Unicorns: Tapestries, Mysteries, History, Horticulture
By Dr. Jules Janick, James Troop Distinguished Professor in Horticulture

Wednesday, November 19, 2014
BRNG B222, 4:30 - 5:30 pm

The Art History faculty and students are delighted to invite you to a lecture on two famous yet somewhat mysterious tapestries: The Lady and the Unicorn (1480s, Musée de Cluny in Paris) and The Hunt of the Unicorn (1490-1505, Cloisters Museum of Art).

Both are overwhelmingly beautiful and represent the high point of the tapestry art form. They incorporate a style popular in French and Flemish tapestry known as millefleur (thousand flowers) where a mass of flowering herbs and trees are included in the background giving the tapestries high horticultural interest.

They also raise art historical questions. The designer of the Hunt of the Unicorn tapestries is indeed unknown, but some scholars think that they were made to commemorate the marriage of Anne of Brittany to Louis XII of France in 1499. If true, a logical designer for the tapestries would have been Jean Bourtichon (1457-1521), the illustrator and miniaturist associated with the French court, and illustrator of Anne’s personal prayer book of Grandes Heures.

Prof. Janick will test this conjecture by comparing style elements including flora and fauna of the tapestry with illustrations in the Grandes Heures, and offer a close reading of the works, including cryptic inscriptions.

Please join us, over a light tea, for what promises to be a stimulating conversation on the interaction between art history and horticulture.

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