

SPANISH CHAPEL

2 This chapel—one of two in the museum—captures Isabella Gardner’s interest in the many and various ways art has been used in the service of religion.

It also indicates her interest in Spanish art, which increased later in her collecting career. On the floor is an alabaster tomb figure of a knight, which Mrs. Gardner purchased during her last European trip in 1906. And on the wall above the altar is another Spanish work, bought on an earlier trip: The Virgin of Mercy from the studio of Francisco de Zurbarán. Isabella Gardner once hung this painting in her bedroom and moved it to this location in 1915.

This intimate gallery evokes Gardner’s own strong religious feelings, particularly the devotion associated with mourning. The words “In Memoriam” are painted over the doorway inside, and she left instructions that her body should lie in state just outside the Spanish Chapel before her funeral.



Tomb Figure of a Knight

Spanish (Salamanca), around 1500
Alabaster

Noble tombs in Europe often include figures that portray the deceased. Here, alabaster has been intricately carved to show the textile pattern on the pillow and the chain mail of the armor (see top photo)—all indicators that the deceased was an aristocratic knight.

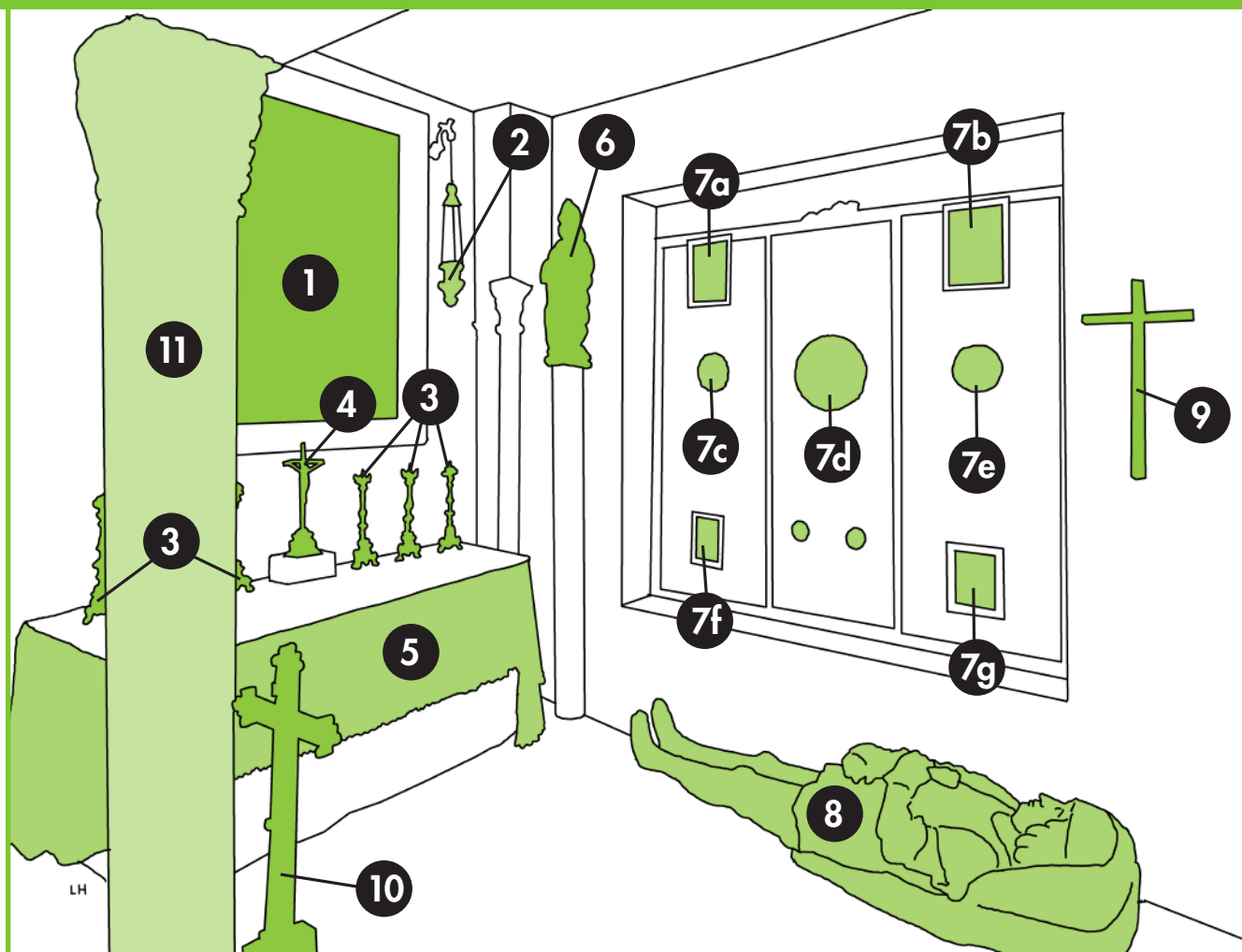


When Isabella Gardner bought this sculpture in Madrid in 1906, restorers had replaced the nose and repaired other damaged areas. A century later, museum conservators decided it was time for a “facelift” to remove the old repairs and accumulated surface grime. In the middle photograph, a conservator puts the finishing touches on the knight’s new nose, one that now matches the subtle color and gleaming surface of the rest of the face.



The bottom photograph shows another conservator using a state-of-the-art laser cleaner to remove dirt from the knight’s leg. Free of the distractions of dirt and damage, this elegant sculpture can now be better appreciated by contemporary audiences.

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1. Virgin and Child, around 1630–35. Studio of Francisco de Zurbarán (Spanish, 1598–1664). Oil on canvas

2. Hanging Lamps (two). Origin unknown. Silver and glass

3. Candlesticks (six). Italian, late 19th century in the style of the 17th century. Bronze

4. Crucifix. Italian (Venice), 17th century. Bronze, wood, and ivory

5. Altar Frontal. Partly Italian, second half of the 16th century. Composite of drawn-work and linen with a band of needle-point trimming (Italian, 16th century) layered on top

6. Standing Bishop. Netherlandish or German, second half of the 15th century. Gilded and painted wood

7. Glass Panels and Medallions. Flemish, French, German, and Spanish, late 15th through 17th centuries

a. Crucifixion

b. Saint Catherine

c. Saint Peter

d. Saint Martin and the Beggar

e. Male Saint

f. Moses and the Brazen Serpent

g. Self-Mortification of Saint Benedict (part of a series designed by Albrecht Dürer)

8. Tomb Figure of a Knight. Spanish (Salamanca), around 1500. Alabaster

9. Cross. Italian, 19th century. Painted and gilded wood

10. Cross. Italian (Venice?), 17th century. Wood inlaid with mother of pearl

11. Column Capitals. Catalan, 15th century. Limestone and marble

In front of the chapel:

Gate with two escutcheons (coats of arms). Basque (?), 16th century. Wrought iron

Railing (a former gate turned on its side). Italian or French, 1724. Wrought iron