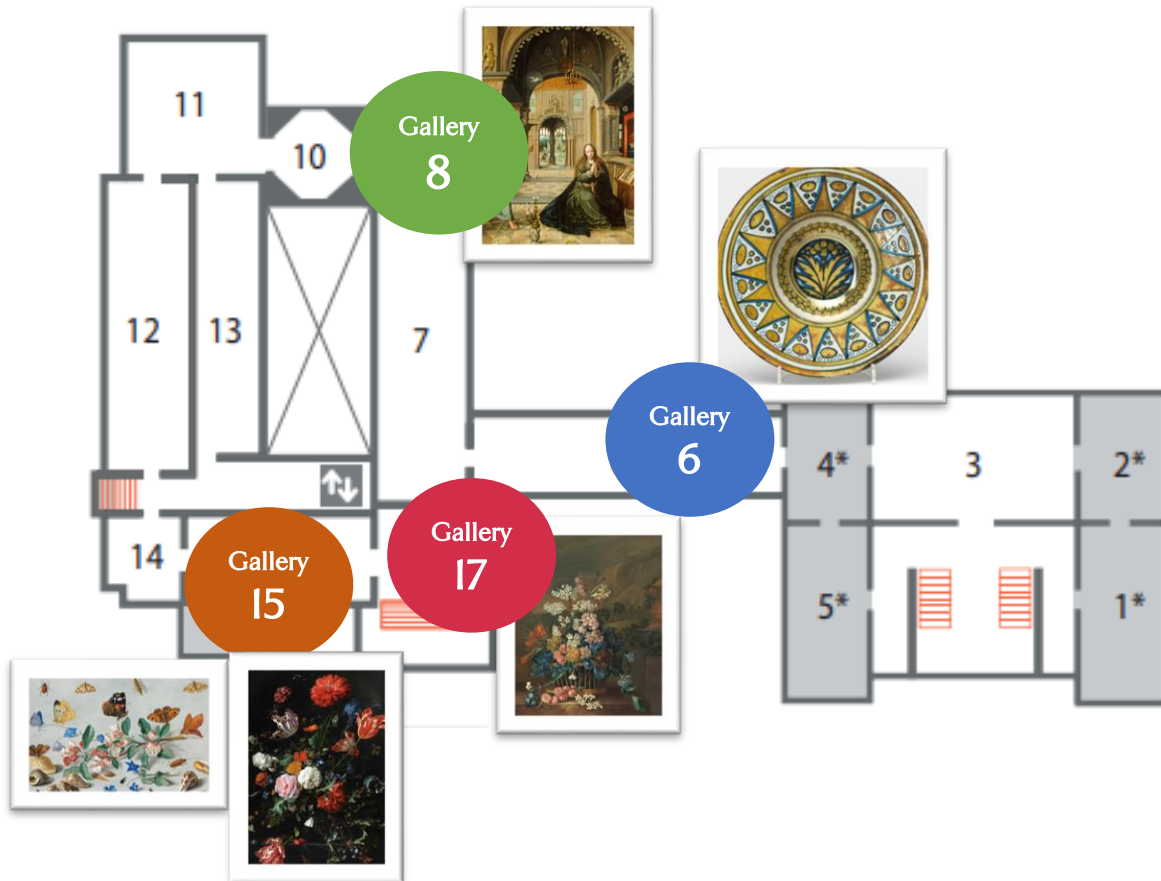


Fitzwilliam Museum ~ Top Floor

Floral inspiration walking map



Notes

The
Fitzwilliam
Museum
CAMBRIDGE

Museum Walk

Floral inspiration

Why artists like to paint flowers



Gallery
15

Flowers in a glass Vase

Jan Davidsz. de Heem (1606-1684) Dutch

'The more you look, the more you see' lose yourself in this truly flamboyant explosion of flowers, berries, seed pods, foliage and insects, brilliantly and masterfully executed to enthrall, surprise and excite!

A celebration of the natural world, this painting would have been the height of fashion in 17th Century Holland; a statement of the incredible and impossible, it unites flowers from across the seasons, represented in fine and brilliant detail, in one improbable composition.

Gallery
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The month of February

Jc.1730s Jacobus van Huysum
(1668-1740) Dutch

How did artists distinguish themselves in the competitive flower painting market of the 17th and 18th -century Netherlands?

Van Huysum had the idea of creating a collectable set of flower paintings, one for each month of year. The Fitzwilliam has the whole set, February's arrangement is shown here.

In this Gallery we can see many elaborate floral arrangements, each overflowing with different types of flowers, exotic fruit and even birds! With the elongated and intertwined stems, the flowers seem to jostle each other for prime place in the arrangement!

Gallery
8



The Annunciation

1517 Bernart van Orley
(1492-1542) Flemish

This painting tells the Christian story of the Annunciation – the moment when the Angel Gabriel visited Mary to tell her she is to be the mother of the Son of God – Jesus. A critical element in this story is that Mary is pure and innocent.

Flowers and their symbolism have long been a helpful device for artists in the depiction of stories. Few flowers have been more consistently used in religious paintings than the lily which has been associated with purity and innocence and the Virgin Mary since Medieval times.

In this painting, the lily is placed in the foreground, between Gabriel and Mary, the artist telling us that they are both pure.

Broad-rimmed bowl

Umbria c.1500-30
From the collection of
William Morris (1834-1896)

Gallery
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At first glance this bowl looks a lot like the work of William Morris, the celebrated 19th Century designer – however it isn't, but he did own it!

Made over 300 years before Morris, this piece is a great example of a long tradition of artists and craftspeople who have drawn inspiration from the natural world.

Like Morris work, the pattern on this bowl takes its inspiration from plants and flowers. Greatly stylized, these shapes could be derived from leaves and petals, perhaps even seeds. Arranged in circles, like the rings of a tree or the ripples from a pebble thrown in the water, the patterns repeat and draw the eye to the symmetrical flowers in the centre of the bowl.

Butterflies with other insects

1661 Jan van Kessel
(1626-1679)
Flemish

Gallery
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How better to learn about nature and gain scientific knowledge than to study it by drawing and painting.

Van Kessel's keen observations of plants, insects and shells are just that, combining his knowledge of the natural world with his artistic skill.

As more and more people became interested in studying nature, this gave rise to the question of how best to keep their collections. Cabinets, be they small boxes or dedicated rooms were a favored choice. It is likely that a painting such as this, would have decorated the drawer or door of a cabinet, indicating what was inside.