

Fan - Hercules at the crossroads

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.: 4161 

Place of production: Paris (presumably);

Materials: mother-of-pearl sticks; parchment

Techniques: gouache painting

Dimensions: height: 29,5 cm
width: 52 cm

On the leaf, which is framed by small flowers and scallop motifs, is the above scene, which follows the composition (Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples) painted by Annibale Caracci around 1596 that later became canonical. In the delineation of the female figures in the scene those of Pompeo Battoni's picture on the same theme can be recognized. A brooding Hercules, sitting in the middle, is flanked by two female figures. Minerva—Virtus nods towards the poeta laureatus symbolizing the virtuous life, while Venus—Voluptas shows the young man an ensemble consisting of money, crowns, playing-cards, and musical instruments, symbolizing the joys and sins of life. On the verso is a quodlibet put together from the pages of a book, in which a conspicuous place is occupied by the title-page of a work by Metastasio. In the left-hand corner an eagle clutches an orb (?). The embellishment on the sticks presents a warrior and his sweetheart amidst Rococo ornamentation, a female figure holding a child, a female figure with a trumpet (Fama), and putti. Moralistic Renaissance allegories of the story of Hercules—according to which efforts for the benefit of mankind accompanied by a rejection of earthly pleasures lead to the attainment of eternal life—underwent significant change during the 18th century. Johann Adolf Hasse and Piero Metastasio's opera *Alcide al bivio* ends in a dance of compromise between Pleasure and Virtue. This opera was premiered in 1760 in Vienna, on the occasion of the marriage of Archduke Joseph—later Emperor Joseph II—and Princess Isabella of Parma. The theme of the depiction on the fan, the quodlibet reference to Metastasio and the featuring of the eagle together allow us to infer a direct link between the fan and the opera.

Literature

- Maros Donka Szilvia: *Bájos semmisségek. Az Iparművészeti Múzeum legyezőgyűjteménye (1700-1920)*. Balassi Kiadó - Iparművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, 2002. - Nr. 30.

