Fan - with the scene Telemaque in the Isle of Calypso

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.:	24529
Place of production:	Netherlands (presumably); Paris (presumably)
Materials:	ivory; parchment leaf
Techniques:	gilded; painted
Dimensions:	height: 24,5 cm width: 42,5 cm

On the leaf bordered by delicately drawn flowers can be seen a girl resting beneath a tree in a garden as she regards a thoughtful young man standing in front of her. Hovering above them, Amor has just let fly his arrow at the girl. Next to the pair is a maiden picking two flowers, and behind the young man there is a warrior resting. The scene depicts an episode in what was perhaps the most popular novel of the 18th century, and one which exerted great influence throughout Europe: Francois Fenelon's Les aventures de Telemaque (1699), in other words stories of Telemachus's wanderings. The model for the composition was a copper engraving issued in 1724 by the Parisian engraver Edme Jeaurat (1688—1738), after a painting by Nicolas Vleughels (1668—1737).

Of the figures represented in the painting and in the engraving only the principal ones feature on the fan: Calypso, who tried to induce Telemachus to stay Mentor, who is asleep and two nymphs, with one of whom - owing to a mistake by Amor - Telemachus falls in love, instead of with Calypso. On the verso, in a finely drawn and colourful Oriental flower-garden contoured and patterned in gold, can be seen a young main taking leave of his sweetheart. On the sticks, decorated with a pattern of intertwining tendrils, are three irregularly shaped insets each with a little picture showing a seaside harbour. The guard-sticks are embellished with snails, scallops, fruit, and oars carved in relief and painted.

There is an analogous example in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. There is a version of the scene with more figures in an English private collection and a version with four figures used to be kept by Berlin's Kunstgewerbe Museum. With the tendril ornamentation on the sticks this piece exhibits a close kinship with a fan dated c. 1680 and considered to be of French origin, and with a fragment of another at the Museum Carolino Augusteum, Salzburg. In all probability this fragment, published as a small French fan and dated to the last quarter of the 18,h century, was only a stick of a fan once supplied with a leaf. The earlier conjecture that the leaf might depict Rinaldo and Armida lost its validity when the model-picture was discovered. Of the same shape and size—and hence conceivable as a piece by the same workshop—is the fan in our collection bearing the inventory number Inv. no. 69.1420.1.

Literature

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- Randall Richard H.: *Masterpieces of ivory from the Walters Art Gallery*. Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 1985.
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