

LADIES FEEDING SWANS - Vicente Palmaroli y Gonzales (1834-1896)



Five elegant figures in Directoire dress are resting in the courtyard of a Moorish palace. A suitor is wooing a lady, while a pensive young man is watching two ladies feeding swans.

Palmaroli was of Italian origin but born in Spain. He studied in Rome and was part of the group of Spanish artists, among them Fortuny, who had their headquarters at the Caffè Greco, just off the Piazza di Spagna. In 1873 he settled in Paris and started sending exhibits to the Salon. He returned to Madrid in 1894 to head the Prado Museum, whose collections he brilliantly enlarged.

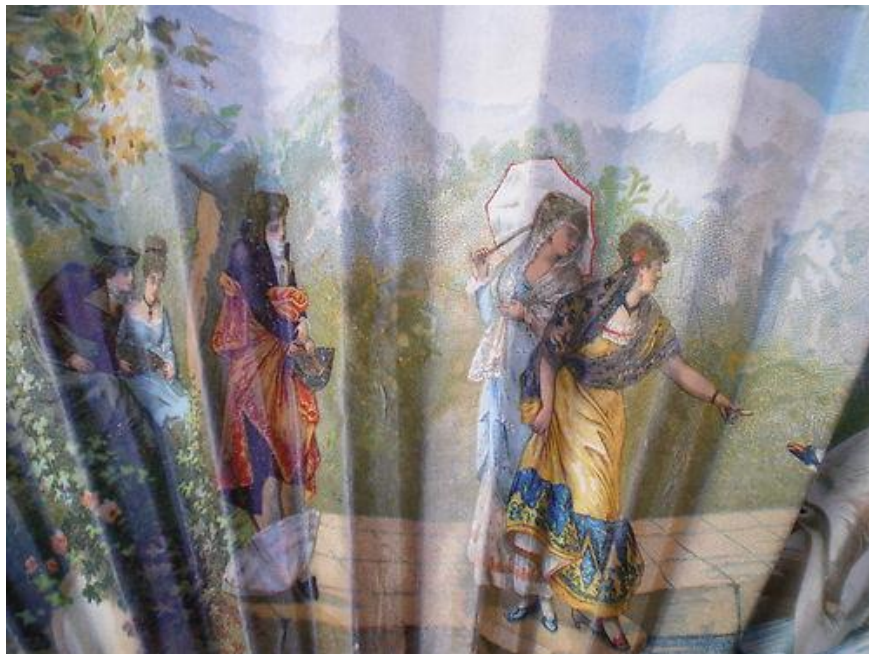
The following printed version of Palmaroli's painting was published in London by Gebbie and Husson, reportedly in 1889, three years after Lauronce's death, too late to be the model on which the chromolithograph is based.



Laurence's fans adapt the original painting quite faithfully, only omitting the background: it is replaced by the usual foliage and a tree instead of the pillar against which the young man was leaning. There are six known copies of this design: five on white satin, signed; one on black satin, unsigned. The colour scheme is identical on all copies, with slight differences when compared to the original painting: the pink dress trimmed with black lace is now yellow with a blue flounce.



An unusual fan with this design was recently sold on the Internet. It is printed on paper and the central part seems to be identical to Lauronce's print: it features the same colour scheme (yellow and blue dress, white umbrella trimmed with red, red cloak) and the same decoration of roses on each side. But the background of snow-covered mountains neither appears in Lauronce's print nor on the original painting. And the vegetal elements that fill the leaf are not in keeping with Lauronce's style, not even on the late prints made by his nephew after 1886. The stone and its model could have been sold to another printer after the 1893 bankruptcy, or even later during the six years when the printing press was still in activity.



I will conclude with another fan, painted in gouache on gauze. It reproduces the central part of the painting, and features a yellow and blue dress: it shows that the design was familiar to fan painters, but not the original colour scheme.