

LA VICARIA - Marià Josep Bernat Fortuny i Marsal (1838 – 1874)



The title of the painting itself explains what these elegant people in their finery 'à la Goya' are about. In Spanish the phrase "pasar por la vicaria" (going to the vicarage) can be translated as "tying the knot". In a vast 'vicaria' decorated with panelling and gilding, a newly-wed couple is signing the marriage register. Some of their numerous guests are so exhausted (by the Spanish heat ?) that they have half collapsed on a bench and a lady is fanning herself.

Fortuny was a Catalan painter acclaimed for his light brushwork and brilliant colours. He studied in Paris and Rome and developed a taste for orientalism. He is the father of Mariano, the versatile 20th century artist-designer.

If we compare Fortuny 's original and the fan by Lauronce, we can see that of the twenty-odd figures in the painting, a good half have disappeared, including the black-clad vicar: the bridegroom is now signing the register in front of an empty chair !

Only a few elements evoke the richly furnished vicarage: a mirror, a bookcase, a lamp, leaving the figures floating strangely on the satin surface without even a floor under their feet.



An engraved version of Fortuny's painting was published in 1877 in the magazine "*L'Univers Illustré*", and the critic noted admiringly that "the artist masterfully overcomes the challenge of line, colour and design".


