



The Bayeux Tapestry: The Life Story of a Masterpiece

Carola Hicks

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One of Europe's greatest artistic treasures, the Bayeux Tapestry depicts the events leading up to the Battle of Hastings in 1066. For all its fame, its origins and story are complex and somewhat cloudy. Though many assume it was commissioned by Bishop Odo—William's ruthless half-brother—it may also have been financed by Harold's dynamic sister Edith, who was juggling for a place in the new court. In this intriguing study, medieval art historian Carola Hicks investigates the miracle of the tapestry's making—including the unique stitches, dyes, and strange details in the margins—as well as its complicated past. For centuries it lay ignored in Bayeux cathedral until its discovery in the 18th century. It quickly became a symbol of power: townsfolk saved it during the French Revolution, Napoleon displayed it to promote his own conquest, and the Nazis strove to make it their own. Packed with thrilling stories, this history shows how every great work of art has a life of its own.

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