

Colorfully Woven

The Making of *Thérèse Makes a Tapestry*

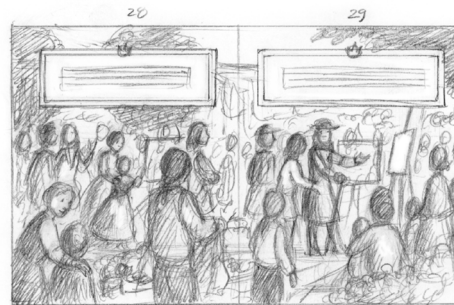
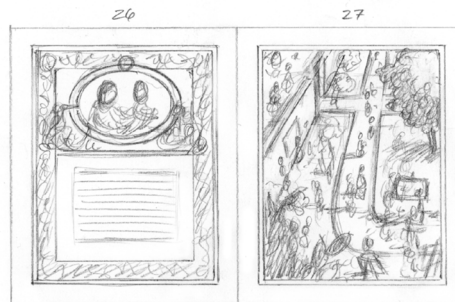
Written by Alexandra S. D. Hinrichs

Illustrated by Renée Graef

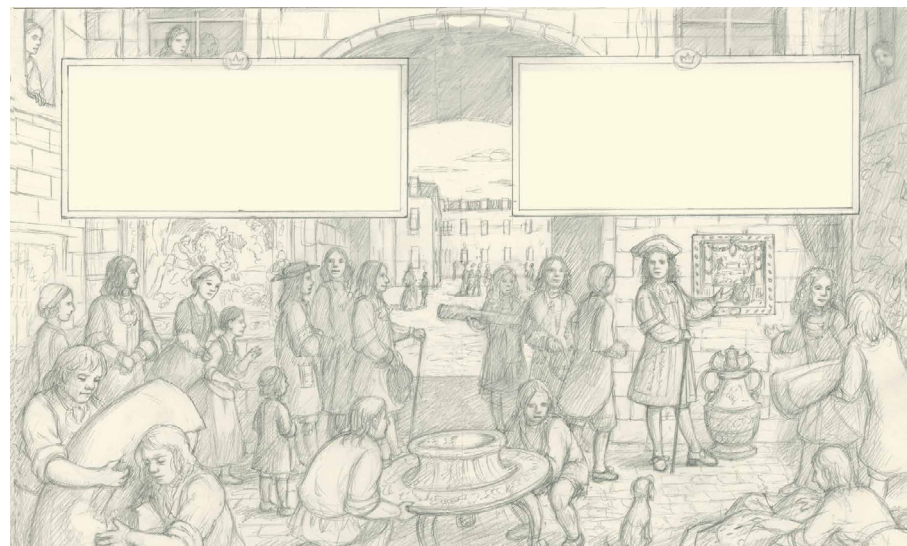
Thérèse Makes a Tapestry is rich with vibrant and detailed images from Thérèse's world. Read on to learn more about illustrator Renée Graef's artistic process and her creative collaboration with the author Alexandra Hinrichs, curator Charissa Bremer-David, and fashion historian Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell. Look closely and you'll discover some secrets within the pages of *Thérèse*!

Illustration Process

Graef works in stages. Her illustrations begin with thumbnail sketches. These can change a lot, but they help get the ball rolling and fill in the blanks until she gets more information.



Then Graef does a larger sketch.



Once the sketch is done, she flips it over and scribbles all over the back with graphite. Then she flips the sketch back over and carefully draws over the line illustration with pen. The pressure of the pen causes the graphite on the back to transfer pencil marks of the image to her illustration board in preparation for the next stage: painting!



Once Graef has transferred a sketch to her illustration board, she begins to paint with acrylics. To start, she paints in sepia tones to warm things up right away. Then she moves on to colors. In an outdoor scene one of the first things she paints is the sky.





Graef likes to paint from two-ounce condiment cups, which come with lids—perfect for storing the paints at the end of her workday! The condiment cups allow her to use the same paints for four to five days before she needs to replace them.

She waters the paints down a little before she begins, and sometimes will just paint straight from the lid.

After the acrylics have dried Graef adds a layer of oil paints. She paints all the final details in oils on top of the acrylic. Graef finds this part really fun and rewarding, because the hard work of developing the scene is done. She compares her enjoyment of this final stage of painting to having dessert!

Models and Costumes

Graef likes to use models for each of her characters. For example, her friend modeled as Henri, and her own son Maxfield modeled as Thérèse's brother Mathieu.



To choose period-specific clothing for the characters Graef turned to costume consultant Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell for help. Chrisman-Campbell provided historical references before Graef finalized outfits for each character.

Maman



Papa, Henri and Mathieu



The visual references included paintings by seventeenth-century artist Jan Steen. Graef found these inspiring and sought out more of Steen's paintings, which capture everyday moments from people's lives.



Jan Steen, [Celebrating the Birth](#), 1664. Oil on canvas. © The Wallace Collection, London.



Jan Steen, detail from [Family Meal](#), about 1674



Once she knew what their outfits should look like, Graef made a color study to make sure that one color did not dominate the palette and to find a look that showed the personality of each character. When Renée learned that ensembles of contrasting bright colors were fashionable at the time, she had the idea to dress Thérèse in primary colors to match her creative spirit! There were some changes made to the color study above. In the final paintings, Henri's cuffs became green and the blue he wears is toned down a bit so Thérèse shines all the more. Papa's black outfit became brown, since black was generally reserved for mourning and for the clergy during that time period.

Throughout the process of determining the look and style of the characters, the pages, and every other aspect of *Thérèse Makes a Tapestry*, Graef worked closely with Getty Publications designer Jim Drobka. The two met almost every week to pore over visual details and historical research.



The Cover

When Graef thought about what to paint on the cover of *Thérèse Makes a Tapestry*, she knew she wanted to create an image that complemented the 1999 Getty publication [Marguerite Makes a Book](#).

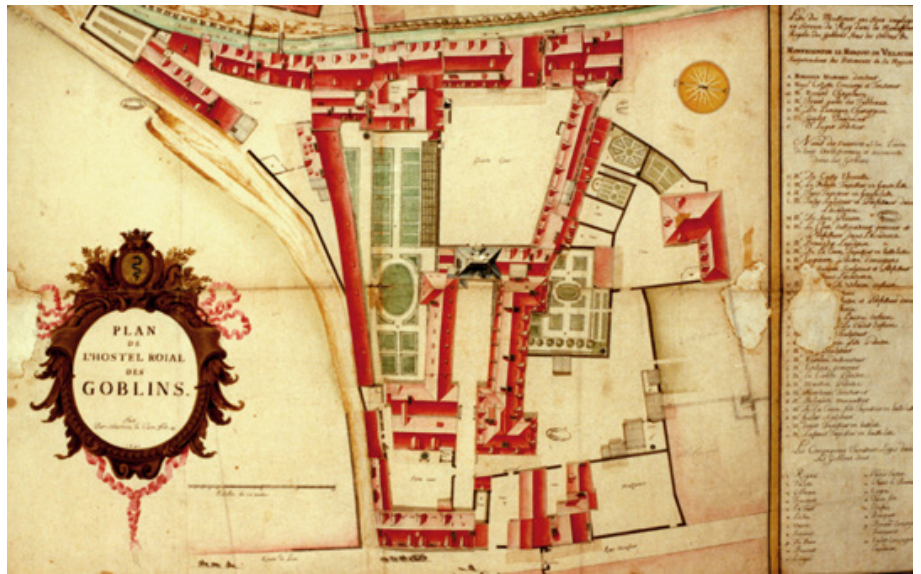
For the cover image, Graef decided to show Thérèse focused on her weaving. Here is what her initial thumbnail sketch looked like.

As Graef learned more about the weaving process, she made changes accordingly. For example, the warp would not be pulled out so far on a real loom. However, Graef didn't want to push Thérèse farther from the reader, so instead she brought Thérèse even closer, fixing attention on the bobbin in her hand. When Graef discovered more about the types of dwellings that artisans and their families inhabited at the Gobelins, the buildings seen outside the window in the background changed. Getty curator and tapestry expert Charissa Bremer-David provided visual references and helped Graef determine which colors of yarn would go where on the tapestry.

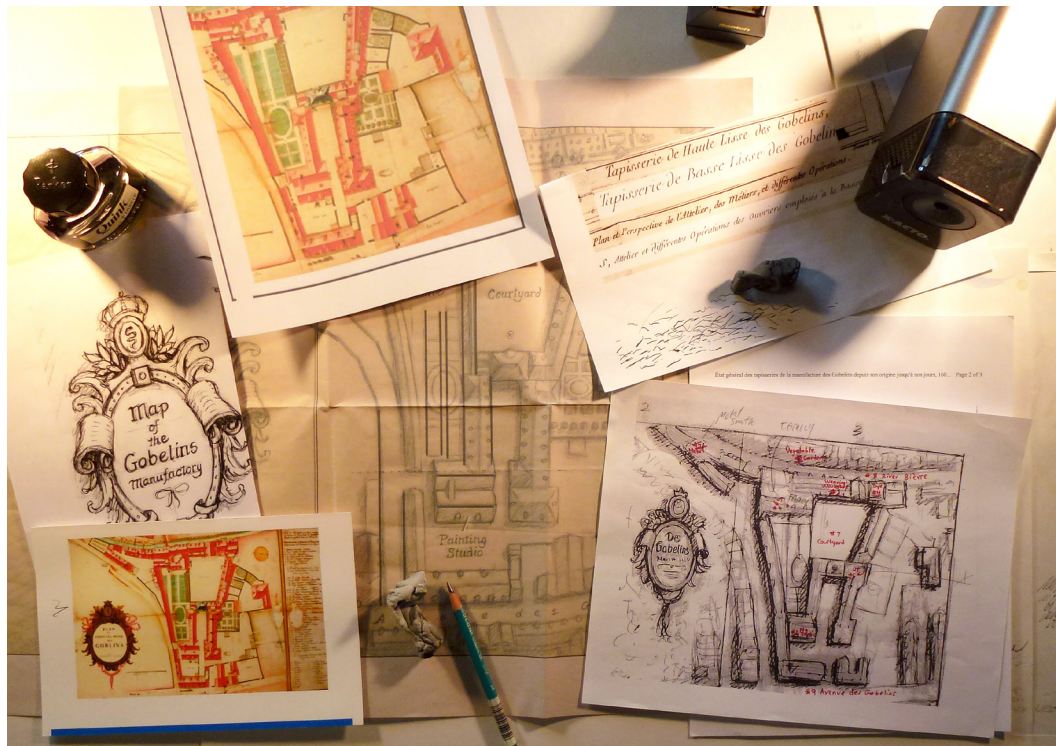


Map of the Gobelins Manufactory

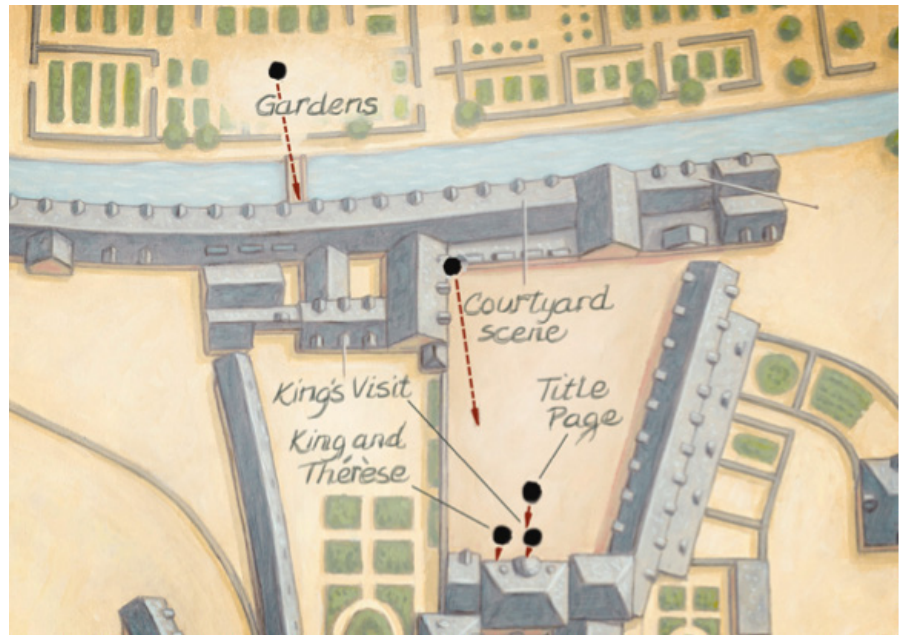
The map depicting the Gobelins Manufactory on the end pages of *Thérèse Makes a Tapestry* is based on a real map of the Gobelins. The map, designed by a young engraver named Sébastien Le Clerc in 1691, was remarkable for the creative way it showed multiple levels of each building. (Check out [this video](#) to see more— even if you don't speak or understand French, you'll be able to enjoy how the map works!)



Bremer-David helped Graef figure out where each location in the story would have been on the map, no small feat when the legend of the original map was in tiny French script! In the image below you can see what Graef's desk looked like as she worked. A sketch of the map marked up in red is in the lower right-hand corner. The markings show each location. Above it you can see a sample of handwriting that she used to write all the words on the map. On the left you can see her sketch of the map's emblem, and below that the image of the original map. The final emblem has three fleurs-de-lis, a signature of King Louis XIV, beneath a crown at the top.



The map illustration proved useful for other illustrations in the book. Graef used it to create a site locator showing where each outdoor scene in the book takes place.

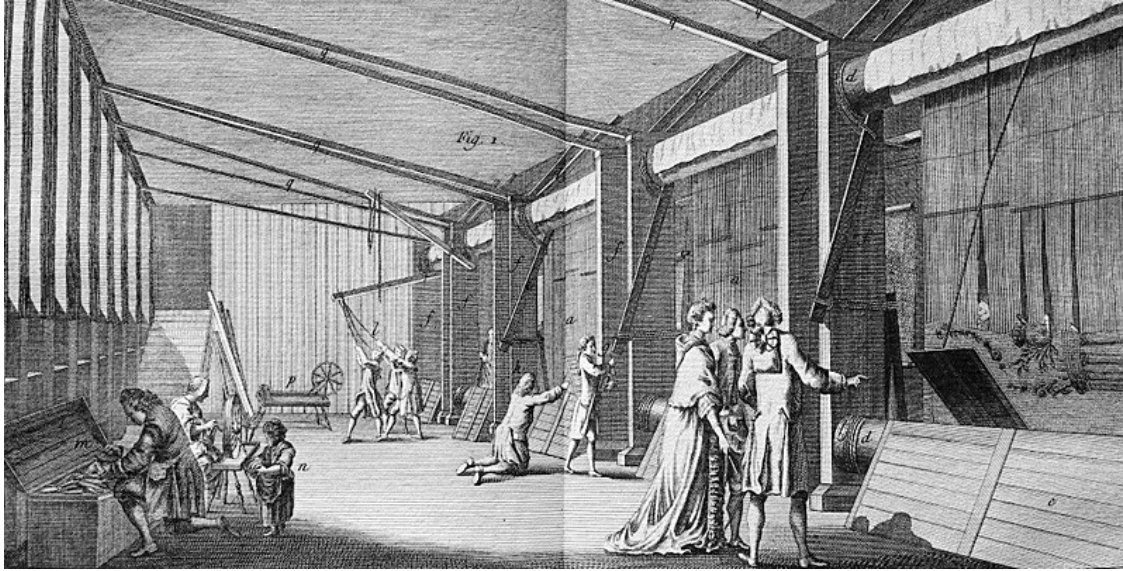


Here is the final painting of the map before Graef added the words:



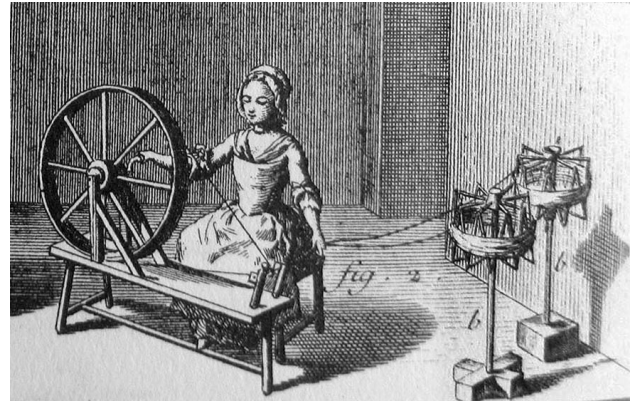
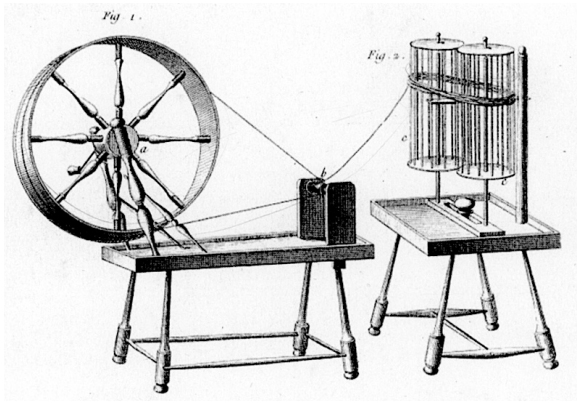
Weaving Workshop

As she did with the map, Graef used images that were centuries old when illustrating the weaving workshop. Denis Diderot's [Encyclopédie](#) was an especially valuable source. Dating from the mid-eighteenth century, the encyclopedia details collective knowledge about the types and practices of arts and sciences from that time period, including information about many artisanal workshops such as the Gobelins Manufactory.



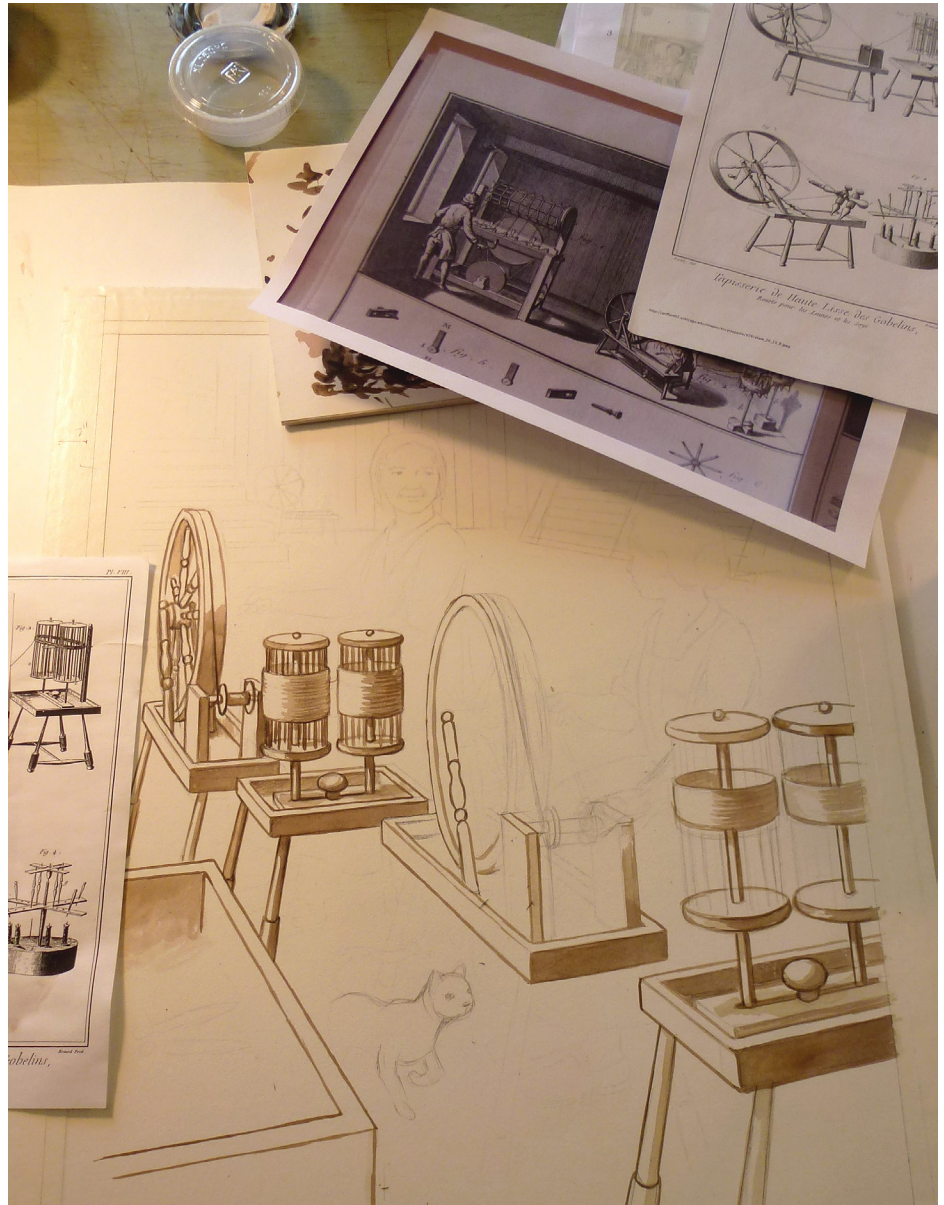
The contraption to the left of Thérèse is called a *dévidoir*. The *dévidoir*, which looks a bit like a spinning wheel, proved to be a stumbling block for both author and illustrator as they attempted to figure out exactly how it worked. Thankfully, Diderot came to the rescue again, as did Bremer-David.

Two examples from the *Encyclopédie*

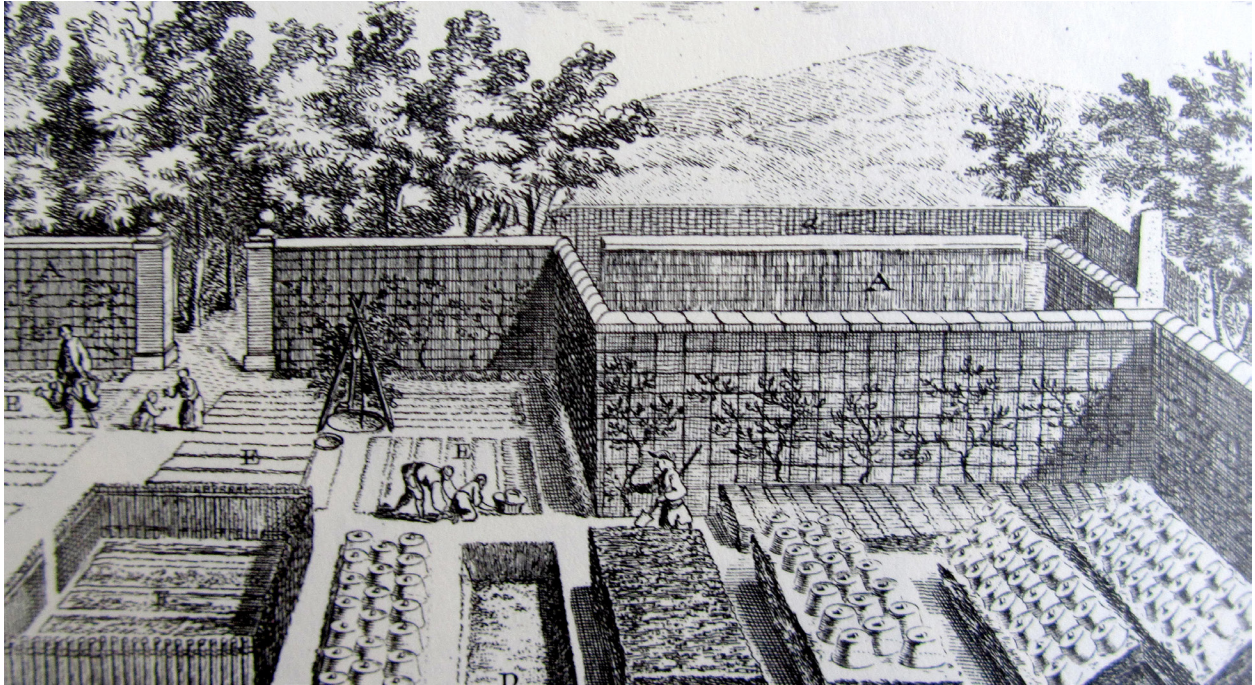


The above image was actually for a different scene of Thérèse and Maman working on their *dévidoirs*, but Graef used the references for both that scene and the scene of Thérèse at the workshop.

In the workshop scene, as in many other scenes, the reader might notice a cat. Graef loves animals and was again inspired by Jan Steen's paintings, which also include animals. In home and work settings, animals served practical purposes, such as a cat keeping mice and rats at bay!

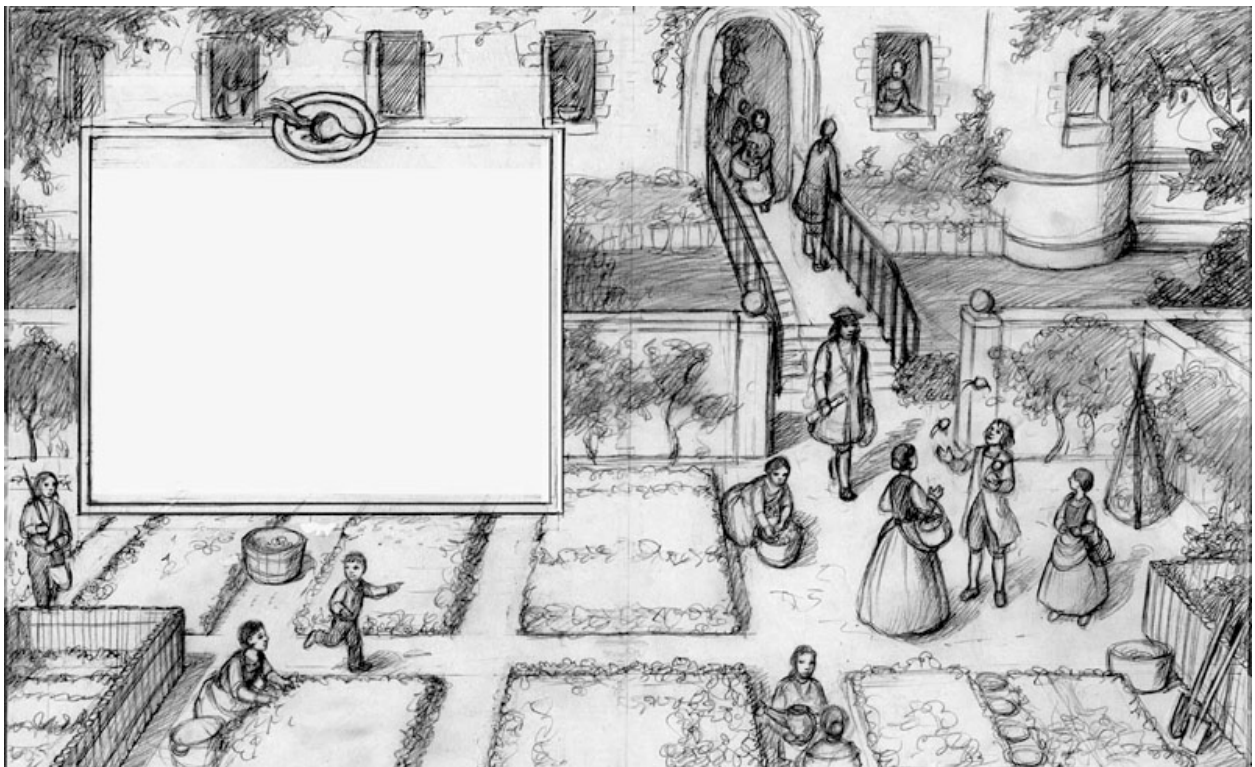


Garden Scene

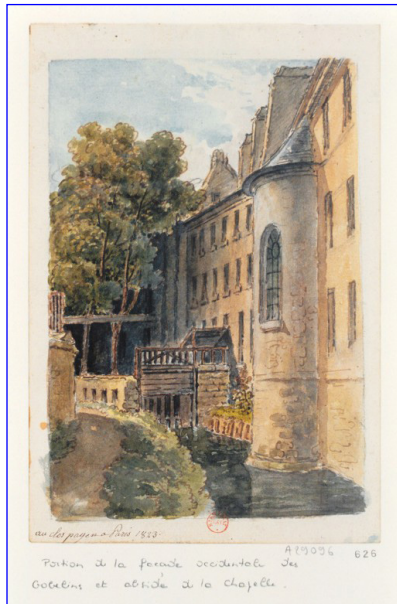


["Agriculture et economie rustique: jardin potager"](#) from Diderot's *Encyclopédie*.

In this scene Thérèse and her family are out in the Gobelins gardens, gathering vegetables from their own plot.



In addition to checking historical references, Graef also considered the season and the types of vegetables that would have been growing. Behind Thérèse and her family readers can see the River Bièvre. The river was crucial to dye-making and a big reason why the Gobelins dyeworks were successful.

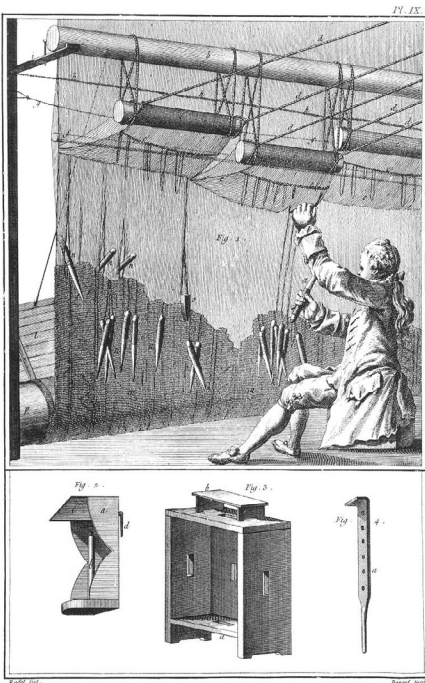


[A nineteenth-century view of the Bièvre behind the Gobelins, 1830](#)

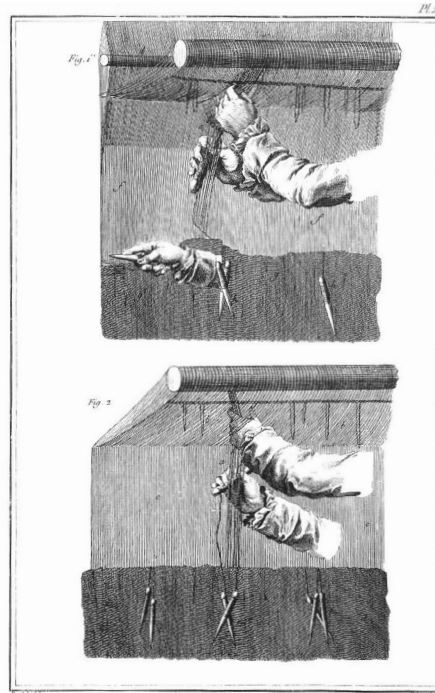


Thérèse Weaving

Once again, Graef relied upon the detailed images in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and the tapestry expertise of Bremer-David to illustrate weaving. Diderot's plates below show the weaving process on a high-warp loom with several close-ups of special techniques and tools.

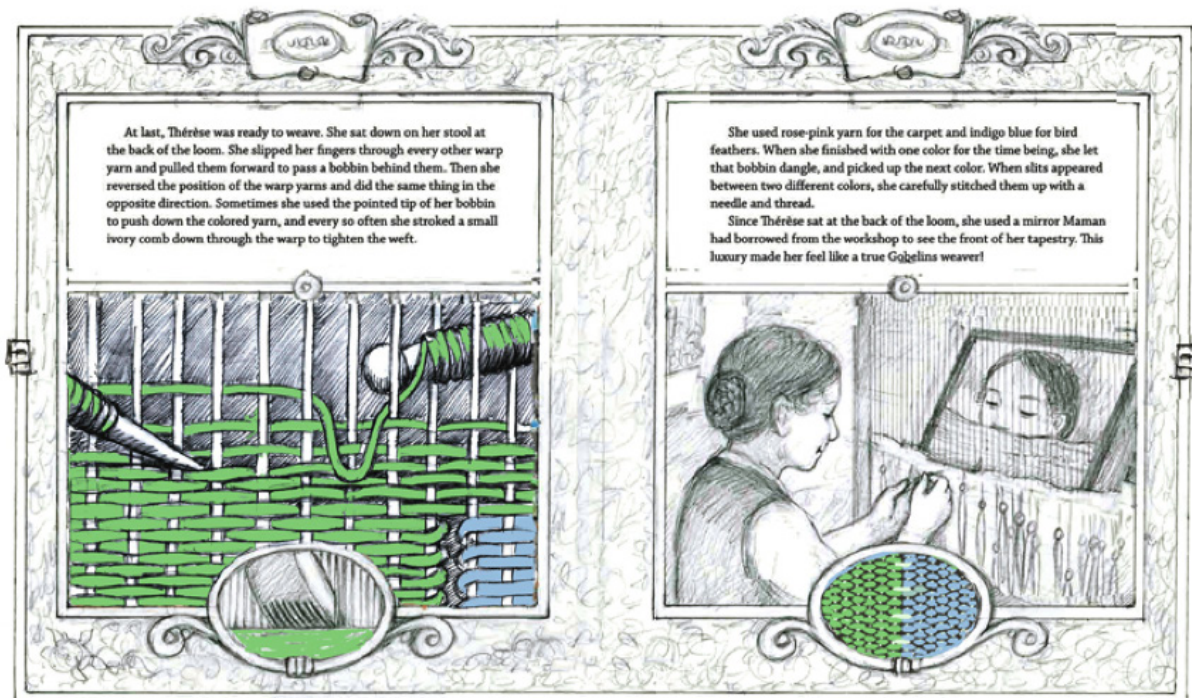


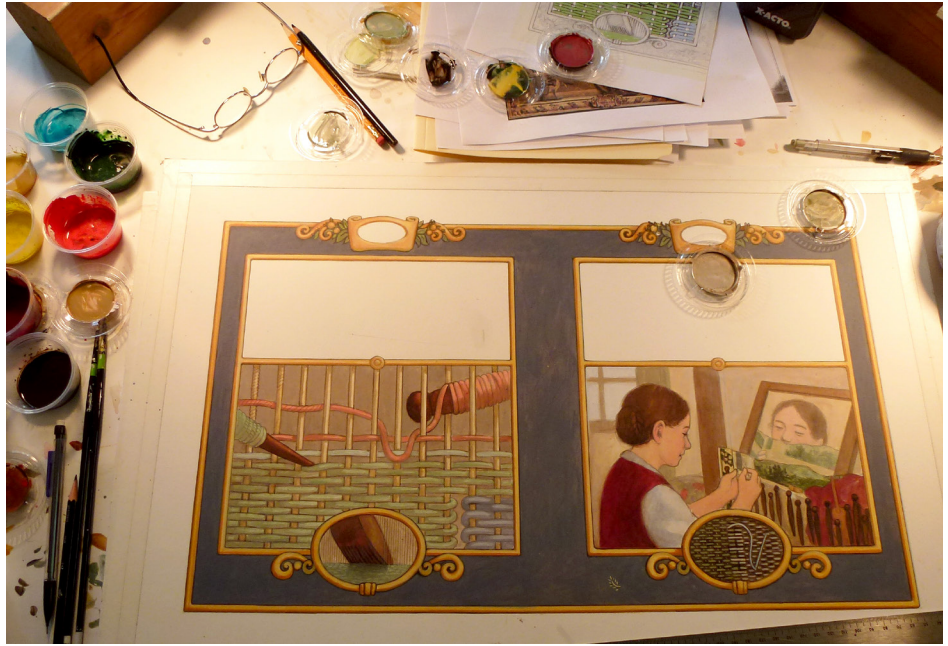
*Tapisserie de Haute Lisse des Gobelins.
Attitude de l'Ouvrier pour commencer l'ouvrage.*



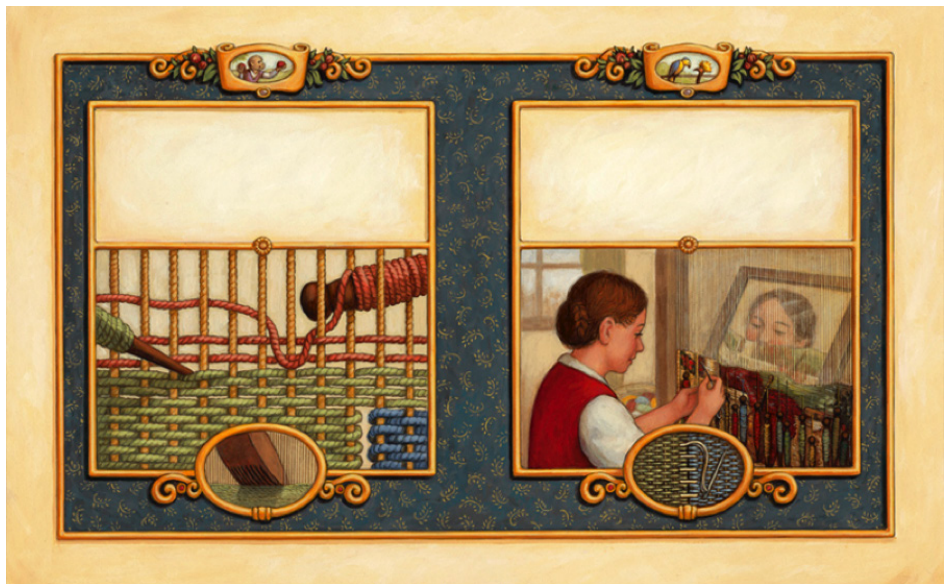
*Tapisserie de Haute Lisse des Gobelins.
Service de la Broche.*

Bremer-David helped Graef refine details such as the thickness and the color of the yarns.





The circular insets of the monkey and birds that readers see at the top of each of these pages are also inspired by a real tapestry, in this case, an eighteenth-century four-panel screen called a *paravent* at the J. Paul Getty Museum.



Four-Panel Screen from the Savonnerie Manufactory, knotted between 1719–1784



The Metalsmith's Workshop

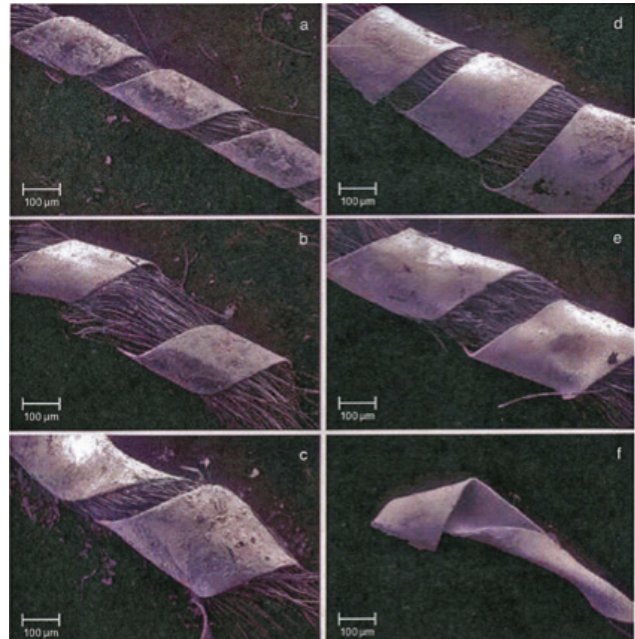
At the metalsmith's workshop readers encounter one of the trickiest scenes created in *Thérèse Makes a Tapestry!* It was quite the challenge to figure out how gilded thread was made. There were several brief descriptions scattered across different reference books and one image from Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (below) that were helpful, but that was not enough information to illustrate the scene.



Undaunted, Bremer-David conducted original research, speaking to experts in Germany and acquiring some valuable historical and scientific references for Graef to use.



Period portraits of Nuremberg wiredrawers from [House Books of the Nuremberg 12 Brothers Foundation](#), Stadbibliothek Nürnberg



Secondary electron images of metal-wrapped threads. Image © Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY

These examples demonstrate how a final painting can look completely different from the first thumbnail sketch. Graef made changes to match the incoming information...a good reminder of the importance of research!



The King's Visit

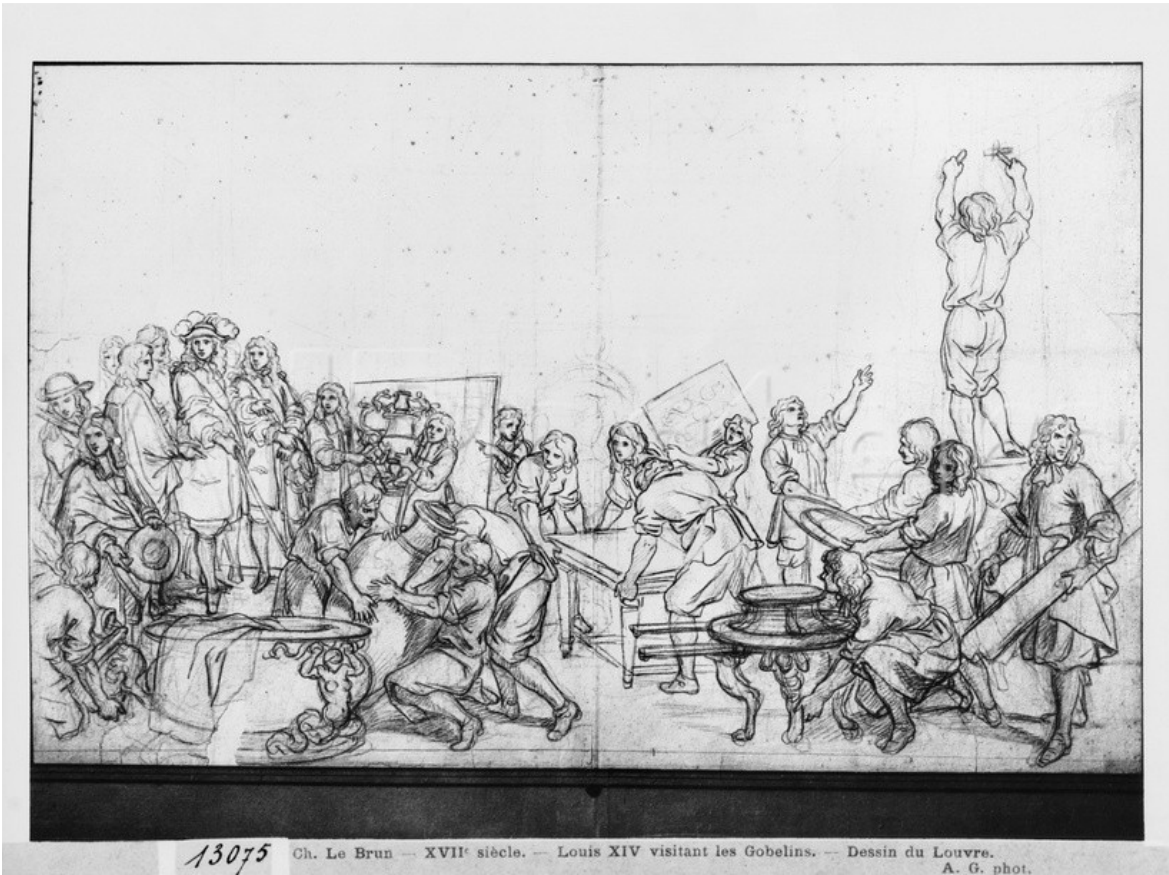
Illustrating the king's visit to the Gobelins Manufactory was, in Graef's own words, "a ton of work!"



The big influence for this scene was a Gobelins tapestry called *Louis XIV Visiting the Gobelins Factory*, woven after King Louis XIV's visit in 1667.



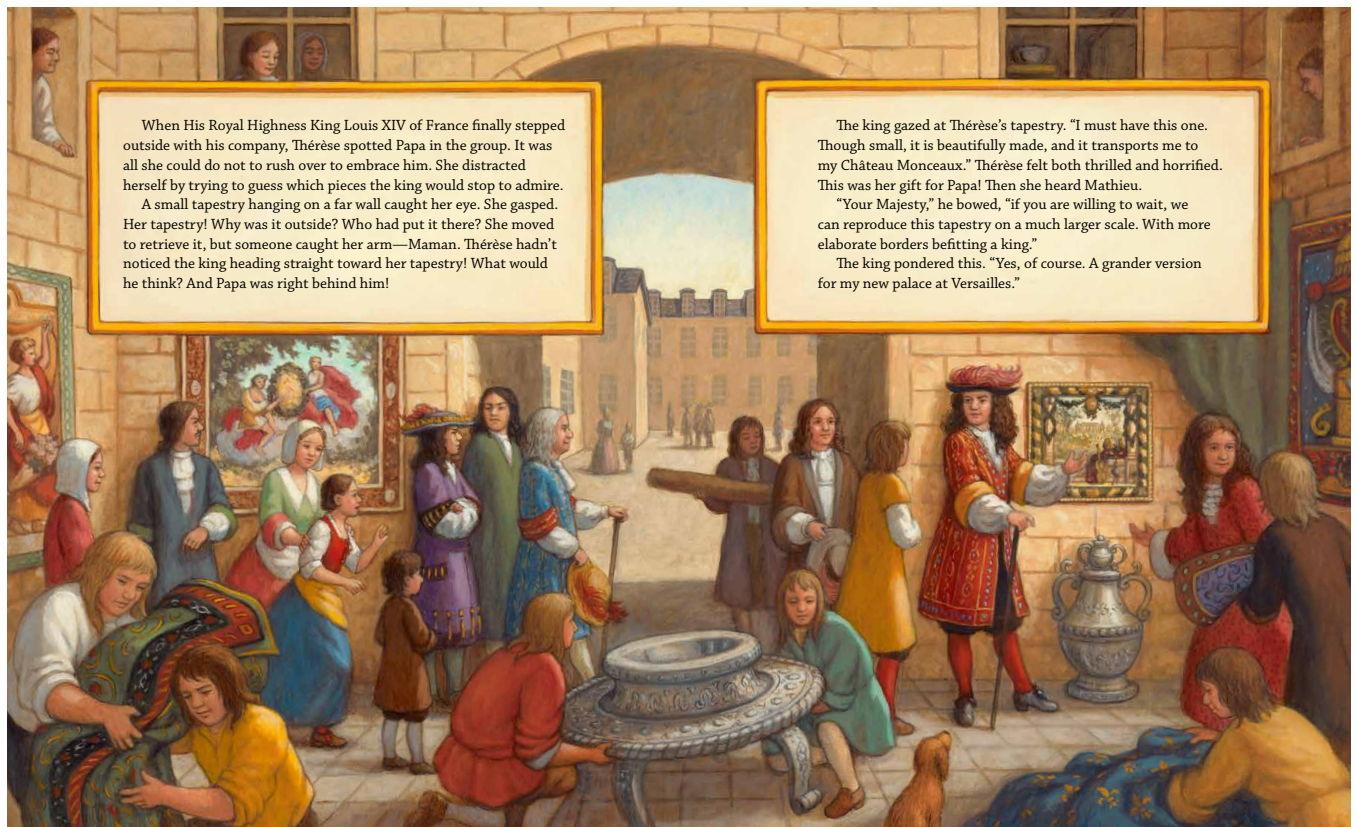
Charles Le Brun, [Louis XIV Visiting the Gobelins Factory](#), 1673



Charles Le Brun, a preparatory drawing for *The King's Visit to the Gobelins*, about 1672. Black chalk on beige paper. Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, Paris. Image © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY



Graef wanted to include similar objects from the original tapestry to capture the same feeling of energy and action. In Graef's illustration, the man to the right of the king, also gesturing towards the tapestry, is [Charles Le Brun](#), the first artistic director of the Gobelins Manufactory during Louis XIV's reign. He was the designer of many tapestries, including the tapestry above showing the king's visit. Graef paid homage to Le Brun's artistic accomplishments and career by illustrating Le Brun in *Thérèse Makes a Tapestry*. The painter Adam-François van der Meulen, who traveled with the king during his military campaign and specialized in battle scenes, also helped design Gobelins tapestries and served as an inspiration for the character of Papa.



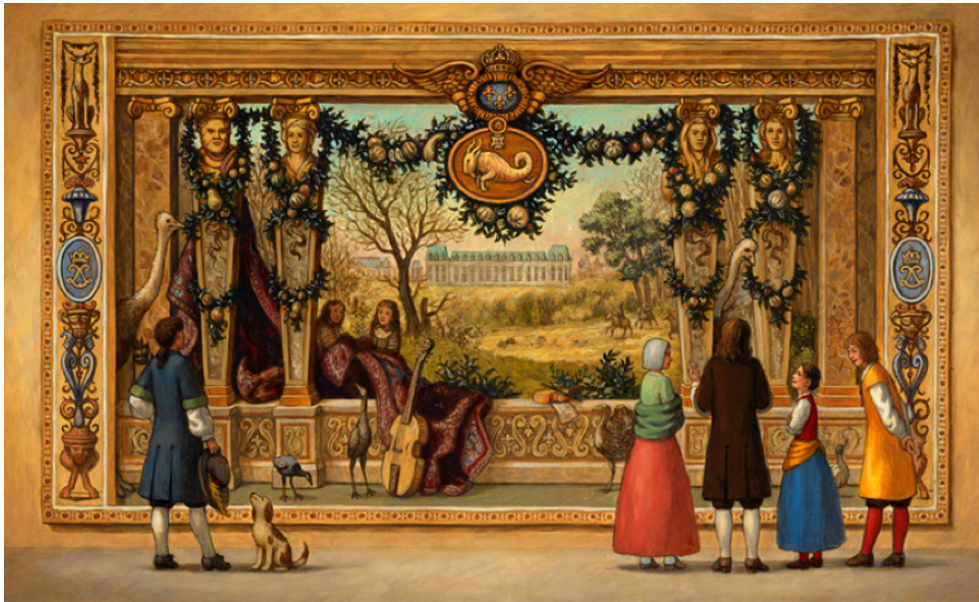
The Final Tapestry

Graef really wanted to include a wordless spread as a way of bringing the museum experience into the book. Here, readers can witness Thérèse and her family enjoying the full tapestry based on the *Château of Monceaux/Month of December* woven for King Louis XIV at the Gobelins. Readers can view original tapestries from the Gobelins at the Getty's "[Woven Gold](#)" exhibition until May 1, 2016.

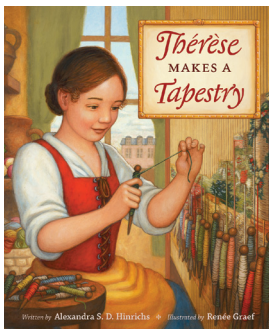


Château of Monceaux/Month of December from *The Royal Residences/The Months of the Year*, design conceived by Charles Le Brun, about 1665–by 1668, presented through the generous support of Eric and Nancy Garen, Le Mobilier National National, Paris, inv. GMTT 108/12. Image © Le Mobilier National, photo by Lawrence Perquis





Illustrator Renée Graef, author Alexandra Hinrichs, and editor Elizabeth Nicholson modeling Thérèse and her family in front of the real *Château of Monceaux/Month of December* tapestry. Image courtesy of Julie Southwell.



About this book

Thérèse Makes a Tapestry is a charming picture book set in the world-famous Gobelins manufactory of France under King Louis XIV. Thérèse dreams of becoming a royal weaver someday, and she carries out an ambitious plan with the help of friends, family, and the fascinating artisans of the Gobelins.

Other resources are available at http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/getty_books/therese.html.

