Fan - Rinaldo in Amida's garden (episode from Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered)

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.:	69.1420.1
Date of production:	ca. 1730
Place of production:	Netherlands (presumably)
Materials:	ivory; mother- of-pearl; parchment
Techniques:	gilded; painted; pierced
Dimensions:	height: 26 cm width: 45 cm height: 4,5 cm length: 37,5 cm width: 6,5 cm

The special feature of the finely drawn flower and leaf ornamentation framing the leaf is the use of patches of small mother-of-pearl scales stuck onto it at intervals. The literary source for the depiction on the fan is Torquato Tasso's poem Gerusalemme liberata, a masterpiece celebrating the First Crusade, in which the pair represented by Armida, a beautiful sorceress, and Rinaldo, a knight with a love-spell upon him, can be recognized. While the enraptured young hero spends his time in happy captivity, the Christian warriors tarrying below the walls of Jerusalem—and able to begin the siege only with Rinaldo's help—send Carlo and Ubaldo to find the fugitive, to break the spell on him, and to bring him back to the fray. Using a shield as a mirror, they show him his appearance, soft from pleasure and unworthy of a warrior. The noble youth leaves with his comrades, whereupon the abandoned enchantress awakens to the true and torturous nature of love. Francois Chereau's (1680 —1729) first copper engraving of Bernard Picart's painting Rinaldo and Armida (1702) was made in 1711 another followed in 1724. Unlike earlier treatments of the theme, Picart's enriched the scene with a multiplicity of small details. In the poem these details are mentioned only in passing, but here they also derive from pictorial elements of an episode - the abduction of Rinaldo - depicted in a succession of 17th century picture series: the festoon of flowers with which Armida bound him and the putti with whose help she placed the drugged youth in her carriage. In the round picture Armida sits on the edge of a bed with a baldachin and scalloped headboard, cradling her sweetheart's head in her lap a putto holds a mirror in front of them. Emblematic motifs take the place of the shaded expression of sentiments: thus the power of love is symbolized by the garland of flowers wound around Rinaldo's body and by the putti fastening it to a tree trunk, and sensuality by the scalloped bed by and the recessed statues of Venus and Amor in the background. This composition celebrates marriage and abandoned carnal pleasure, and not wild passion, in line with what was expressed in the poetic work and the expectations of its pictorial interpretation a century earlier. The fan bears an excessively simplified version of the original: the bed, the fountain and the many putti are missing, and the figures of the knights emerging from among the trees in search of Rinaldo are omitted. On the verso, in an oval floral frame contoured and patterned in gold, stands a girl carrying a basket of flowers a child on her knees is offering a flower. The clumsy, highly unskilled quality of the figures contrasts strikingly with the chinoiserie floral frame exhibiting graceful, lively brushstrokes, and also with the brilliantly executed and delicately patterned sticks. Staffage pictures on the sticks show a sailing ship and ruins in irregularly shaped cartouches. Set in garlands of flowers coiling among rings, these refer to the sequel of the story, according to which Armida, in her consuming and angry desire for the departed Rinaldo, destroyed her palace. Identical with regard to form and—not very high—standard of painting is the piece bearing the inventory number MAA 50.8 (Cat. No. 5). (This is probably from the same workshop.) A marked Neapolitan fan from 1751 follows Chereau's engraving relatively faithfully this last-mentioned fan has been incorrectly published as a depiction of Mars and Venus: Cat. 1920, No. 142, Pl. XXIX.

Literature

- Maros Donka Szilvia: *Bájos semmiségek. Az Iparművészeti Múzeum legyezőgyűjteménye (1700-1920)*. Balassi

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Kiadó - Iparművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, 2002. - Nr. 7

