Fan

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.:	70.44.1
Place of production:	France (presumably)
Materials:	ivory; paper; parchment
Techniques:	gilded; painted; pierced
Dimensions:	height: 29,3 cm width: 49 cm

On the leaf, which is framed by gold scallop motifs and coloured roses, can be seen a company of people enjoying themselves. In the middle are two young men clinking wine glasses, around them are their companions and sweethearts. On the left side two musicians sit in front of a waterfall. One is playing the pipes and the other a violin. On the right side, next to a young girl lying in the grass, an embracing couple watch the musicians. In the background are buildings and a couple approaching each other. On the verso, on a small island, under a baldachin hung between a tree and a commemorative column surmounted by an urn, sits a young lady playing with a dog. On the perpendicular grid pattern of the sticks little doves fly among cut roses. On each of the guard-sticks, in an oval frame, sits a young man. Jean-Antoine Watteau's work L'Amour au Theatre Franqais — Love in the Theatre Frangais (its meaning is somewhat obscure and not fully solved even today), and an engraving of it made by Charles Cochin (1688—1754) in 1734, served as the model for the depiction on the fan. In the centre these leaf a young man wreathed in vine leaves and seated on a stone bench is clinking glasses with a young man wearing an enormous feathered cap on his head. Between them leans Columbina, the charming and flirtatious heroine of commedia dell'arte. In the foreground is a young man with his back to the viewer. Opposite him a young girl moves to the tune of the musicians on the left side, hitching up her skirt slightly in her fingers. From the right other members of the company are watching the events, and one - in whom research has recognized Paul Poison, the celebrated actor of the age - is looking out from the picture. On the wall overgrown with vines behind the stone bench, in the shade of the leaves, a hooded bust rises above the scene. The attributes and the verse accompanying the engraving—in which mention is made of unforced service of Bacchus and Amor—make it likely that the above deities were personified in the two main protagonists. Deprived of its mysterious atmosphere and motifs replete with significance—such as the bust and the quiver—and placed in a sunny rural landscape, the scene might at first glance be an allegory of the five senses. Here Bacchus appears as the accomplice of Amor by helping to fan the flame of love, since "in wine a young man will readily be a slave to a girl / in wine desire flares up, Venus is the fire in the fire" (Ovid: Ars amatoria, I, 243—244). Of the symbols in Watteau's painting, only the vase was used by the painter of the fan, but it is this that has made it accessible and easily comprehensible for many. On the verso of the fan Fidelity is depicted in the young lady playing with her dog. On the pierced, grid-like ivory sticks doves fly among roses, Venus's flowers. The depiction of a bird released from a cage—this spread in the wake of 17th century Dutch books of love symbols—refers not merely to the poetic image of love soaring free, but also to the very real loss of virginity, and as such features among the symbols of marriage.

Literature

- Maros Donka Szilvia: *Bájos semmiségek. Az Iparművészeti Múzeum legyezőgyűjteménye (1700-1920)*. Balassi Kiadó - Iparművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, 2002. - Nr. 23

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