Tapestry - Theseus and Ariadne

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.:	62.1312.1
Date of production:	late 17th - early 18th century
Place of production:	Brussels
Inscription:	nincs
Materials:	silk; wool
Techniques:	woven
Dimensions:	length: 342 cm width: 254 cm

The tapestry illustrates the well-known mythological tale of Theseus and Ariadne, which is recounted in book VIII of Ovid's Metamorphoses. According to the legend, the Athenians killed Androgeus, son of King Minos of Crete, who launched a campaign against Athens in response. After Minos defeated the Athenians, he demanded that every ninth year seven young men and seven girls be sacrificed to the Minotaur, a monster that was half-man and half-bull and was kept in the labyrinth of the king's palace on Crete. When the Athenians were required for the third time to send sacrifices to Crete, Theseus, son of the Athenian king, volunteered to kill the monster. Minos' daughter, Ariadne fell in love with Theseus and gave him a ball of yarn so he could find his way out of the labyrinth after defeating the Minotaur. The tapestry shows Theseus receiving the ball of yarn from Ariadne in the splendid palace garden. The border, decorated with rich floral and fruit garlands and animal figures, is very similar to the frame of the tapestry Mercury Gives the Child Bacchus to the Nymphs (MAAB inv. no. 24376); thus, it is possible that the two works were made in the same workshop in Brussels.
The background of the scene corresponds in every detail to that of a tapestry in London, in which the foreground shows Hera and Ixion (V. Sternberg, Four Centuries of Tapestry. London, 1966, 41).
The tapestry is from the collection of György Ráth, who purchased it from the Munich art dealer Aaron S. Drey in 1893.

Literature

- Szerk.: Dr. Horváth Hilda: *Egy magyar polgár. Ráth György és munkássága*. Iparművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, 2006. - Nr. 59.
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- László Emőke: *Művészet és Mesterség. Textil*. Iparművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, 1989. - 22-23.
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- Radisics Jenő: *Guide de Musée Georges Ráth*. Budapest, 1906. - Cat.113.

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