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**Goose walk rugs**

Welcome, [Filiberto Boncompagni](#).  
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November 16th,  
2011, 07:37 PM

#1

**Pierre\_Galafassi** [Goose walk rugs](#)  
Guest

Posts: n/a

On several fifteen century paintings, windowsills are decorated with small, roughly knotted rugs, featuring a single walking bird. Is it a goose, a swan or a crane? Difficult to tell since we can see only the lower part of the bird.

For sure there is nothing obviously "islamic" in the rug pattern and an attribution to Italian weavers is rather credible. (Other simplified small rugs with stricly geometric patterns will we discussed in the next essay).

Was the bird inspired by the coat of arm of an Italian city-state or of a local ruler? Or was it a religious symbol perhaps related with a local saint?



(A. di Giovanni, 1440-1460, Cassone panel., National Gallery)

Best regards

Pierre



November 17th, 2011,  
10:14 AM

#2

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)  
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008  
Location: Cyprus  
Posts: 10



Hi Pierre,

I think those were sort of Heraldic birds. Hard to say which one, but here are a few examples:

<http://www.rarebooks.nd.edu/digital/heraldry/charges/birds.html>

<http://www.ngw.nl/themes/birds.htm>

If it was a "religious symbol perhaps related with a local saint", as a Florentine I'm not aware of it (Apollonio di Giovanni was from Florence).

Same for birds symbolizing Florentine neighborhoods. Although things may have changed a bit since 1440.



Regards,



November 17th, 2011,  
02:05 PM

#3

### [Steve Price](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008  
Posts: 55



Hi Guys

On the subject of birds in that painting, what's up with the feathers on the guy dressed in gold (lower part of the painting, second person from the right)?

Regards

Steve Price



November 17th, 2011,  
04:46 PM

#4

### [Filiberto Boncompagni](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008  
Location: Cyprus  
Posts: 10



Hi Steve,

I hadn't noticed that. Searching more on that painting I found that:

First, the "cassone" (chest) panel was painted by a Marco del Buono (see note at the bottom) who worked in A. di Giovanni's "bottega".

Second, that the scene depicted was of a tournament.

In this National Gallery web page is possible to see the whole panel and zoom on it:

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/italian-florentine-cassone-with-a-tournament-scene>

So, perhaps the guy in feathers was the squire of a knight whose coat of arms had a bird... But, then, the only animals in the visible coat of arms are lions.

I don't know...

But before anyone facetiously suggests that the guy was perhaps a "chicken" (meaning: coward), the animal associated with cowardice in Italy is the rabbit, not the chicken

NOTE: *Marco del Buono (1402 - 1489?) was a member of the Physicians' Guild in Florence in 1426 (the guild to which painters belonged).*

*By 1446 he was in partnership with Apollonio di Giovanni (died 1465) almost entirely for the production of cassoni, such as the 'Cassone with a Tournament Scene' attributed to Apollonio's workshop. Source: National Gallery, London.*



November 17th, 2011,  
05:06 PM

#5

[Steve Price](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008  
Posts: 55



Hi Filiberto

He's also remarkably tall; his head is at the same level as those of the guys on horseback. And the woman next to him (in the red cap) seems to find something quite interesting about the lower part of his body.

Regards

Steve Price



November 18th, 2011,  
03:42 PM

#6

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008  
Location: Cyprus  
Posts: 10



Ahem... That's not a woman, Steve, but another guy on a black horse.

The feathered man either is jumping or he is somehow suspended between the knight on the brown horse and the guy with the red cap on the black horse. Or he's on the back of the same black horse.



Regards,

Filiberto



November 18th, 2011,  
05:07 PM

#7

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008  
Location: Massachusetts  
Posts: 35

**More horsing around**

Hi Filiberto,

Isn't Featherman *riding* the *brown* horse that's *behind* the guy with the red cap on the black horse?

Joel Greifinger



November 19th, 2011,  
10:25 AM

#8

[Filiberto](#)


[Boncompagni](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008  
Location: Cyprus  
Posts: 10



Yes, you are right... So, it could be that "Featherman", although seems to be on the right of the guy with the red cap, is actually on his left, riding that yellowish horse that otherwise wouldn't have no rider.

Well, the artist is no Leonardo da Vinci, after all. (very appropriate smiley here  )

Regards,  
Filiberto



November 21st, 2011,  
05:47 PM

#9

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009  
Posts: 5



Yes Filiberto the bird could be part of a gentleman's, a merchant's or a guild's coat of arms. Another possibility is that it was the symbolic animal of an administrative subdivision, ward or district («contrada», «rione», «sestiere» or «terziere», whatever) of an Italian city-state.

In Siena for example, each of the 59 original «contrade» was named after a symbolic animal, including several birds: Oca (goose), Gallo (rooster), Civetta (owl). Pisa and Lucca also had similar citizen organizations, if I do not err.

The tournament represented on the cassone was not necessarily celebrated in Florence, by the way.

Anyway, the odds seem to be in favor of an Italian weaving of the rug.

The golden feathers could be part of "featherman's " heaume (or great helm") which he is perhaps holding with his right hand while waiting his turn.

It will surely disappoint Steve, but I doubt that the fellow had these feathers implanted in the style of a "Moulin Rouge" dancer 😊

Regards  
Pierre



November 21st, 2011,  
06:05 PM

#10

[Steve Price](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008  
Posts: 55



Hi Pierre

*I doubt that the fellow had these feathers implanted in the style of a "Moulin Rouge" dancer 😊*

You're probably right, but it totally destroys the image I had conjured up.

Regards

Steve Price



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2. Animals in Paintings

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