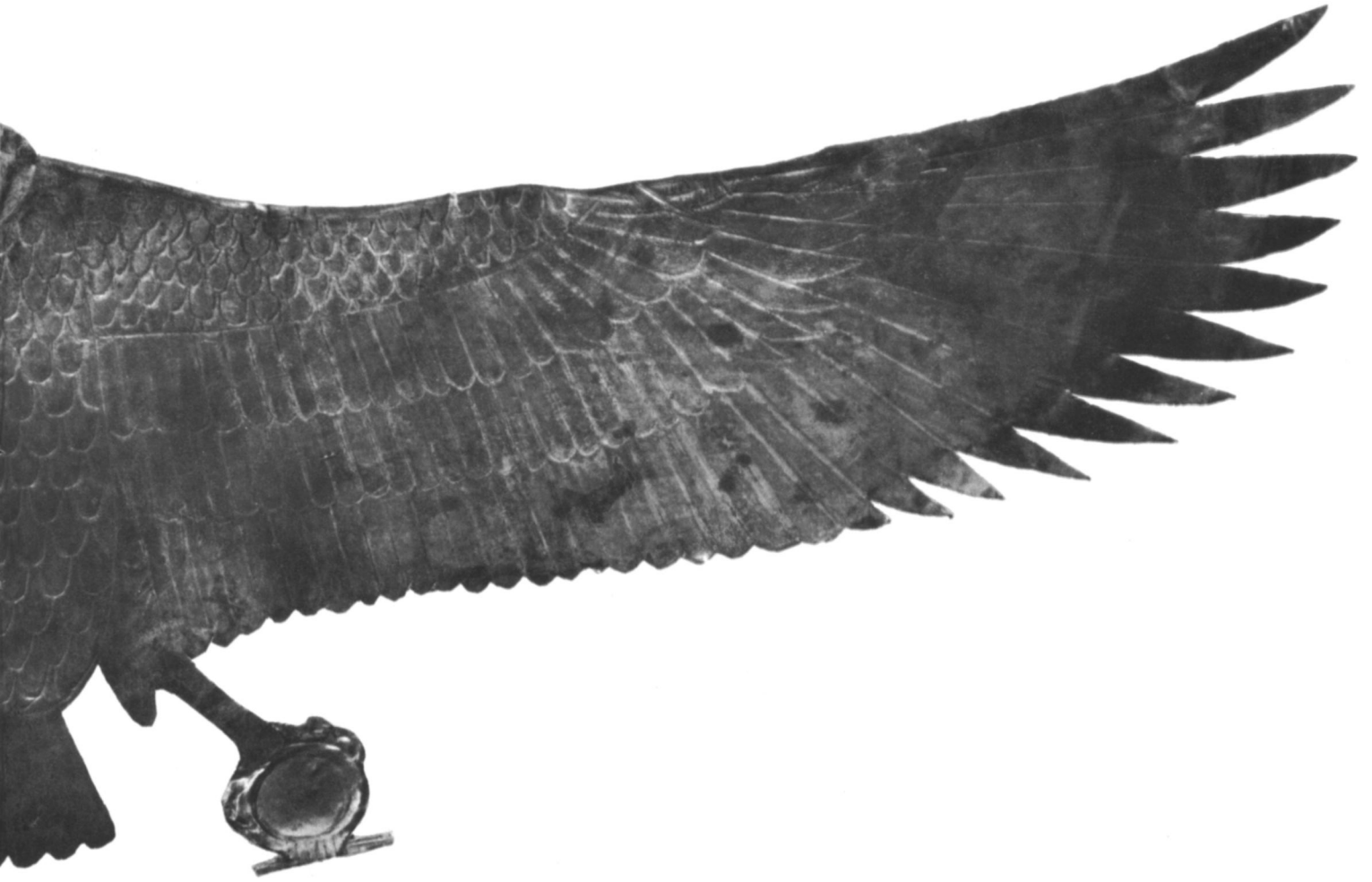
The pectoral below is in the form of the vulture-goddess Nekhbet, who spread her protective wings over the mummy of one of the "Three Princesses" — a minor wife of the pharaoh Thutmose III, buried with two other girls high up in the cliffs near the Valley of the Kings at Thebes. Though their tomb, with their

precious tableware, cosmetic equipment, and jewelry, was plundered by villagers during the First World War, the Metropolitan Museum has been able to acquire almost all its contents. This amulet is of heavy sheet gold and impressed with details of the bird's head and feathers. XVIII Dynasty, about 1490 B.C. W.  $16\frac{1}{2}$  in. Fletcher Fund, 26.8.104.

Right: No more exquisitely fashioned example of goldsmith's and lapidary's work has survived from ancient Egypt. Given to the princess Sithathoryunet by her father, the pharaoh Sesostris II (whose name is in the cartouche supported by the two falcons), it is made of a thin gold plate inlaid with some of the favorite stones of the Middle Kingdom: carnelian, turquoise, and the rare lapis lazuli, which must have been brought from Afghanistan, over two thousand miles away.

The princess lived at the time considered the golden age of Egyptian civilization by later Egyptians, and the insistence on excellence of design and workmanship is reflected in the minor arts. XII Dynasty, about 1890-1880 B.C. H.  $3\frac{1}{4}$  in. Rogers Fund and Purchase, Henry Walters Gift, 16.1.3









**T**his pair of armbands was worn on the upper arm, where the figures would be upright; they were attached by loops at the top to the wearer's dress. The snake spirals terminate in a triton and tritones, each holding an Eros. Such triton "families" appear from the fourth century on. Greek, 3rd century B.C. H. of the triton armband  $5\frac{3}{4}$  in. Rogers Fund, 56.11.5,6



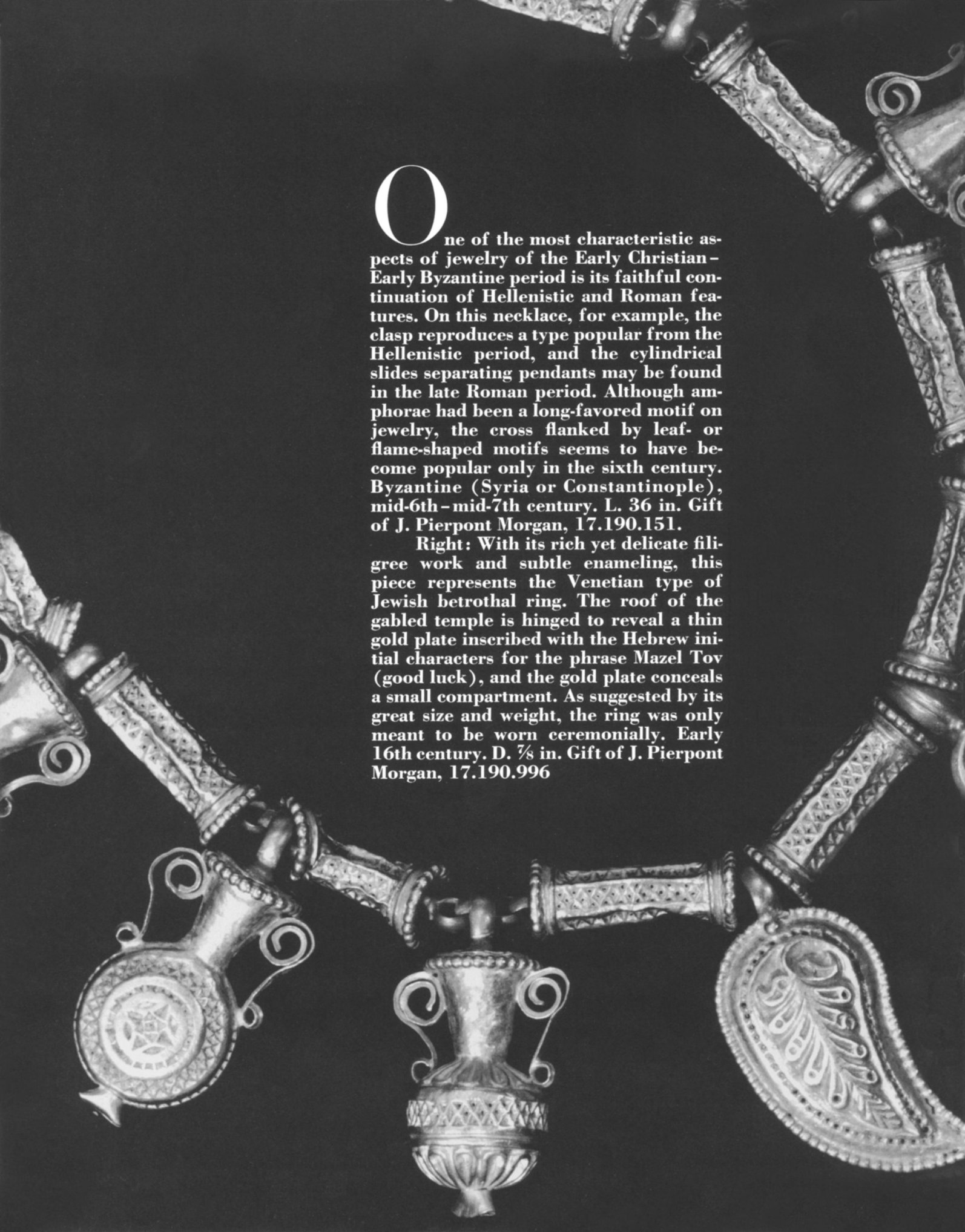


**P**endants in the shape of ships originated in the great harbor towns of the Mediterranean. Some were votive offerings to saints; others may have been given in gratitude for a safe return, as a pledge of fidelity, or as an offering of love and friendship. The one above may have been made in Barcelona, since the slightly heavy type of figures and expressive dragon's head are seen on other jewels of Spanish origin. End of the 16th century. H.  $4\frac{3}{8}$  in. The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 32.100.312.

The decoration on the south German chalice at the right, with its mannered scrolls, bright enamel, and sculptured and jeweled ornament, is far closer to the art of the jeweler than to that of the plateworker. It is studded with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and sapphires, which reflect the new popularity of table-cut stones, introduced about 1600. Dated 1609. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.371

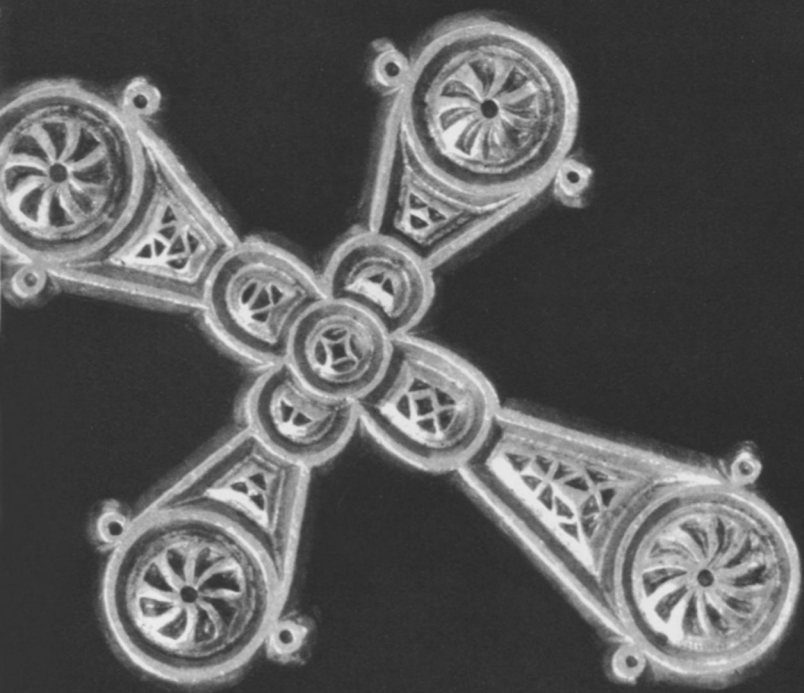
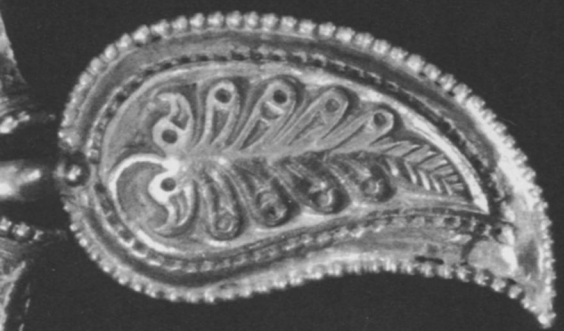






**O**ne of the most characteristic aspects of jewelry of the Early Christian–Early Byzantine period is its faithful continuation of Hellenistic and Roman features. On this necklace, for example, the clasp reproduces a type popular from the Hellenistic period, and the cylindrical slides separating pendants may be found in the late Roman period. Although amphorae had been a long-favored motif on jewelry, the cross flanked by leaf- or flame-shaped motifs seems to have become popular only in the sixth century. Byzantine (Syria or Constantinople), mid-6th–mid-7th century. L. 36 in. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.151.

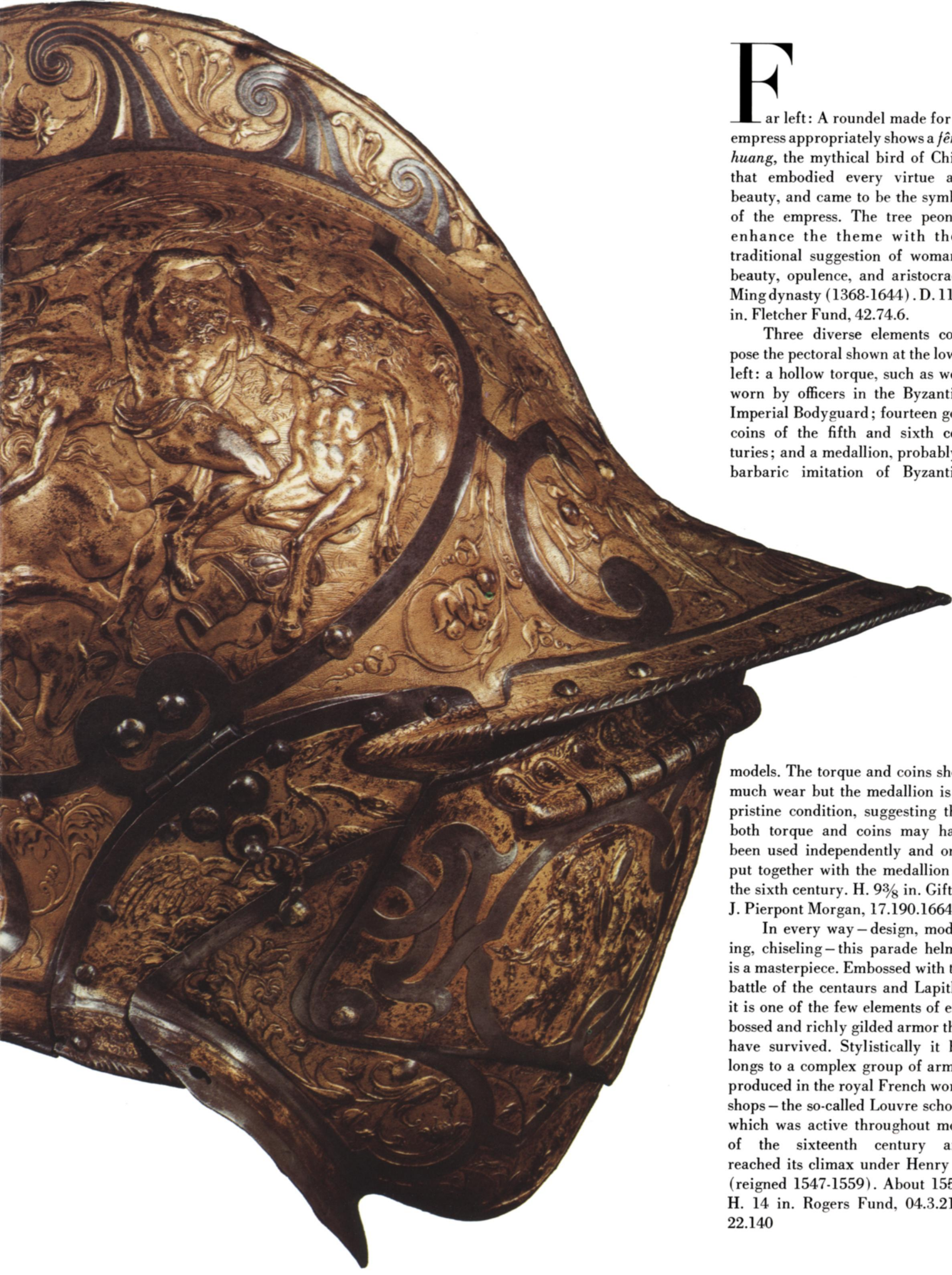
**Right:** With its rich yet delicate filigree work and subtle enameling, this piece represents the Venetian type of Jewish betrothal ring. The roof of the gabled temple is hinged to reveal a thin gold plate inscribed with the Hebrew initial characters for the phrase *Mazel Tov* (good luck), and the gold plate conceals a small compartment. As suggested by its great size and weight, the ring was only meant to be worn ceremonially. Early 16th century. D.  $\frac{7}{8}$  in. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.996











**F**ar left: A roundel made for an empress appropriately shows a *fēng-huang*, the mythical bird of China that embodied every virtue and beauty, and came to be the symbol of the empress. The tree peonies enhance the theme with their traditional suggestion of womanly beauty, opulence, and aristocracy. Ming dynasty (1368-1644). D. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. Fletcher Fund, 42.74.6.

Three diverse elements compose the pectoral shown at the lower left: a hollow torque, such as were worn by officers in the Byzantine Imperial Bodyguard; fourteen gold coins of the fifth and sixth centuries; and a medallion, probably a barbaric imitation of Byzantine

models. The torque and coins show much wear but the medallion is in pristine condition, suggesting that both torque and coins may have been used independently and only put together with the medallion in the sixth century. H. 9 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.1664.

In every way – design, modeling, chiseling – this parade helmet is a masterpiece. Embossed with the battle of the centaurs and Lapiths, it is one of the few elements of embossed and richly gilded armor that have survived. Stylistically it belongs to a complex group of armor produced in the royal French workshops – the so-called Louvre school, which was active throughout most of the sixteenth century and reached its climax under Henry II (reigned 1547-1559). About 1550. H. 14 in. Rogers Fund, 04.3.217, 22.140





**L**eft: Children's rattles are among the least common survivors of American goldwork, although they were advertised for sale in colonial newspapers fairly frequently. Like this one, by Nicholas Roosevelt (1715-1769), they usually consisted of a whistle and rows of bells at one end with a teething coral at the other. According to two ancient superstitions, which may well have become American tradition, coral was a charm against evil as well as promoting the hardness of a child's teeth (because of coral's "miraculous" hardening when taken out of water); so a rattle like this was an especially appropriate present for a baby. New York, about 1760. L. 6 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. Rogers Fund, 47.70.

Right: The nineteenth-century discovery of gold in California, Australia, South Africa, and Alaska provoked a rush to the gold fields where many a feverish miner found only minute amounts of gold dust or a few small nuggets. So extraordinary was the appearance of a nugget weighing 2,217 ounces that the T. C. Williams Tobacco Company used it on this small poster to advertise: "As the Welcome Nugget weighing 2217 oz. exceeds in purity and value any lump of gold ever found, so this brand surpasses in quality any tobacco made." American, 19th century. Color lithograph, 13 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 6 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. Purchase, Jefferson R. Burdick Bequest, 1971.503.1.

Far right: In 1919 Vice-President Thomas R. Marshall and Speaker of the House of Representatives F. H. Gillett used this gold pen to sign the joint resolution of Congress extending the right of suffrage to women. It was presented to the Smithsonian Institution in 1920 by the National American Woman Suffrage Association. L. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. Lent by the Smithsonian Institution.

Below: Eighteenth-century American gold boxes are rare and those with a maker's mark very rare. This snuffbox bears the mark of Myer Myers (1723-1795), an important New York craftsman and the only recorded early silversmith who created Judaic ritual silver as well as the more usual forms of his day. The cover is decorated with what is probably a scene of the young shepherd David being presented to King Saul, and the box may have been made as a presentation piece for the opening of a new Masonic Lodge in New York in 1769: its name was King David's Lodge and Myers was Senior Warden. D. 2 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Marshall P. Blankarn Gift, 66.102





# WELCOME NUGGET



JACK! LOOK AT THIS!

**T. C. WILLIAMS CO.**  
MANUFACTURERS

**VIRGINIA U.S.A.**







**L**eft: This statuette of St. Catherine was cast of gold, and then decorated with opaque enamel (*émail en ronde bosse*) after the surface had been roughened slightly. Probably made in Paris between 1400 and 1410, the statuette's flat back suggests it originally stood in the kind of richly jeweled composition much admired in French court circles. H.  $3\frac{3}{4}$  in. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.905.

The two pendants on the opposite page represent the fanciful jewels popular in the late sixteenth century. The pendant with the camel—a pearl suspended from each hoof—is German, made between 1580 and 1590. The other, depicting Europa being carried off by Zeus in the form of a bull, is of a type believed to have been executed by Netherlandish goldsmiths for their Spanish overlords during the years of occupation. H.  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $8\frac{3}{8}$  in. The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 32.100.299; Gift of George Blumenthal, 41.100.29









**A**t the left is a sophisticated example of eighteenth-century weaving that could come only from France, the leader of fashion in Europe from the days of Louis XIV. Both the enormously complicated weave and the superb control of the design—matte gold foliage entwined with sparkling gold vines and brilliantly colored silk flowers and leaves— are peculiarly French traits. The fact that this light-hearted dress silk was made into a chasuble illustrates the custom of the aristocracy in many countries and ages of leaving their treasured worldly goods to a favorite religious foundation. L. 43 in. Rogers Fund, 35.136.2.

Nose ornaments were much favored in pre-Columbian South America as personal adornment. The delicate piece above, shown almost twice actual size, is notable for the elegance of its conception: small hemispheres of silver in a framework of gold wire are set around petal-shaped golden leaves. The flower-like quality is not common to the metalwork of the area of northern Peru from which the ornament is believed to come, and may indicate influence from adjacent Ecuador. Area of Cerro Vicus, Piura. Mochica (?), 1st century B.C. W. 3 in. Lent by The Museum of Primitive Art, 65.62.

Left: Minoan craftsmen worked with gold, silver, and rock crystal as early as about 2500 B.C. In their jewelry, as in other arts, they rendered nature—plants, insects, small animals—with remarkable delicacy. Leaves and flowers like this one are well known from Early Minoan tombs on Mochlos, an island off the northeast coast of Crete. Probably from Mochlos. About 2200-2000 B.C. L. 2 in. Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 26.31.427

**O**verleaf, left to right: The covered cracker jar is made of Amberina glass, the name given the first successful particolored glassware made from one batch. A small amount of gold dispersed in the melted amber glass would cause it to turn red when reheated, so a piece—like this one—might have an amber base shading into deep red at the top. New England Glass Co., Cambridge, Mass., after 1883. H. 8 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. Gift of Emily Winthrop Miles, 46.140.483.

Glassmaking was highly developed in Hellenistic times, and vessels like the diminutive perfume bottle in front have been found throughout the Mediterranean world. The design was achieved by melting together colored glass rods and introducing gold leaf into bands left colorless. Greek, 1st century B.C. Rogers Fund, 06.1035.2.

The design in the roundel in the center is of gold leaf sandwiched between two thin layers of glass. Originally the bottom of a bowl, it was reduced to a medallion (presumably upon the death of the owner) and embedded, possibly as an amulet, into the mortar that sealed the individual tombs of the Roman catacombs. Early Christian (probably Rome), 4th century. Rogers Fund, 16.174.2.

The extremely elegant tazza at the right represents the height of the artistic development of Islamic enameled and gilded glass. Its decoration includes musicians and revelers, poetic inscriptions, coursing animals, heraldic eagles, and geometric designs. Syrian, 14th century. Bequest of Edward C. Moore, Collection of Edward C. Moore, 91.1.1538.

In the right foreground is a luxury version of the standard Greek perfume jar. It combines gold with rock crystal, a material highly prized in antiquity. From Cyprus, 5th century B.C. Purchased by subscription, 74.51.3598

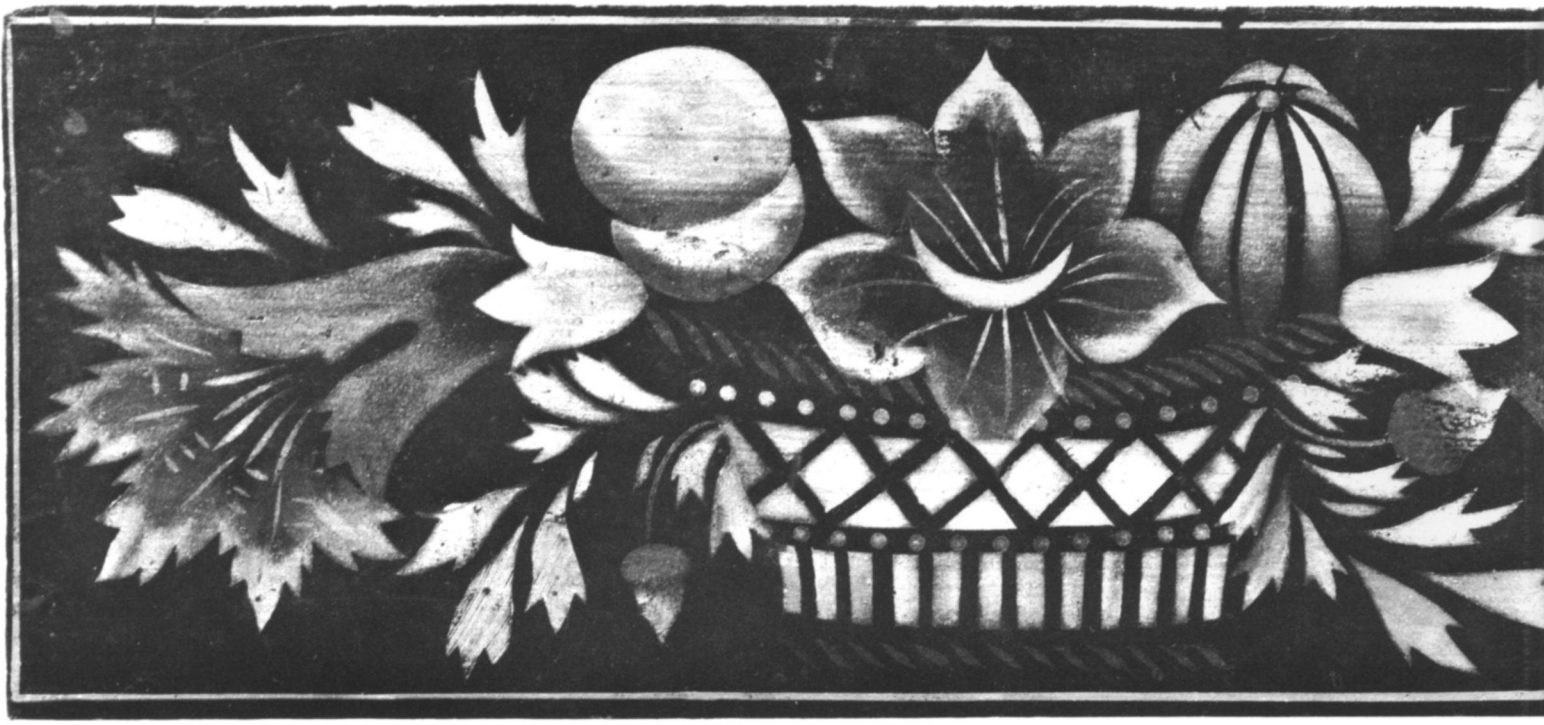
















Upper left: Stenciled in gold, silver, and copper on wood, this kind of pattern was used to decorate the backs of “fancy chairs.” It is by Allen Holcomb (1782-1860), an American furniture maker who worked mainly in Morris, Otsego County, New York. 4 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 47.31.85.

The Japanese swordguard at the lower left, made of a chemically treated gold and copper alloy, is ornamented with a symbolic design of boulders and bamboo in gold: though seemingly frail, bamboo bends but does not break, while even the hardest stone can be worn down by the gentle lapping action of water. By Ishiguro Masayoshi, 19th century. H. 2 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. Gift of Howard Mansfield, 36.120.79.

Near left: During the latest period of Egyptian civilization, animals associated with certain gods were mummified and buried in special catacomb-like tombs; this is a coffin for the mummy of an ibis, the bird associated with Thoth, god of wisdom. It is made of wood, hollowed out; the back is covered with sheets of gold leaf. Head, legs, and tail are of bronze, the eyes are obsidian. Ptolemaic period, 332-30 B.C. H. 14 in. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 56.18

**B**elow: On arriving in Colombia in the 1530s, the Spaniards heard tales of a monarch so rich he could cover himself from head to foot in gold, and search as they might, they could not find him. The legend of El Dorado, “the golden one,” had its source in a Chibcha Indian ritual in which the king covered himself in gold dust and then, as a form of offering, washed off the gold in the waters of the sacred lake. The Spaniards never found El Dorado, but the myth of his golden land was not forgotten.

In the ancient land of the real El Dorado—Colombia—gold was extensively used for personal ornaments and implements. Many of the goldworking techniques were sophisticated, but the earliest pieces were often simply hammered from sheet gold, as in the case of this impressive mask. Calima, Cauca valley. 4th-1st centuries B.C. W. 9 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. Lent by Jan Mitchell.

Right: The human face seems to have been the favorite subject of Baule goldsmiths and their patrons. Though gold ornaments might sometimes be worn as neck pendants or attached to swords, their most important role was a largely invisible one—as part of a sacred family treasure. These treasures were not to be disposed of, for they were a symbol of family unity stretching back across the generations; very rarely, they were displayed at certain funerals and weddings to honor non-family members. Ivory Coast. H. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. Lent by The Museum of Primitive Art, 58.314



Right: In this miniature from a sixteenth-century Persian *Shah-nameh*, the use of gold on the caparisons and saddles of the horses and on the armor, shields, and quivers of the knights calls to mind the rich illumination of the opening pages traditional for Islamic manuscripts. Here the confrontation of enemies in desperate combat has become a delightful feast of color, pattern, and rhythm. Gift of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., 1970.301.48, f. 376v







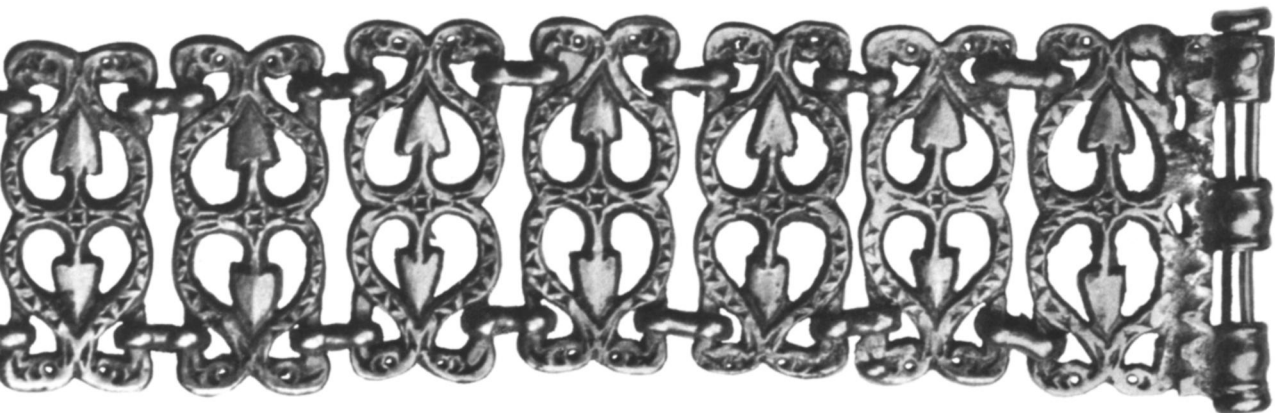


**T**he double-barreled fowling piece shown above is the work of Nicolas-Noël Boutet (1761-1833), who created some of the most lavishly decorated firearms ever made. Many were commissioned by Napoleon, who used to send a presentation gun or sword to everyone from whom he anticipated some important service. In addition, Boutet's workshop at Versailles manufactured the regulation firearms and swords that were instrumental in the Napoleonic wars, and Boutet trained artists to preserve the traditions of French gunmaking. This gun was probably made around 1820, after the fall of the empire, when Boutet was working privately in Paris. Walnut, steel, and gold. L. 47 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 42.50.7.

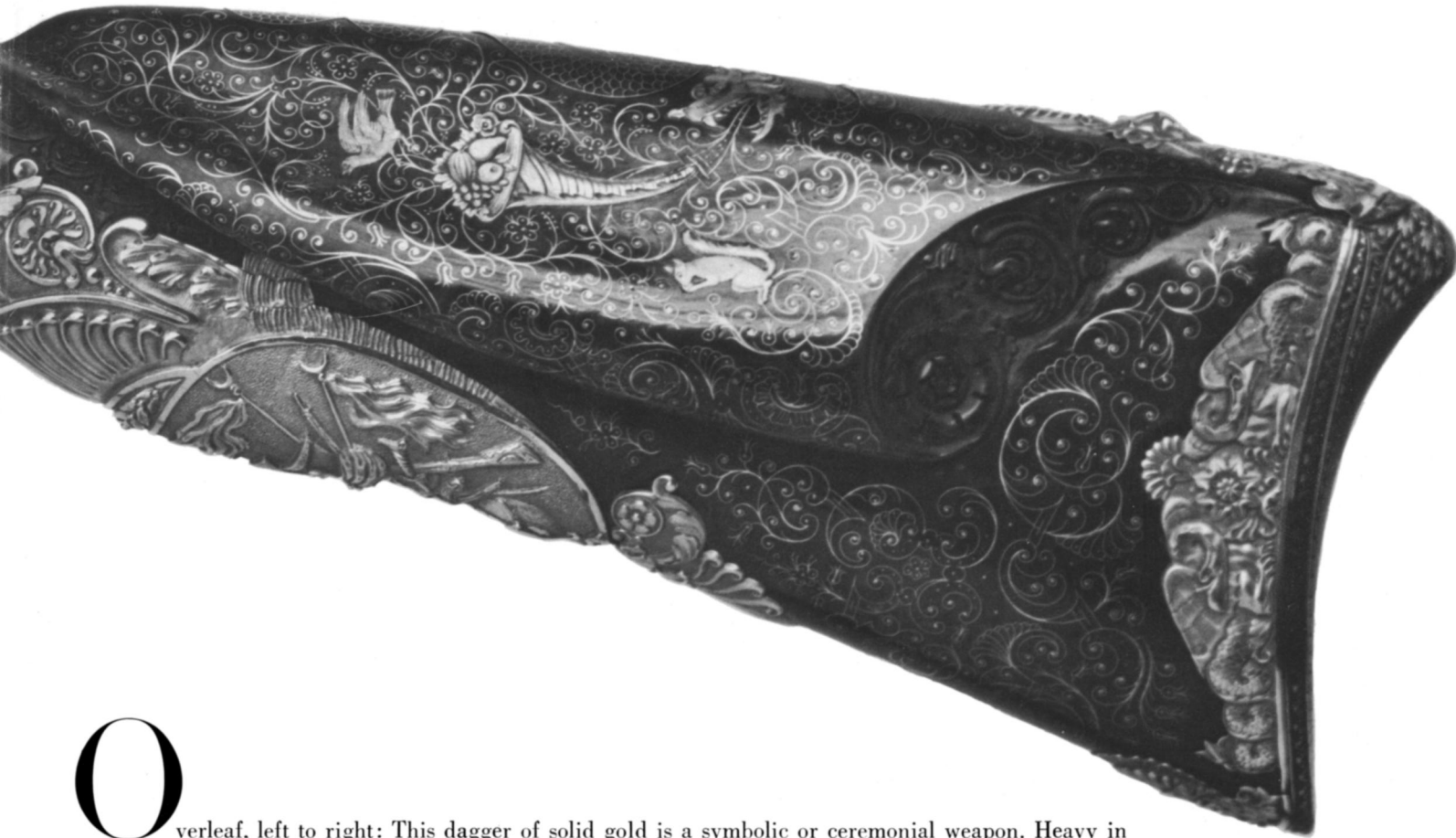
The golden sword-hilt ornament at the upper right depicts two pheasants, which, in Japan, are

symbols of motherly love since they are thought to exhibit great affection toward their offspring. By Imai Nagatake (1818-1883). L. 21 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 38.55.8.

Below: The design punched on the stylized palmettes of this handsome Byzantine bracelet is a version of the "point and comma" motif that probably can be traced as far back as Assyrian sculpture, where a single comma was placed on an animal's hind- or forequarter to indicate the muscles, and circles on the flanks to accentuate the natural curves. The motif has also been explained as of Scythian origin—the eye and beak of a bird of prey, with a second beak added for symmetry. 6th-7th century. L. 7 in. Gift of Alastair B. Martin, The Guennol Collection, 52.76.1







**O**verleaf, left to right: This dagger of solid gold is a symbolic or ceremonial weapon. Heavy in weight, it is finely and intricately worked, particularly around the lion heads. Achaemenid, about 5th century B.C. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 54.3.4.

The extravagant scimitar, second from the left, was put together in its present form for the enthronement of Sultan Murad V of Turkey in 1876. The jade grip is of Indian workmanship and the Persian blade is dated 1688; these imported pieces were highly prized in Turkey. Gift of Giulia P. Morosini, 23.232.2.

The sword in the center, embellished with American patriotic emblems and classical figures, was presented by the State of New York to Alfred Davis, heir of Brigadier General Daniel Davis of the New York militia, who was killed in the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813. By John Targee, New York. Gift of Francis P. Garvan, 22.19.

The last, overrefined descendants of the medieval knight's battle sword, court swords came to be treated as pieces of jewelry. The one second from the right has a solid-gold hilt with exquisite rococo contours. French, 1770. Gift of Jean-Jacques Reubell, 26.145.356.

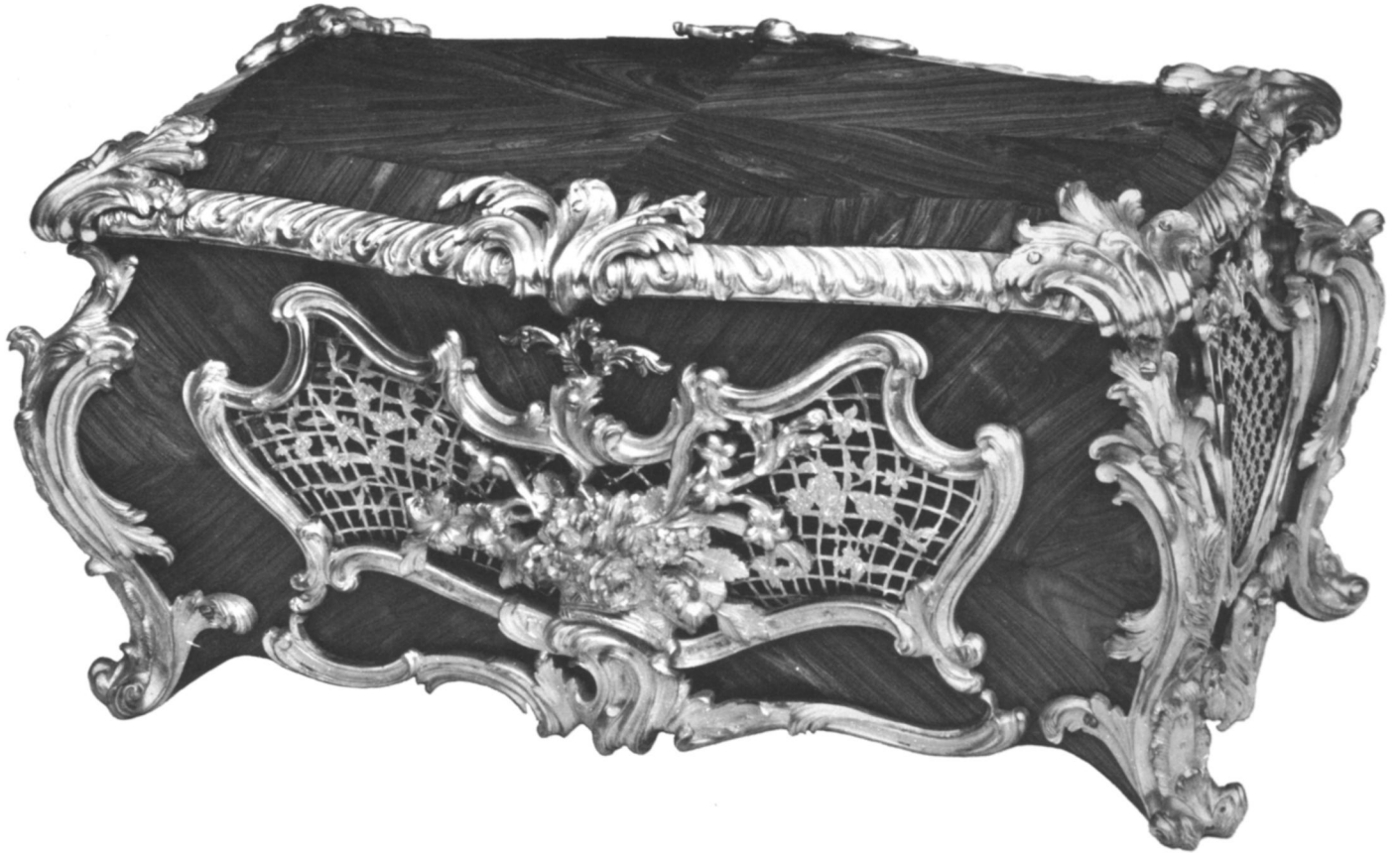
Though found in northern Iran, the shape of the sword at the far right suggests an origin among the nomads of the Central Asian steppes, possibly the Avars, a people related to the Huns. Golden bows, and presumably golden swords, were badges of rank for Hunnish chieftains; the pattern on the gold of this scabbard and hilt imitates the tooled leather used on the swords of common warriors. About 600. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 65.28











**T**he casket above originally served as a music box, and the musical airs were heard through the pierced brass grilles on the front, sides, and back. The gilt-bronze decoration can be dated before 1750, and is in the asymmetrical rococo style associated with King Louis XV's early years. The veneer is kingwood over pine. Paris, 1745-1749. H. 9 in. Rogers Fund, 59.175.

Daniel Govaers was the first Parisian goldsmith to specialize in making boxes, and characteristic features of his style appear in the snuffbox shown at the left—its baroque shape with canted front corners, and the lavish use of diamonds in defining the decoration. He worked primarily for Louis XV and the royal family, and commissions for diamond-studded boxes occur regularly in the court accounts from 1725 to 1735. In the following year Govaers, bankrupt, fled Paris and is not further recorded. 1734/5. L. 3¼ in. Bequest of Catherine D. Wentworth, 48.17.419





**F**ar left: Hundreds of clothing ornaments like this have been found in the tombs of the Scythian kings of South Russia. It represents a griffin, which, according to tales reported by Herodotus, watched over the Scythian gold mines and sprang upon unwary travelers venturing too close. About 5th century B.C. H. 1 in. Fletcher Fund, 24.97.48.

Lions were closely associated with royalty in all the kingdoms of west Africa. The Ashanti example at the near left is one of a pair that probably stood on the back of a royal chair. The triangular openings on its body reflect a taste for pierced forms typical of Ashanti art, rather than a desire to conserve the precious metal. Ghana. L. 2¼ in. Lent by The Museum of Primitive Art, 61.273.



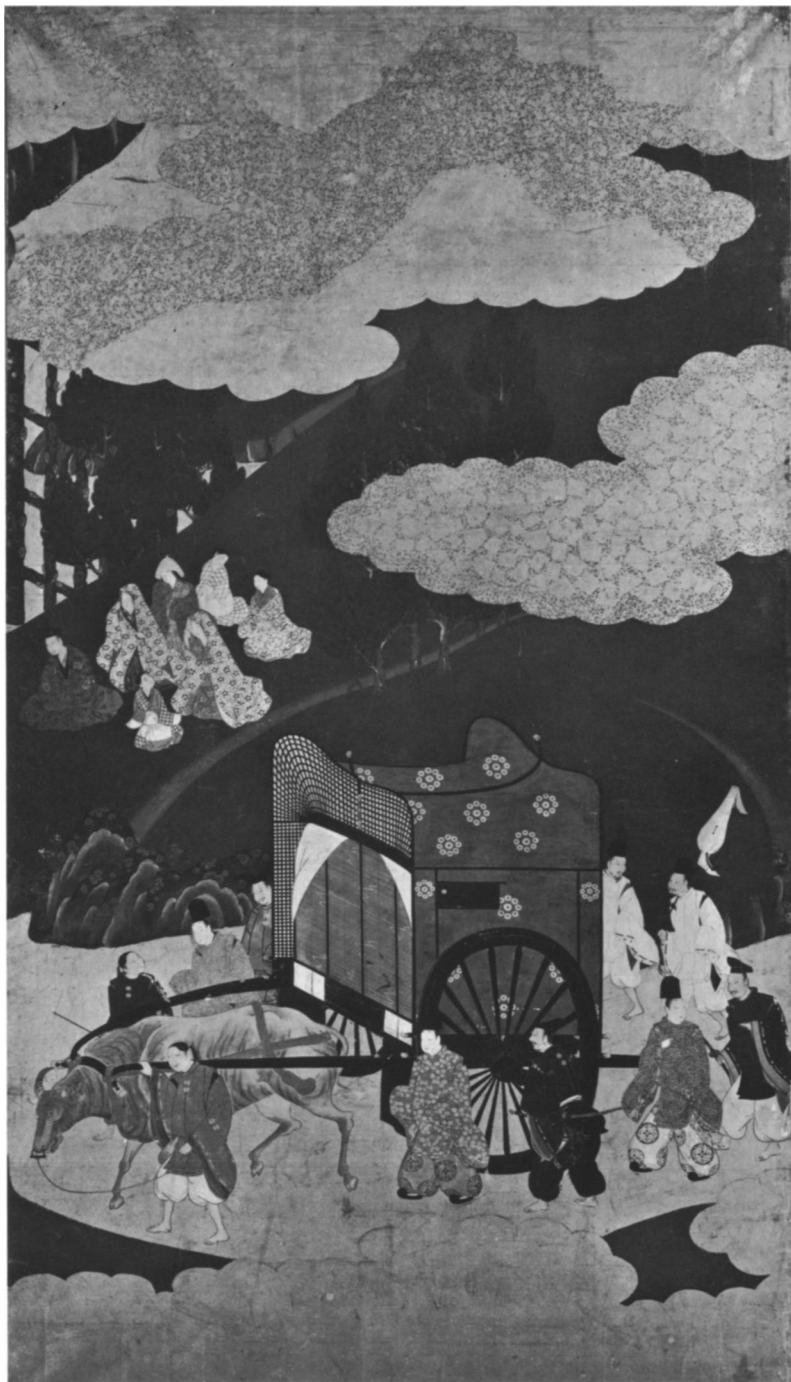
Above: This belt mount of cast gold represents some of the finest craftsmanship of the Avars, nomadic tribes who migrated into the Balkans from the sixth to ninth centuries. To the Avars the belt was a sign of rank and power, and the owner's status was determined by the quality of his belt accessories. Probably 8th century. W. 11/16 in. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.1686.



Left: Frogs exist in numerous species on the Isthmus of Panama and are commonly represented in the goldwork of the Panama-Costa Rica area. This one may be a tree frog, as they have extremely long legs (here projecting knee-like from the body) and equally long "feet" (here flattened to rectangles). L. 4¼ in. Costa Rica, Puerto Gonzalez Viquez. Chiriqui, 9th-14th centuries. Lent by Jan Mitchell

**T**his detail from a seventeenth-century Japanese screen illustrates a scene from *The Tale of Genji*, a novel written by Lady Murasaki in the eleventh century. The prince and his romantic adventures have been so admired that the tale has been told and retold—in paintings and screens—even up to the present time. Here Genji, in his chariot drawn by a bullock, is about to encounter Lady Utusemi, with whom he had had a fleeting love affair; at this meeting they will only be able to “exchange sad notes of unfulfillment.”

The vivid colors of the figures and landscape are highlighted by their golden setting: gold leaf forms the billowing clouds, gold pigment enhances details, and in some areas tiny gold flakes are interspersed to provide a textural contrast. Attributed to Misuyoshi (1539-1613). Fletcher Fund, 55.94.2



Information for the captions in this issue has been provided by the following: Helmut Nickel, Stephen V. Grancsay, and Ben Vincent, Arms and Armor; Mary Glaze Seiler, American Wing; Vaughn E. Crawford, Prudence Oliver Harper, Oscar White Muscarella, and Charles K. Wilkinson, Ancient Near Eastern Art; Christine Lilyquist and Nora Scott, Egyptian Art; Constance Lowenthal, European Paintings; Jean K. Schmitt, Far Eastern Art; Joan Mertens and A. O. Oliver, Jr., Greek and Roman Art; Marie L. Swietochowski and Marilyn Jenkins, Islamic Art; George Szabo, Robert Lehman Collection; Carmen Gómez-Moreno, Katharine R. Brown, Charles T. Little, and Vera K. Ostoia, Medieval Art; Julie Jones and Susan Mullin Vogel, Primitive Art; Janet S. Byrne, Prints and Photographs; Yvonne Hackenbroch, James Parker, Clare Le Corbeiller, and Jean Mailey, Western European Arts. Most of the color photographs were taken by William F. Pons, Walter Yee, and Gene Herbert of the Museum's Photograph Studio.





Obviously depicting a young couple purchasing a ring from the goldsmith St. Eligius, this painting is an epitome of gold omnipotent. Gold and its symbolism appear everywhere: in the coins, and in the treasures money can purchase; in the ring of matrimony and the happiness or bondage it brings; in the mirror's golden frame—human life encompassed by gold; in St. Eligius—the metalworker who turns the beautiful substance into beautiful things; in

the couple—those who acquire it, to their benefit or misfortune, and those who receive it, to their honor or shame. It is a suggestion of the metal's seductiveness that although it accounts for only a fraction of the picture's area, the gold in this painting dominates the viewer's attention. By Petrus Christus, Flemish. Dated 1449. Oil on panel, 39 x 33 7/16 in. Robert Lehman Collection. Photograph: Malcolm Varon



