Settee

Furniture Collection

Accession Nr.:	53.1405.1
Date of production:	ca. 1880
Place of production:	Hungary (presumably)
Materials:	beechwood
Techniques:	carved; gilded; upholstered
Dimensions:	height: 89 cm width: 97 cm depth: 66 cm

The four cabriole legs are equipped with metal rolls they are joint by a curved seat rail of flowery- leafy decoration. The vertical arm support is voluted, the horizontal arm rests are straight and upholstered. The elongated, lying frame of the back support has chiselled corners, carved at the top with motifs identical with those on the seat rail. Both the seat and the back are upholstered. One of the seat shows and illustration of a La Fontaine tail (The Fox and The Stalk) while the back presents a scene from another La Fontaine tail: mother and child is almost attacked by a wolf peering out of a high brick wall a dog and two hens are already trying to escape but men equipped with iron forks arrive from the side houses to defend the woman and the child. The seat of the other sofa is again decorated with a La Fontaine tail: The Wolf Being the Shepherd, while the back shows a scene from the tail entitled The Miller, His Son and The Donkey.

The upholstery of both sofas was woven in Central Europe, most likely in Hungary, following the cartoons of Jean Baptiste Oudry (1686-1755). Since 1736 Oudry, being the artistic manager of the Beauvais upholstery weaver manufacture, made 277 drawings to illustrate La Fontaine's tails. The illustrations are now in the Roederer collection they were first published in 1759 in Reims (see Thieme-Becker, Vol.26, pp.98-99). According to H. Göbel (Wandteppiche. Leipzig, 1923-28, vol II, p.224.) the four tapestries with Oudry's La Fontaine illustrations were rewoven sixteen times between 1736 and 1777 in Beauvais, the workshop of Nicolas Besnier. As P. Verlet says, the king bought a series of tapestries from this workshop every year from 1754 on, sometimes together with matching furniture. These were then presented to his ministers or sent as a gift to representatives or counts abroad (see P. Verlet: Le style Louis XV. Paris, 1943, p.44). This explains partly the wide popularity of the La Fontaine tapestries in Europe. The fact that the upholstery factory of Beauvais also had a few plants outside Paris, for example in Leipzig, provides us with a further explanation.

Pieces similar to the two sofas described above, decorated with La Fontaine scenes was in the former Cornier Gouldin collection (see H. Göbel: Wandteppiche. Leipzig, 1923-28, Vol. II, pict. 256). Göbel identified the sofa as being an original beauvais furniture, from around 1775. The use of the aniline paint and the rolls on the feet, in contrast with the hand-woven upholstery suggest that the sofas were made in the second half of the nineteenth century already.

Literature

- a kiállítást rendezte: Batári Ferenc, Vadászi Erzsébet: *Historizmus és eklektika. Az európai iparművészet stíluskorszakai*. Iparművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, 1992. - Nr. 46. (Vadászi Erzsébet)

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